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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 496. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 2ND, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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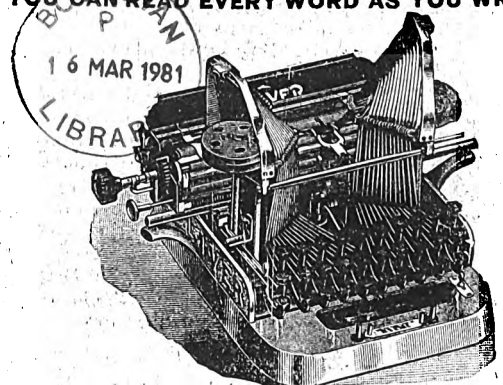

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 496. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 2nd, 1898.

THE LOVE OF MEN.

A STORY OF WEST AFRICA.

I.

BANG! crash! and out of the cook-house belonging to a certain bungalow in Accra, inhabited by Dick Lockhart and Tom Willoughby, shot Friday, the cook, followed by an apparition of "size eight" and one leg of a pair of duck trousers.

"There! take that, you black-faced scoundrel!" exclaimed an angry voice, with astonishing energy for the coast, "and don't let me set eyes on you again in a hurry if you value your skin."

Friday pulled a grimace, and rubbed himself soothingly, for the remark had been made in a most impressive manner; then he walked away.

"Hallo! what's up?" asked another voice, and a man's head and shoulders, in dishabille, appeared through a window of the bungalow.

"What's up, indeed?" exclaimed Tom Willoughby, displaying the rest of the duck suit; "why, the very deuce. I've just found that ugly scoundrel, Friday, sound asleep, without having made the faintest attempt to prepare the dinner, and here it's six o'clock, and we asked Fulwell and Eyre to come at half-past," and he fumed and strutted like a true Britisher.

"Never mind," replied Dick, the owner of the head and shoulders, in a cheery voice. "We'll have to cook the dinner ourselves, that's all; I'll be ready in a jiffy," and he disappeared.

Tom did not feel very reassured, and he knocked two small black boys' heads together, who happened to be onlookers, as a let off to his feelings. He cheered up somewhat, however, when Dick appeared in a spotless suit, and a twinkle in his blue eyes, and set to work.

"Aprons first, then soup," said he, "and then work for dear life."

"Are aprons a kind of caviar?" asked Tom wickedly.

"No, silly—to keep your togs clean; here, take this," and he threw one across the table at him. "Now for it—first comes soup; well that of course only wants boiling, with a little salt and pepper thrown in. You can do that while I get to the fish."

"Do you know anything about it?"

"Of course I do. It's as simple as A. B. C.; you simply dip it in something sticky, then in bread crumbs, then fry it. Look slippy with that soup while I get it ready. Joints and entrées must be tinned things."

The soup was completed, and looked—well, dubious.

The fish also was completed, and looked—well, more dubious, but they put it aside, and hoped for the best.

"Can you make any sweets?" asked Tom.

"No, that I can't," was the prompt reply.

"Blest if I can," said Tom, and they looked at each other.

"I know, the cookery book," exclaimed Dick, and a second later they were poring over it.

"See here—custard pudding's as easy as wink. You get the things while I read it out."

"No; I'll read it out," put in Dick hastily: "it's sure to want a light hand, and mine's heavy."

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"Rats! You haven't got to handle it at all. Besides, you can't read, and we haven't time for you to spell the words," for which Tom got the frying-pan at his head, but ducked in time. "Look sharp, there's no time to waste," he continued. "Boil one and a half pints of milk with two ounces of lump sugar, and pour it, boiling hot, over three eggs lightly beaten. Well, that sounds easy enough; you begin it while I see if the cloth is laid properly," and he went off, looking very knowing, and taking the book with him.

"Flavour with nutmeg or anything else preferred, and pour into a tart-dish," he shouted from the sitting-room. "Look sharp, they'll be here in ten minutes."

"All right, it's done," came the response, "but it doesn't look right."

"Nonsense, it must be right; it's like the book."

"Perhaps that isn't all."

Tom picked up the book. Then he pulled a face, and exclaimed:

"By Jove! you've got to place the dish in another, three parts full of boiling water, and bake it slowly for forty minutes."

"Well, we haven't got another dish, so I can't. It'll just have to bake itself the best way it can."

"Perhaps we'd better change the name," called Tom. "Let's call it Montifiore pudding, and say it's new."

"Right you are. Here they come," and at the same moment a whoop was heard outside, and Captain Eyre rode up in his go-cart.

"What ho, you fellows!" he called. "Fulwell's just behind. He didn't know which sash to put on, and it hindered him rather. Ah, there he is," and they glanced down the road.

At the same instant Major Fulwell's cart caught in a deep rut, the pole was jerked out of the Kroo boys' hands, and back went the gallant Major into the road. He rose furious, but the Kroo boys, from a long and varied experience, knew better than to stay, and were already vanishing in the distance as Dick and Tom came to the rescue.

"Never mind, Major, the sash looks lovely," said Tom wickedly; and, after shaking his fist threateningly after the retreating figures, the Major allowed himself to be collared by his two hosts and hoisted up the bungalow steps.

Dick Lockhart had lately come in for some money, and the dinner was in honour of the event. They set to work promptly, once all seated, and the courses progressed rapidly; too rapidly, in fact, for no one seemed to be eating anything.

Dick kept his face, and swore at the cook's disgraceful cooking, but Tom exploded over the pudding. Instead of baking forty minutes slowly, it had baked forty-five minutes rapidly, with the result that the Captain asked mildly, if he might be favoured with the recipe and—a pick-axe. This was the signal for a general uproar, and the story came out, whereupon the two guests solemnly announced that nothing but a double allowance of champagne and an extra cock-tail would appease them. This was agreed to, and the hilarity increased.

On dessert and speech-time arriving, the Major congratulated Dick on his good fortune, and the Captain and Tom emphasized their feelings practically on his broad back.

The Queen and the Army were then toasted, and lastly Dick rose.

He first thanked them all heartily, then said, with a light in his eyes that bespoke some unusual cause for gladness, "and now, gentlemen, I have some news for you. Miss Bolton, whom I hope to marry directly I arrive in England, started out to Accra in the last boat with an aunt, who has been ordered a sea voyage. They are coming out here with the idea of returning at once with me. She knows you all well by name, and is looking forward to meeting you. May I ask you to drink to the good voyage and quick arrival of the sweetest girl in the world—my future wife?"

They rose instantly, and drank the toast with mingled expressions of congratulation, and pleasure. The idea of ladies among them was pleasing to all, even if only for two weeks, for the bungalow was on the outskirts of Accra, and they saw little enough of ladies' society.

When dinner was over they adjourned to the verandah, and Tom got his banjo. They loved a good comic song, these coasters, and were soon shouting choruses lustily, with palpable enjoyment. Finally the guests began to think about going home, and after taking leave somewhat boisterously, and coming back twice to clap Dick on the back and congratulate him again, they departed.

Before they turned in, Dick linked his arm through Tom's, and said affectionately, "You're quite sure you don't mind Miss Bolton and her aunt coming to the bungalow, old chap? I can easily get somewhere else for them to go if you'd rather, but it will only be for ten days."

"Of course not, I'm delighted," replied Tom readily. "We will show them all round, and we might make it a bit daintier, eh?"

"Yes, I have been thinking about it. We'll get some new curtains, and a few other things. You're bound to like her; everyone does," and his eyes shone. "I'm not going to leave her any more now I've got this money; that's why I'm so awfully glad about it," and in his exuberance of spirits he vaulted the table and vanished into his little room.

II.

"It's no use, I can't tell him," and Nellie Bolton gripped the ship-rail tightly, and gazed before her with white lips.

A man stood beside her, and he, too, gripped the rail till his knuckles stood out, but he looked at her, not across the sea.

"I don't see how you can help it," he said.

"I could be ill, or something, and let auntie tell him."

"He wouldn't be satisfied. Why won't you tell him yourself?"

"I am afraid," she said slowly. "I never was afraid of anything before, but I daren't look Dick Lockhart in the face and tell him I don't love him."

"Is it anger you fear, because you may be sure I shall not be far away?"

"Oh, no," hastily, "he will not be angry, but I know just how he will look at me, and just what a wretch I shall feel. He has looked like it before. Once when I was offended with him about something, and would not have anything to do with him all the evening, and once when I flirted very much with someone else. He is so good, Dick is, he doesn't understand people not being as good as himself. I believe I am always a little afraid of him. I suppose I ought never to have got engaged to him, but he was so masterful and determined about it. It would be all right if he wouldn't expect so much of me, but I can't alter my nature, and I never could be what he expects a woman to be. I don't know that I

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even want to," and she raised her beautiful face to his with a half-plaintive, half-childlike air.

And Horace Belcher looked back at her with his soul in his eyes.

"You don't expect women to be angels, do you?" she asked.

"No, I like them natural, with a few sins to correspond with my own. I like you, Nellie, just as you are, with all your wilfulness and follies, and all your thousand and one winsome ways. I love you, child, and I know I can make you happy. I do not ask anything of you, but that you love me in return."

"Ah!" and she heaved a sigh of content. "That is how I like to be loved, then I am not afraid. Dick talks to me sometimes about women leading men and inspiring them, and that sort of thing, and it oppresses me dreadfully. I don't want to lead or inspire anyone. I want to enjoy myself. It sounds horribly selfish, but I'm not altogether selfish. I can look after anyone who is ill or wants help, but I can't be ideal. I couldn't possibly live up to his standard."

"Why haven't you broken off your engagement before?"

"Partly because I was afraid, and partly because I didn't care for anyone else. I thought we should get used to each other aftewards, but now, of course, it's all different." And she dropped her eyes to the heaving waters and veiled them with their long silken lashes.

For some minutes they stood in silence, while his hand strayed to hers and closed over it.

"If only I could have written," she said presently.

"Yes, but it's impossible. He'll put off in the first surf-boat to the ship. Are you quite sure you won't go ashore with him and learn to forget me?"

"Oh, no, no," and she moved a step nearer, "now I know you, I could never go to him—never. Surely you won't desert me now?"

"No, a thousand times no," he breathed hastily, adding, after a pause, "but he has the first right."

"The right of choice is mine," she declared. "It will be much better for him in the end, because I never could have become what he wants me to. I will tell him all about it to-morrow."

* * * * *

The usual crowd gathered on the sands the following day when the steamer hove in sight, for in Accra, as in all colonial seaports, the arrival of the outward-bound steamer is one of the features of the week. No one felt quite the same interest in the homeward vessel, unless he happened to be going by it, and then, Heaven knows, he was glad enough. But the outward-bound brought letters and papers from the dear homeland, and eager eyes welcomed her.

But perhaps never before had a single pair of eyes expressed such a whole world of waiting delight as did Dick Lockhart's that sunny morning when the *Cabenda* anchored off Accra.

His friend, Tom Willoughby, could scarcely take his eyes off him.

The latter did not go out to the ship. He thought it would be nicer for them to meet alone, and when Dick had started in the surf-boat he went back to the bungalow to see that all was ready.

The boat had arrived in the afternoon, and so it was dark when at last he heard the click of the gate, and hastened to the door to greet them. But only one footstep fell on his ear, and that a slow, dragging one, and the greeting died away from his lips, as, with a strange wonder and sudden sense of dread, he stood and waited.

Then Dick entered and stood in the light, and a broken utterance escaped his friend's lips.

"Dick, old man," he exclaimed anxiously, and laid his hand on his arm.

But Dick only stared straight before him blankly, looking as if some great blow had shattered his reason for the time being.

Tom led him to a chair, and gently forced him into it, and then he mixed him something to drink and held it to his parched, dry lips.

It seemed to revive him a little, and he sat up and buried his face in his hands.

Tom looked round the room, and with the quick divination of love hurriedly pushed aside such of the preparations he could reach, which he knew would seem the greatest mockery.

Presently Dick rose and commenced pacing the little room.

At last he spoke.

"It's all over, Tom," he said, in a forced, unnatural voice. "She never really cared for me, and now there's another chap; he met her on board, and they fell in love with each other. I feel as if I could wring his neck, but where's the use? It wouldn't make her mine again, it wouldn't give me back what I have lost—nothing will. She has made me a hard man in one stroke," and he set his lips, stern and relentless.

"No, not that, Dick," and Tom spoke with a seriousness that was new to him. "When you say that, you virtually acknowledge that you have gone under because of a girl. If I were you I would fight it out with myself to the end. I wouldn't let my life be spoilt for such a girl as that."

"But I loved her," he muttered half fiercely, "and love isn't child's play with me. It's everything—just everything. I—I—" he stopped short and caught his breath—"I feel as if I were going mad, Tom," he finished brokenly.

"Poor old chap," was the low reply. "If I were you I should just give way for a bit, and have it out by myself. You'll feel better afterwards," and he led him to a chair by the table.

Dick hesitated a moment, then leant his head down on his arms, and let his feelings find vent.

Tom stole softly away, but he came back presently, and stayed with him all through that long, bitter night. And in the bitter days that followed, when a sharp attack of fever laid the stricken man low, he nursed him hourly with never failing tenderness.

For if the love of men does not equal that of women, it comes strangely near it sometimes.

GERTRUDE PAGE.

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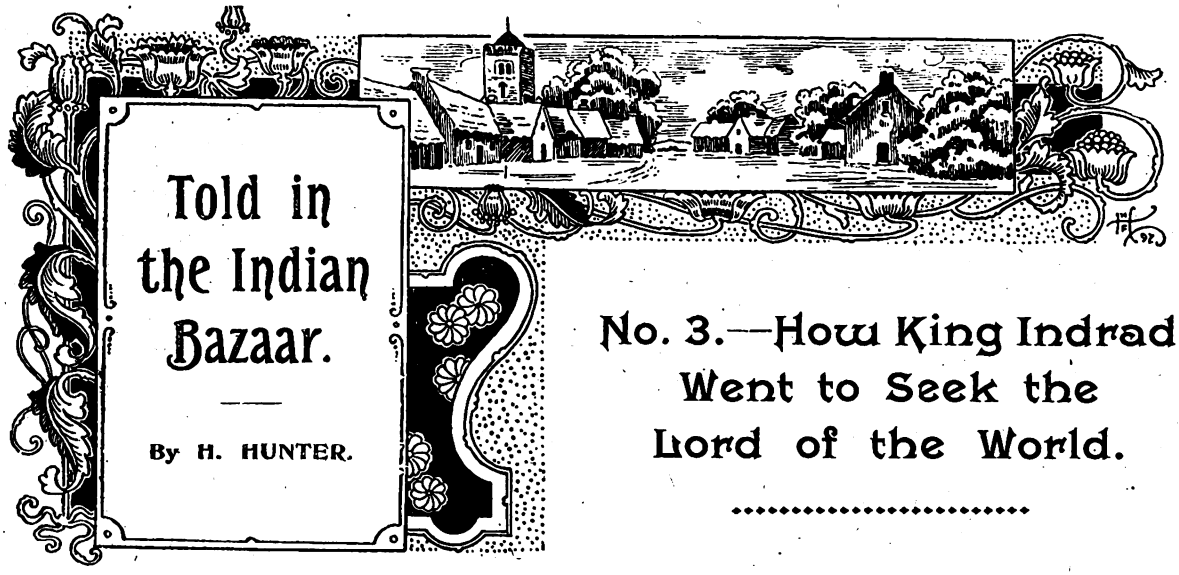

Told in the Indian Bazaar.

By H. HUNTER.

No. 3.—How King Indrad Went to Seek the Lord of the World.

IN the days when the gods lived among men, King Indradyumna sat on the throne of Malwa, and there was peace in the land. This was the time which our fathers have called the Golden Age. The earth was fair and beautiful to look upon, no evil thing had found its way into any corner of it; morning and evening the people brought their offerings of jungle flowers and wild fruits, and laid them on the sacred stone; and no man was jealous of his neighbour.

Now the Queen of King Indradyumna was curious to behold the face of an immortal, and inquired diligently of her maids and tirewomen concerning them; but none knew where was their dwelling place, and not the wisest at King Indrad's court could say what shape they assumed, or under what form they appeared.

But the Queen's curiosity consumed her like fire; it gave her no rest, so that her health suffered; and, as King Indradyumna had no heir to his throne, he began to grow uneasy. So one morning a royal proclamation was fastened up at the great gate of the Palace. Riches and honour with a place at the King's right hand were promised to the man who, by a certain day, should bring to the Chamberlain the news which the Queen desired.

And because of the reward offered by the King, many men of the city went up and down searching for the Blue Mountain, where it was said the Greatest of All had made his dwelling.

The appointed day came, and no man presented himself. Then the King rose up and, descending the steps of the throne on which he had been sitting, threw dust upon his beard, and with a loud voice called upon Heaven to assist him.

Just then a crow flew in at the open window, and perched himself on the back of the throne. "Who is he," said the crow, "that calls upon Heaven when the Lord of the World is visiting the earth?"

But when the King began to explain the crow cut him short. "And pray, Mr. King," said he, "what steps have you taken to find Him whom you desire to see? A proclamation! Robes of honour, rewards of money! Didst thou then, O King, expect men to find the Great One without faith in their hearts and love in their bosoms? Marvel not that your searching has been in vain. Now, if King Indrad be not of too proud a stomach to take advice from such a poor creature as a crow, let him tear down the proclamation at the gate of his Palace, and send the crier through the city, calling upon all men of clean hearts and sound consciences to present themselves before him on the morrow at the hour of morning sacrifice. Then let the King send to the East and to the West, to the North and to the South, and haply if it please Nárrayan, the King's desire may be accomplished. And for this saying, O King, I give thee a sign."

Whereupon the black crow changed immediately to a white dove, and flew away through the open window.

On the morrow, King Indrad sat at the great gate of the Palace to receive the men of clean hearts; but at the hour for sacrifice, behold there were but four who had ventured to answer the summons — a leather-dresser, a barber, a grass-cutter, and a weaver. These, rubbing their foreheads in the dust, proclaimed themselves the servants of the King.

Then King Indrad sent them forth; one to the East, one to the West, one to the North, and one to the South, bidding them search throughout the land for forty days, and inquire whithersoever they went for the Great God, who was Lord over all the earth.

Now when the forty days were expired, those who went to the West, and to the North, and to the South, returned; but he who went to the East returned not; so King Indrad comforted his Queen, and told her that the omen was favourable, since the weaver would have returned had he met with no better success than his fellows.

Now the weaver had journeyed on till he came to the great jungle, inquiring of all he met, but without finding any to tell him where the Lord of the World might be found.

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"We have heard of him," said many, "but no man hath seen him, or knoweth where to seek the Blue Mountain which stands upon the earth, but whose top is in the heavens."

Only one queer little old fellow whom he had met several times had answered briefly in a gruff voice: "Further on, further on," and the weaver, believing the gruff little man, had kept going "further on," convinced that he must surely find the Lord of the World, if he sought diligently after him.

So he pressed forward, thinking only of his errand, and not counting the time. Through thicket and thorn, through bush and through brake, he plodded, feeling neither hunger nor thirst, neither fatigue of body nor weariness of mind, animated only by one desire—to reach the Blue Mountain and find the Lord of the World.

The jungle-folk watched in wonderment as the man passed along, but none offered to molest him or sought to do him harm.

The tiger ceased to growl, and, creeping behind the tall canes, waited in silence whilst the weaver went by. The leopard and the panther looked on in amazement, and, having stared their fill, trotted off into the gloom. Only the jackals gamboled about him, and the birds piped in the trees.

Now and again a black crow came out of the jungle and flew round his head, alighting each time on the ground a few yards in front of his feet. When the crow had done this for the third time the weaver accepted it as an omen, and, addressing the crow, said, "Crow, crow, which way must I go to find the Blue Mountain? Pray tell me, good crow," and the crow answered. "Further on, further on."

Then plucking up courage the weaver tramped along bravely, for, said he, "both the old man and the crow say the same thing, so it must be right." Moreover, the crow kept him company, which he thought was a good sign, and, whenever he put his question, the crow always returned him the same answer.

At last, about the end of the third day, the crow flew into a tamarind tree by the side of the path and disappeared. Then the weaver saw straight before him a hut from which blue smoke was rising, and shouting his thanks to the crow he hurried up to the hut, which he reached just as a woodman entered it.

"Good evening," said the weaver. "Rest is sweet after toil," but the woodman answered not a word.

The table was set for a meal; the woodman motioned his guest to a seat, and a woman brought water to pour on his hands. A carpet was spread for him in a corner of the roof whereon to sleep; and when he opened his eyes in the morning, lo! there was the Blue Mountain, with the sun shining on it from afar.

Now the woodman knew, when he saw him, what the weaver had come for, and was jealous lest he should discover the shrine which the Lord of the World himself had set up in the heart of the Blue Mountain.

"For," said he, "King Indrad will surely offer to build him a temple, and I shall lose my god, and where shall I look for another?" So for three days he kept silence, while the weaver abode in the house waiting for a favourable omen.

In the night, as the weaver lay awake on the roof with his face to the stars, a jackal barked in the jungle. "Ah!" said he as he listened, "the time is at hand."

In the morning the woodman took fruit and flowers and went off to the mountain; but when the weaver sought to accompany him he made excuses, saying "To-morrow, friend, to-morrow," and this he said every day, hoping to weary the weaver. But every day the weaver renewed his attempt. So the woodman bethought him of a plan whereby he might keep the weaver in the jungle and the secret of the Blue Mountain from the ears of King Indrad.

"Marry my daughter," said he to the weaver, "and settle down in the wood, then will we go together and offer sacrifice in the Blue Mountain."

"Agreed," said the weaver. So he married the woodman's daughter, but the secret shrine of the Lord of the World seemed as far away from him as ever; for the woodman continued to go there alone, making always the same answer to the weaver which he had made him before. But in this he reckoned without counting the woman whom he had given the man to wife.

"Hearken!" said she, joining hands with her husband, "and I will tell thee what thou must do. Keep thy bed like a sick man, and leave the rest to me."

Then she went to her father, and with tears and entreaties implored him, till, moved by her supplications, the woodman consented to take the weaver with him.

"But," said he, "he shall go thither blindfolded, since if he know the way, he will return to his master, and I shall be as naught in the eyes of King Indradyumna. He shall see the Lord of the World in his secret dwelling-place, but the way thither he may not know."

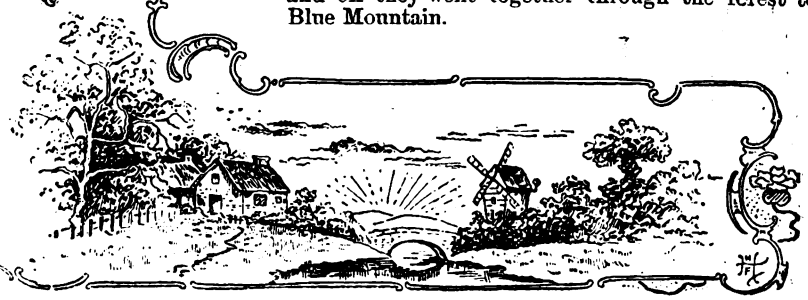
So the wife said to her husband:

"Take this bag of mustard-seed, drop it as you go, and all will be as you wish."

Now, on a certain morning in the same week, everything being ready, the woodman blindfolded the weaver, and off they went together through the forest to the Blue Mountain.

WHY IS YOUR NOSE LIKE ST. PAUL'S?

See this Week's PEARSON'S WEEKLY.



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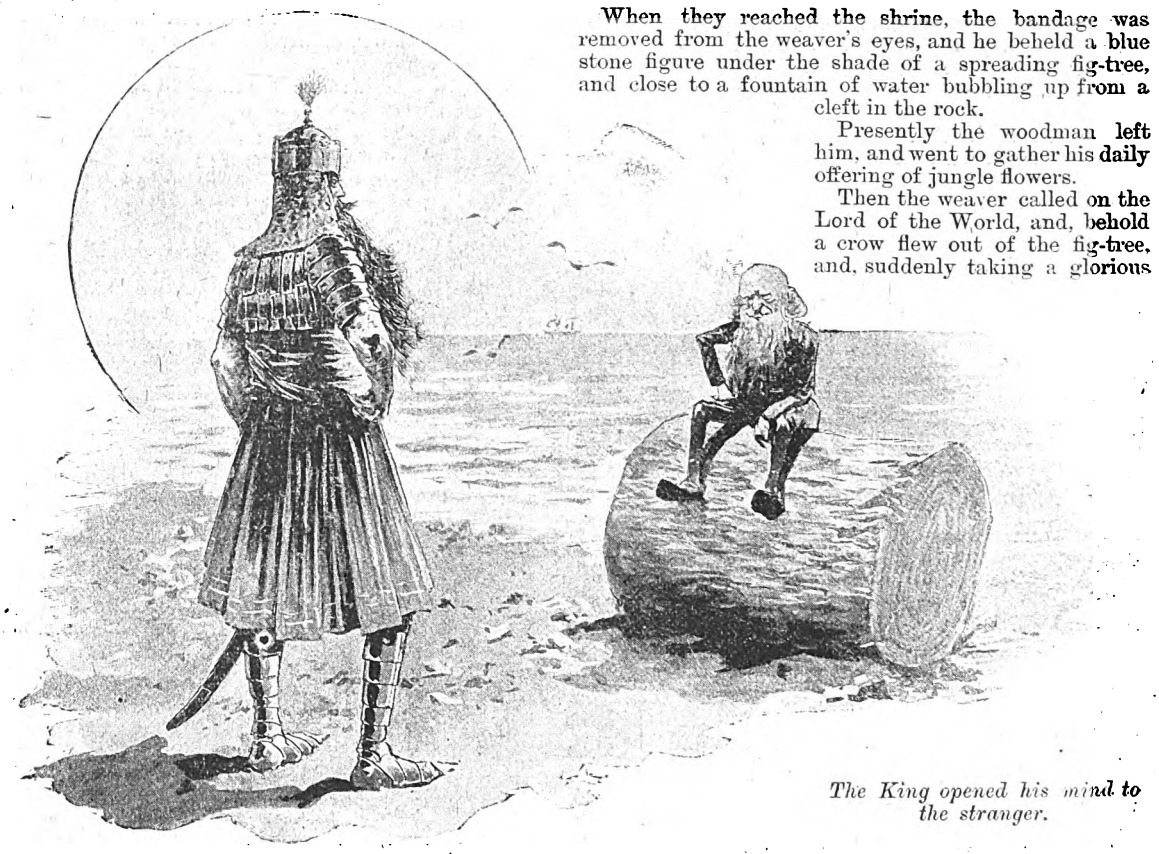
When they reached the shrine, the bandage was removed from the weaver's eyes, and he beheld a blue stone figure under the shade of a spreading fig-tree, and close to a fountain of water bubbling up from a cleft in the rock.

Presently the woodman left him, and went to gather his daily offering of jungle flowers.

Then the weaver called on the Lord of the World, and, behold a crow flew out of the fig-tree, and, suddenly taking a glorious



The King opened his mind to the stranger.

form, soared up into the blue heaven above, and was lost to sight.

"How easy," thought the weaver, "is the path to eternal bliss from this holy spot!" and, climbing into the tree, would have tried to follow the crow; but a voice cried to him saying: "First go back to thy master, and tell King Indrad the good news that the Lord of the World has been found."

At this moment the woodman returned, and when he heard from the weaver all that had happened it made him very unhappy. "Ah!" thought he, "this weaver's going to be a troublesome fellow. Now if I can contrive to leave him behind I shall hear no more of him. He can never find his way through the jungle alone, so shall I keep the secret of the Blue Mountain from the strangers who covet it for themselves."

Then, dissembling his voice: "Well, well," said he aloud, spreading out his flowers, "not a single one of the five blossoms of Heaven in the whole bunch. That comes of dreaming, Master Weaver. Just wait while I gather a few from the purple patch under the banyan."

Off slipped the woodman, leaving the weaver at the shrine.

At last, tired of waiting, the weaver went home, finding his way easily enough by the seed he had dropped in the morning. When the woodman saw him he was troubled; and, running to his daughter, promised that whatever her husband asked of him he would grant it.

"He wants nothing, poor fellow," said she, "but to be allowed to depart to tell King Indrad that the Lord of the World has been found."

"Let him go in peace," answered the woodman.

So the weaver went.

Now it fell out that when the good news was told to the King his heart swelled within him, and he cried:

"Is there any on earth to compare with me—the man whom the Greatest of All has chosen to build his temple?"

But a voice answered him:

"O, King! thou shalt indeed build my temple, but me thou shalt not behold."

So when the road through the great jungle was cut, and the King reached the foot of the Blue Mountain, the stone image had vanished.

Then the King sent for carpenters and masons, and built a magnificent temple by the sea, but there was no man on earth found holy enough to consecrate it.

King Indrad, plunged in despair, had worn himself to a shadow, when one day the Queen, grieved to see her lord so distressed, happened to say:

"Oh, dear! I wonder now if Brahma would consent to do you this service?"

"Best of councillors," said the King; "I will set off immediately."

So King Indrad went to Heaven to beg Brahma to come down and consecrate the temple which he had built for the Lord of the World to dwell in. But he was gone so long that nine generations of kings had reigned upon the earth before he returned; and the

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temple itself was claimed by another. So at Brahma's suggestion the matter was referred to a crow—a wise old bird which sat perched on the branch of a tree in the temple gardens, listening to all the talk that was going on below. The crow declared that it was King Indradyumna who had built the temple; and the King, believing that the last difficulty had been surmounted, besought the Lord of the World to appear before him that he might set up his image on the holy spot. Yet for all this, King Indradyumna found not the god.

Now, one morning, long after Brahma had gone back to Heaven, the King rose up early, and went for a walk on the sands. Slowly he paced along, pondering how he could induce the Lord of the World to take up his residence in the stately temple which looked down on the mysterious sea. Suddenly he spied a queer little fellow sitting on a block of timber which had been thrown up by the waves.

"Good morning," said the gruff old man. "What brings you out so early?"

Then the King opened his mind to the stranger, who directed him to take the block of wood to the temple and the Lord of the World would tell him what further to do with it.

So the King collected a great army, and went down with 5,000 elephants to drag the block up to the gates. They pulled and tugged for a week, but the timber defied all efforts to move it, till a crow, who was watching them, said: "Send for the woodman who lives over against the Blue Mountain. Not one of you has thought of the poor servant in your haste to buy favour of the master."

Now when the block was brought up to the temple, the King saw that it was rough and ragged, and full of defects; and, marvelling that the Lord of the World should have chosen such a sorry piece, he sent for carpenters to trim and dress it. But when the chisels were put to the wood, behold! the iron lost its edge, and curled up as if it had been tin.

"Ho, ho!" said the King, "what is this we have here? No log that ever grew can resist steel."

"Indeed!" said the crow, "and pray how old art thou, who pretendest an acquaintance with all the trees in the forest? Thou art of yesterday, O man! but this timber has seen a thousand such as thee. Saw ye not the undying fig tree by the water of life in the Blue Mountain, and have ye no eyes that ye cannot recognise it again? You have eyes, O King! but you see not the mystery which lies at the heart of the world. Think ye then ye would know the Lord thereof were he to reveal himself unto thee? Go now, leave the log in the temple. At the end of twenty days thou mayst return. It will be according to thy willingness to serve and thy power to obey."

Then the crow flew away and was seen in that part no more.

So the King sealed up the door of the temple with his own seal, and swore that for twenty days no man should enter it. But the Queen, tormented with curiosity to learn the secret of the shrine, gave the King no peace; and the fond, foolish man, being persuaded by the silly woman, opened the door before the end of the appointed time.

Alas! for King Indradyumna; from that hour he beheld no more the light of the sun, and the noonday was even as the night. Then he prayed to the god, and a voice said: "Ask what thou wouldst."

"I ask," said the blind King, "that none who come after me may say I built this temple and taught men to walk humbly before the Lord of the World."

Thus it fell out that the Queen also did not escape, for King Indradyumna was the last of his line.

Result of "War Competition."

The winner of the first prize in the "War Competition" is C. T. Frost, 11 Bosworth, Rugby, whose attempt was the most nearly correct.

A prize of £1 each has been forwarded to the following five:

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A. Clarke, care of E. Bishop, 2 St. Andrew's Hill, E.C.
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J. H. Kendle, 55 High Street, Eognor.
Miss M. Hughes, 25 St. Andrew's Road, Liverpool.

To the next twenty-five books have been forwarded.

Emily Cramphorn, 4 Wellington Road, Wanstead, N.E.
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A RASH VOW.

Charles Riguelet had been left an orphan in early childhood, and had been brought up by his uncle, the curé of the parish, who had educated and destined him for the priesthood. The gentle, generous old man stripped himself of all he possessed to help his poor people, and died when Charles was nearly twenty, leaving him nothing but his blessing and his books.

The young man was exempt from military service in view of his future calling, and for some months time hung very heavily on his hands. He felt he had no real vocation for the priesthood, but then he had neither money nor influence to help him in any other career.

On fine evenings he was in the habit of walking out to Croissey and climbing up into the branches of an old yew-tree, where he used to dream impossible dreams and watch the setting sun, with its thousand gorgeous tints lighting up the surrounding country.

One night, just as the moon was rising, he heard voices beneath him, and his ear caught the words: "The last time!" uttered in tearful tones by a woman's voice.

Her sobs were audible, and then he heard a man say tenderly:

"Courage, Louise, my dear one, the time will soon pass. Be brave."

"But it's a shame!" cried a clear young voice indignantly. "They have no right to take you away from us! Eugène, why did you not tell them that you were just going to be married, and had a young sister to keep?"

"I am afraid, Christine, that would not have done much good. You see, until I *am* married they will not regard me as a family man, and it is our duty to sacrifice ourselves for the good of our country."

"And they'll send you away to some horrid climate where you'll die of fever, like Piérre and Etienne last year!" sobbed the girl.

"My little sister, you know I would have done anything I could in honour to have stayed with you and Louise, but the only way of escape I could have found was by providing a substitute, and that you know was impossible with our straitened means."

"Louise and I would have sold all our trinkets and everything nice we had."

"I know you would," interrupted her brother, "but that would not have brought in nearly enough."

"Then I will sell myself!" cried Christine recklessly. "I am young, and they say not bad-looking, and I swear on this cross which contains our mother's hair, that if any man will take your place, I will marry him when he comes back!"

"Child, child, you are over-wrought and don't know what you are saying! Thank Heaven there is no one to hear you!" said Eugène, stroking her cheek and looking nervously round.

Charles Riguelet felt distinctly uncomfortable, but it was too late to acquaint them of his presence. He could not, however, resist the temptation of looking down to see the face of this devoted sister.

The lovers were standing close together, and Christine was facing them with flashing eyes and the little gold cross raised in her right hand so that it glittered in the moonlight.

Her brother and Louise seemed to be reasoning with her in a low tone, and after a few minutes conversation they all turned to go.

Riguelet could just see the knot of ribbon and the fatal number in the young man's hat as they passed beneath him.

A couple of hours later, when Eugène and his sister were pretending to eat their last meal together, and Louise was sitting beside him with tearless eyes and a drawn, strained look upon her pretty face, there came a sharp knock at the door which made them all start and look fearfully at one another.

"Come in!" said Eugène, pulling himself together.

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The door opened and showed an old sergeant, who asked in a gruff voice:

"Are you the conscript Livon?"

"Yes, sergeant."

"Then that's for you," he said, throwing an official-looking letter on to the table.

Eugène took it up and opened it with trembling hands. He began to read it, first mechanically, then feverishly, and finally let it fall from his hands with a dazed and bewildered expression on his face.

It was a formal release from military service.

"But, how, what does it mean?" he stammered.

"Why it means that someone has come forward to serve in your place," said the sergeant. "But it's a pity to my thinking. It does a young man good to smell powder early in life! However, I expect you're glad enough, and someone else too," he added, with a sly look at Louise, who was clinging to her lover with a radiant face.

"Well, good-night," said the old man, moving towards the door. Then he suddenly remembered something, and turning round, asked:

"Where is Mademoiselle Christine Livon, your sister?"

"There she is," answered Eugène, pointing to the young girl who was devouring the contents of the precious document.

"That's for you, mam'selle," he said, throwing another letter on the table.

"You will stop and drink a glass of wine with us, sergeant? We must celebrate this joyful occasion," said Eugène cordially.

The old man accepted and sat down with them, while Louise busied herself about the duties of hostess which Christine seemed to have entirely forgotten. The old sergeant watched her light, deft movements and the taste with which she laid out the simple repast, and turning to the young man said jokingly:

"I admire your choice. You're better off here than you would be in barracks. Your health, young ladies!"

He raised his glass and looked first at Louise, then at Christine, but the girl was as pale as death, and the letter he had given her was crushed up in her right hand as she sat staring blankly at the table in front of her.

"What's the matter, Christine?" cried her brother anxiously. "The letter? Has anyone dared to annoy you?" and he took it quickly from the girl's unresisting hand.

"Read it aloud," she said in a hollow voice. He did so:

"Mademoiselle,—I am going to replace your brother, for you need him and I have no one to miss me, I am alone in the world. I saw your grief to-night and it went to my heart. I send you a ring that belonged to my mother, and the only condition I make is that, if you have any kindly feeling for me, you place the gold cross I saw in your hand in a nitch in the old yew-tree at Croissey, so that I may fetch it before I start to-morrow morning. If I live I will bring it back to you in three years, if not I will send it to you. Do you remember the vow you made upon it?

"Adieu."

"What does this mean?" said Eugène slowly. "Can't you throw any light upon it, sergeant?"

"Evidently someone overheard you talking, and he is playing the friend in need."

"But why did he not come forward and speak, like a man?"

"Oh, I dare say he felt shy, or perhaps he's romantic and thought he would make more impression this way," chuckled the old man. Eugène shook his head and frowned

"I can't accept such a substitute. I will not allow my sister to sacrifice herself to an utter stranger. I will come with you, now—let me just—" and he made as though he would tear the letter to pieces.

"Stop, Eugéne," cried Christine, waking up from her reverie at these words. "*I* accept him! Give me the letter, it is my affair. He makes no demand upon me, he is noble and generous, and I will send him the gold cross. I'm glad he didn't come himself," she said after a pause. "Have you seen him, sergeant?"

"Yes, for a minute or two."

"He's not lame or hump-backed or anything of that sort, is he?" she asked anxiously.

"My dear young lady, is the French army made up of such people?—such a one would not have been looked at for a second."

"But do you think he's nice?" she persisted.

"Yes, I should think so, very nice."

"Very well then," she said, detaching the cross from its chain, "will you put this where he can find it, and say no more to him, but keep your eye upon him and bring him back safely and tell me that he is a brave soldier."

The old sergeant's eyes were a trifle dim as he took the young girl's pledge of sisterly devotion and heard her pathetic words.

Eugène and Louise saw that it was no good reasoning with the wilful girl, and looked on in silence, trusting that the future would bring a way out of the difficulty.

When the three were alone again, Christine turned to Louise, and said with a grave smile:

"Now I am engaged too, and my pledge is with a soldier of France."

Eugène and Louise were married very soon after this, and Christine, who lived with them, seemed to have changed from a merry, romping child, into a grave, thoughtful maiden.

A year later the great war with Germany broke out, and Eugène had to go to the front; but this time, his wife and sister, like true French women, choked back their tears, and bade him God-speed with brave faces as he went forth to meet the invading force.

He escaped unhurt till the attack upon the village of Le Bourget, when he got separated from his fellows and was trying to hold his own against three stalwart Germans. His strength was failing when he heard a voice shout:

"Conscript, save your life for your wife and sister. Let me settle these fellows!" and with that a young officer dashed up and cut down two of his opponents. The next moment the officer's horse was shot under him, and, as he fell, the remaining German sprang forward bayonet in hand, but Eugène was too quick for him, and succeeded in disabling him before he reached the French officer.

This incident was the beginning of a strange and firm friendship between the two men. It seemed especially strong on the officer's side, and he found many opportunities of ameliorating the sufferings of his subordinate during the long and disastrous campaign.

When all was over, and the remnants of the French army were allowed to return to their homes, Eugène was greatly exercised in his mind as to how he could show his gratitude to his friend.

At last, learning that Lieutenant Riguelet had neither home nor friends to go to, he timidly suggested that he should share what remained to him and his wife. Louise and Christine had taken refuge in Bordeaux with an

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aunt of the former, and it was there that Eugène proposed to settle for the present.

Lieutenant Riguelet accepted the kindly offer most readily, and received a warm welcome from the wife and sister of the man he had so generously befriended.

It soon became evident that a powerful attraction drew him and Christine together, and in due course he asked Eugène for his sister's hand. He had decided to leave the army, and had been fortunate in obtaining an appointment in one of the large city firms of Bordeaux.

"Nothing would please me better," said Eugène, "but remember, my sister has not been brought up like you; she has not had much education, and you might find after a time that you had made a mistake, and if she ever guessed that it would break the poor child's heart, for I believe she is very fond of you."

Riguelet soon overruled these objections, and convinced Eugène that nothing could ever alter his love for Christine. "I have watched her with loving, jealous eyes," he said, "and I am determined that no other woman shall ever be my wife."

Eugène went to his sister and told her of his friend's offer. For a moment the girl's eyes shone with a happy light, and then her face became suddenly grave.

"But, Eugéne, I am not free, the three years have not passed yet," she faltered.

"My dear child, you surely don't think any more of that foolish escapade?"

"Of course I do. My word was given, and I consider myself bound by it till I am released by the return of the token."

"But suppose you never get it? Suppose he is dead?"

"Then he will send it to me, or I will mourn him as my betrothed. You should be the last to tempt me to slight him, Eugéne, for if he had not come forward in our hour of need, you might never have been married to Louise."

"Yes, that's true enough, but I can't bear for you to lose the love of a man like Riguelet for an unknown adventurer, who has perhaps forgotten all about you by this time."

He saw that his words pained her, and added gently:

"Perhaps you don't love Riguelet?"

"It is just because I *do* love him that I dare not contemplate the prospect of becoming his wife. It is so hard to keep my word now that I have met him, that I am afraid of myself!"

Seeing that further conversation only made her more miserable, Eugène left her and told his friend the whole story of his sister's rash vow and the weight she still attached to it. Riguelet listened without any sign of disappointment and merely asked to see Christine alone.

She received him with evident emotion and listened to his earnest pleadings with tears in her eyes and sorrow at her heart, but she remained true to her resolution.

"At least tell me if you could ever have loved me," he said, taking her hand in his.

"I do love you," she said, raising her eyes to his, "and it is because I love and honour you that I would not have your wife's name stained by a breach of faith."

"Thank Heaven!" he exclaimed. "I have won you for my very own! It was I who served in your brother's place and sent you that letter, but I would not redeem your promise till I was sure that you loved me."

She trembled violently, and her hand involuntarily sought the ring which she always wore on the chain round her neck.

"But the cross?" she murmured. "You were to bring it back."

"Unfortunately that is no longer in my possession," he said sadly. "One day before going into action I gave it to the old sergeant and charged him to return it to you. I had come to the conclusion that it would be unfair to claim your promise, and had I not met Eugène I should never have sought you out. As you have not received it I fear he must be dead."

Christine looked earnestly at him. His words and manner had every appearance of truth, but the disquieting thought oppressed her that Eugène, treating the whole thing as a joke, had persuaded Riguelet to play this part.

"You will think me hard and unbelieving," she said slowly, with evident effort, "but I dare not marry till I am released from my vow, either by the return of my pledge or the expiration of the three years."

He left her with mingled feelings of anger at her incredulity and admiration for her staunch adherence to her word.

The next day he left for Paris, where he tried in vain to get tidings of the sergeant, but all he could ascertain was that he had been severely wounded during the war, and had not been heard of since. With a heavy heart he set out on the return journey and arrived late at night at the bachelor abode he had hoped so soon to quit. On his table he found a note in Christine's writing. He tore it open and read the one word "Come."

She was waiting for him, and one glance at her face told him all was well. In her right hand she held the little gold cross.

"But how did you come by it?" he asked, when the joy of meeting had been eloquently, if silently expressed.

"The day after you left, a hospital nurse called to see me and gave me a small packet which she said she had promised a dying man to deliver into my hands. She had been looking for me for a long time and then traced me through inquiring about Eugène. I opened it and found the cross inclosed in a touching letter from the dear old sergeant. He has nothing but praise to say of you and hopes we may long be spared to each other."

The first journey the young people made after their marriage was to the old yew tree at Croissey.

Mary Fermor.

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By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE FIRST.

"The Ambitions of Youth."

SUMMARY.

The opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

CHAPTER III.

Calm Before Storm.

After that night the frenzy of the factions abated somewhat, though they still plotted against each other in secret, using every influence, honest or dishonest, to raise their own partizans to the places of public power.

But the balance of gain remained with the blues, so implacable was the hatred of the wilful Theodora to the green, the colour her father Acacius favoured so much that he had been the keeper of the beasts for it up to his death.

One day, when idling in the house, Proclus told his friend with great gusto of how his father had taken him, when quite a child, to the hippodrome, and Acacius had sent his three daughters—Theodora, Comito, and Anastasia—round the crowded ring to beg for largess; and how the green faction had treated them with contempt, the blue with pity.

"Little Comito, I well remember," said he, "she was better-looking than her sister, our present Empress, and but for falling into evil hands, would doubtless have captured the affections of Justinian for herself. But Theodora was the boldest of the three, and lost no opportunities, and she must have played her nets skilfully to have ensnared the nephew of Justin so completely that he made a fresh law to render their marriage legal, as all the world knows."

"And in three years she has forgotten her origin—or affects to have forgotten it—and has turned upon her father's friends," mused Rhesus.

"As your little charge, Eutasia, will some day forget you," rejoined the cynic.

"I trust not; I think not," said Rhesus. "She is of a better mind than that, I trow."

"You are a country youth yet, for all my teaching, Rhesus. Now, I have seen so many of these waifs and strays——"

"That you brand them all with the same degradation!" retorted Rhesus hotly. "A plague on city manners, if these be such! But I know your satire is skin-deep only, Proclus; that beneath it all you hope with me that the little maid may grow up better than the rest. It shall not be my fault if she does not."

"You might have a worse desire, a worse mission," said Proclus, "and if you are sincere in it, you must keep a careful watch on the doings of Marcen, and the attentions of that fiery young Hermiot who lost us the chariot race."

"That will I," said his friend.

And would have said more, but just then a soft hand closed over his mouth, and another over his eyes, and a merry voice cried:

"Say who, Rhesus; say who?"

Who, indeed, but the subject of their talk?

As Rhesus uttered her name, her warm arms slipped round his neck, and her red lips met on his forehead.

"Ah! I have heard some of your secrets!" she cried, in her gladsome voice. "You don't want me to grow up like the others—I don't want to!—I don't think I shall! You are jealous of Marcen and Hermiot—I don't like them a bit! There, Rhesus, you see I can understand a great deal more than you think, if I am only twelve and-a-half—though they say I look four years older!"

And she came and stood before him on tip-toes, to increase her little height. Proclus slipped out of the room while she spoke, and they heard him fingering the strings of his harp in the outer court.

"You are too precocious for one so young and fair," said Rhesus chidingly, stroking her sunny locks with an unsteady hand. "You should not listen to such talk."

"But I have listened, Rhesus," she answered merrily, "and I am glad I have, because I know now that you like me and will take care of me. I love you very much, and I was afraid you did not care for me. Now I am happy."

And with a sweet confidence in him that completed her conquest, she nestled to his side and looked into his eyes with those clear blue orbs of hers so intently, that he put up his hand to cover them, as in play. He felt somehow abashed before the gaze of those earnest eyes, the eyes of a waif of the circus; it seemed as though he were not worthy of the love of the pure soul that gazed through them. The charioteers and city idlers who haunted the hippodrome and the lower quarters of the palace did not live lives of the best kind, and Rhesus doubted his fitness, after some months of mixing with these roysterers, to take little Eutasia's happiness and destiny into his own keeping for ever. He never doubted, from the first, that she would agree, that her childish liking would develop into later love, that he would never find another fair to so encharm his heart. The only thing he doubted was his own worthiness; he was twenty-one and very philosophic—an Epicurean of the Epicureans.

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"I am glad you are happy, my sunny one," he said, stroking her soft cheeks and resolving to risk the hazard of following his desire, "and most glad that you like me so well. Will you promise me, 'Tasia, to let me call you my own, to be my little sweetheart—to marry me when you grow old enough?"

There was a child's amused pleasure in her laughing eyes as she promised gaily, a child's delight; and yet a strange light dawning there that was something more, and Rhesus felt, now that this soul was committed to his keeping, now that he had prejudiced this one sweet maid against all the world for his sake, something of manhood's responsibilities upon his young shoulders.

"So we are sweethearts indeed, now, little 'Tasia," he said, kissing her tenderly, "and you must let me come and take you out in the day and protect you from the rough gladiators of the arena, and I will see that old Sibron's wife takes care of you and dresses you well. And Proclus will be our friend always. You like him also, don't you, sunny one?"

"Yes. He is very cruel in his talk sometimes, but he is not cruel, really. I think I like him next to you, Rhesus. And next to him I like Marcen, who is so clever with his sword."

Awhile longer they talked, until the twilight shadows crept across the marble floor; and then Proclus came in and began to tease Eutasia so that the tears stood on her cheeks, and Rhesus had to intervene on her behalf, and tell his friend what they had agreed in his absence. Then, with a couple of sturdy slaves, they sent her to old Sibron's house.

Proclus laughed when she had gone, but at last confessed that Rhesus had done right, and promised to aid him to the utmost until she grew old enough to know her own mind.

"After that," said he. "I shall clear my hands of you."

So Rhesus won that little heart for his own, and thereafter the days glided by for him in continuous content in that city between the seas.

"You are too precocious for one so young and fair," said Rhesus.

Though he still wore the badge of green, and sometimes drove a chariot for the faction in the races, he thought more of Eutasia than of aught else.

Together with Proclus and some of the quieter folk of their acquaintance—for he had cried, "Enough!" to the gay life so gaily begun—they went to the various pleasure haunts round the city, to the many festivals, or voyaged up and down the narrow strait and by the verdant shores of the Euxine Sea.

The time passed very pleasantly for those wild and troubled years, and while plots and counter-plots seethed round them, and the fortunes of the factions rose and fell, and the exactions of the ministers and rebellious murmurs of the people grew apace, and the rumours of foreign war began to emanate from Court, Rhesus watched his sweet Eutasia upgrowing into a lovely girl on the verge of womanhood, her increasing beauty and charm giving still greater promise for a time of love's fulfilment. Year by year she grew in grace and loveliness, till all the gilded youth of the city were at her feet, and costly presents were daily left at Sibron's door.

Those the old curmudgeon kept for his own use, and guarded Eutasia well, and as for the girl herself, she never once wavered, never once failed in her childish promise. Hermiot, who was one of the most daring of her admirers, Rhesus had met and defeated in a duel, and Marcen had apparently taken the plain warning and so left her unmolested.

That heart was his, and his alone, and that knowledge kept Rhesus back from the easy ways of sin that the others trod, and made him a true man. For he grew in strength and, statue and skill, as she in beauty, and when he had reached and passed his four and twentieth year, he was one of the most sought after and idolised of the gladiators who pursued their calling for the love of it, rather than for the lust of gold.

And also, though that added not to his popularity, young Rhesus gathered round him a little band of believers in the gods of the olden time; a faithful few who still clung to the poetic traditions handed down from the sturdy generations who in their time had made Greece famous and Rome great.

These few friends—of whom Proclus was one, though for social reasons he kept much in the background—all wore the badge of green, and kept alive, by tongue and pen, the old religion in face of the overpowering wealth and influence of the Christian church. Even pretty Eutasia was made a proselyte, and that with little trouble.

So, knit together by the bonds of faith as well as love, their lives ran side by side like an idyll of Arcadia, and they gave no thought to the storm that was gathering round them and was so soon to break, wrecking their happiness, and parting their lives awhile.

At last, towards the end of the fourth year after his coming to Constantinople—the year of the great comet which, with long fiery tail sweeping to the north, had terrorised the superstitious for twenty days—Rhesus began to have forebodings, and to wish that he dare go back to his father's house in distant Sicily. But he dared not, so cold had been the only letter he had received since his leaving, and he saw that he must stay and face the danger. And the risk was not slight.

The power of the Emperor over public order was fast diminishing, robbery and violence ruled the night, and rioting was of daily occurrence, the weight of the taxes enforced by the unscrupulous minister, John of Cappadocia, bled the people to poverty, the fury of the rival factions revived and grew to madness, and outside the empire, Persia in the east and the Vandals in the west, menaced its existence.

And one night, as Rhesus and his friend were returning home—it was the festival of the Twelfth Night—they learnt that treachery and treason were afoot in high quarters, and that their own lives were in imminent peril.

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CHAPTER IV.

Under the Convent Wall.

Seeking the shelter of the shadows on their homeward way, the two friends were passing under the shade of the buttressed wall of the Convent of St. Conan, when Proclus, who was leading, put out his hand to stop the other and whispered:

"Stay! There are figures lurking in the gloom over there."

Rhesus joined him, and saw distinctly three forms, one dressed as a priest, behind a mullioned buttress not a dozen paces off. These did not known they were seen, for the moonlight was at the back of the watchers, and shone dimly reflected from the polished marble of a house across the deserted street, upon them.

"Do you know any of them, Rhesus?" asked Proclus, in a low whisper of expectation.

"Pallas and Venus! that I do!" answered the other, in as low a tone, as they flattened themselves against the wall, and slowly, taking steps sideways, moved forward without noise.

"That I do! One I can tell by his height and build to be Hermiot, who owes me a grudge for the thrashing I gave him; and the face of the second is the face of none other than our friend Marcen. As to the other, the priest, I know him not. Those two together are enough to make one feel that mischief is afloat!"

"Do you not know the third?" asked Proclus.

"By my faith, no."

"'Tis strange, my doughty charioteer. I know him at once, despite his clumsily-worn mandyas and cowl. 'Tis Hypatius, nephew of Anastasius, who was emperor before Justin. He favours our faction, but will pander to either or both to gain influence to help him to the purple. Let us listen; we must hear this pretty plot."

"Stay! There are figures lurking in the gloom over there."

By this time they had gained the other side of the stonework behind which the three stood, and every word was distinctly audible. Keeping silent as the grave, each with hand on sword, they waited, listening.

"Are you sure that we are at last alone and unwatched, Marcen?" asked Hypatius. "Methought I heard footsteps near."

"A plague on your fancies!" returned Marcen. "I am risking more than either of you, and I am willing to take the risk of being overheard. Proceed."

"Yes, proceed," said Hermiot. "If we are to act at all we must act quickly, if your friends, Marcen, should discover your contemplated change of colour. What will you promise us, Hypatius, if we raise the city in revolt against the Emperor and his unpopular ministers, and make you Emperor in his place?"

"What have I said?" asked Hypatius. "If you can do this—and you are both powerful—I will promise you almost anything. One of you shall be my chief general, the other my chief minister, after we have dethroned this upstart Dacian and his circus wife, and these two obnoxious ministers. But can you do this, think you, and yet take no account of Belisarius in your plans?"

"That is the question," said Hermiot. "He is a man of infinite resources, of unaccountable loyalty, and one who cannot be bought. With the gold you speak of, I will wager to buy the city, even to Procopius, his secretary, but Belisarius I could not."

"Then we must silence him in the way I mentioned," said Marcen. "Then there will be no more fear."

"Yet it seems hard," mused Hermiot, with a soldier's instinct. "He is a brave and true man, and Byzantium will feel his loss when the Persians and Sythians come."

"You grow sentimental," sneered Hypatius. "However, that is no matter. He must be removed. If not, you will not gain the guerdon you have hinted at as the price of your assistance to my scheme. He must go."

"As you will, then," returned the other. "And now for the details, and the whereabouts of this vast treasure which was buried and which you alone have found."

"Will you swear to me, by the holiest vows of the Church, that you will keep the knowledge secret; that you will not pilfer the store prematurely?" asked Hypatius doubtingly. "It is a treasure of such vastness that it will make your mouths water at the sight of it, so I have taken care to have my armed spies on watch at the place from whence access is obtained to it. Yet why should I tell you at all? Is not the word of the nephew of Anastasius enough?"

"No more than ours is enough," replied Marcen coldly

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He seized the unsuspecting man round the waist.

"If we help you at all, we must know that you can redeem your promise, if we take oaths on our part, you must let us see this gold with our own eyes. Say you not so, Hermiot?"

His companion assented, and in the brief silence that followed, Rhesus gripped his friend's hand tightly. Then the claimant to the throne went on:

"As you will. But first let me review the items of our plan so that we may understand each other fully; we may not have the chance to meet together without suspicion or hindrance before the day of the games. You, Marcen, will openly change your green badge for a blue one, and with the gold I shall give you, will buy over as many of your chief men as you can to the same change, hinting secretly that another Emperor may ere long be master of Eastern Rome. You, Hermiot, will sow the seeds of discontent amongst your party with the same means, working on the public dislike of the taxes, and in my name, when the day is near, you can promise anything. The fulfilment of such promises may be left to its own time. You will also have filled the palace with our paid revolutionaries, and put this foolish Belisarius out of the way—the waters of the Bosphorus run deep—by the ides of January, and if you are the men I take you for, the result is assured. I shall appear in the hippodrome with a band of armed followers, drag this Justinian from his seat, clothe myself in his purple, and trust to lavish gold and promises to catch the fancy of the crowd and of the hour. The greens will welcome the overthrow of one who favours their enemies, and the blues, knowing through you, Hermiot, that I favour them, will make no resistance. What the thunders of the hippodrome proclaim one day, the city will echo the next, and then, *Nika!* Wealth and wine and women for my friends; sword and noose and river for my foes!"

"And fame for me and for our armies!" said Hermiot with a soldier's enthusiasm.

"And power, and the fair one I desire!" said Marcen, "and the overthrow of that country youth, Rhesus, who thinks so much of himself and is so fond of airing his pagan notions. Neither he nor his keen-tongued friend will have time to sort themselves when once I get the reins of office in my hands. But this gold of yours, Hypatius—this gold on which success depends?"

"Is under your feet," said the rebel, "in the Hall of Waters."

The two plotters visibly started at that, and Proclus scarcely refrained from uttering a cry of surprise. Said the younger gladiator:

"It is in a safe place then, but a perilous one. Can you lead us to it now?"

"Assuredly, but one only at a time. You, Hermiot, must remain here to watch whilst I and Marcen go. The secret entrance to the flooded catacombs is not far from here. Then Marcen can watch whilst I take you. To be spied upon may mean death. Come, Marcen."

Rhesus would have started forward in pursuit then, but Proclus held him back.

"Wait," he whispered. "We must deal with Hermiot first."

As the pair of traitors disappeared round an angle in the frowning wall, Hermiot came out from the gloom and looked about him. Seeing that the road was clear, he retreated once more to the shadow and leant upon the buttress so near to the others that they could have touched him by reaching out their hands.

"Now—quick!" cried Proclus, "seize and bind the wretch before he can give the alarm! quick!"

And suiting the action to the word he sprang out, seized the unsuspecting man round the waist, and hurled him to the ground. Rhesus was ready with his green sash, which he wound tightly over the prisoner's mouth and eyes while Proclus held him; then they pinioned his arms behind his back, and raised him to his feet again, despite his struggles.

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Having wound another fold of cloth from his own garments round his feet, they left Hermiot and drew off where they could speak freely.

"It seems to me," said Proclus, "that we have here an excellent chance of one of two things. We can either make an end of this prisoner of ours and meet the others boldly when they return, telling them we know all, and will join them in the plot on condition that Hypatius openly favours our faction and entrusts the secret of his treasure to us, or we can go to Belisarius and give him word of the scheme and then, when the plotters are taken, go over to the blue faction and reap the advantages of our loyalty. We can either have a new Emperor predisposed in our favour, or we can gain the goodwill of Justinian, or what is better, the approval of Theodora herself. Which say you, friend Rhesus?"

"I say," returned he hotly "that I will neither go back upon my friends nor lift a finger to help a weak-kneed, cunning, revengeful wretch like Hypatius upon the throne. I am no favourer of Justinian, as you know, but I prefer an open antagonist to a treacherous partizan."

"I am with you," answered Proclus, "but what shall we do? Would you see Belisarius assassinated—the only man in Constantinople, besides yourself, for whom I have any respect—for want of a word? And are you prepared to risk the loss of your Eutasia to this Marcen—for it was she whom he meant when he spoke of his reward—and perhaps the loss of your life as well? I have no mind, for all the tenets of the Stoics, to end my days just yet!"

"I think I see a way," replied Rhesus. "A better way than turning common murderers and slaying them all. You are about the same height and build as this fellow, and if you pulled the cloak a little closer round your face and exchanged your green sash for his blue one, I don't think the others would know you in this light. If they do not, you can take his place and find where this wealth is, and the rest will be easy. Belisarius can be warned secretly, and when we have removed the gold to a hiding-place of our own, *we* shall hold the destiny of the empire in our hands."

"You are growing as cunning as the most experienced court spy," said Proclus admiringly. "But what shall we do with Hermiot?"

"He does not know us; he can divulge nothing," said Rhesus. "We will leave him where he is. Do you take his place now and play your part well, and we shall call this adventure a lucky one. Hasten, I hear someone coming!"

He hurriedly slipped the blue sash from the prisoner, and Proclus wound it round him and took up Hermiot's position, whilst Rhesus shrank back into the shadow and crouched there over the captive, dagger in hand. The oncomers were only a party of drunken revellers reeling home—with more than one severely-garbed monk amongst them—and the two breathed more freely, yet scarcely were they lost to view than the two conspirators came in sight, and with due caution, rejoined Proclus. He played the part of Hermiot well, and presently Rhesus saw him depart with Hypatius, Marcen remaining behind.

The watcher kept absolutely still, though his limbs were cold with the cramped position, not daring to move now the moonlight was growing clearer, and he caught several words that Marcen muttered to himself.

"*Jesu Christi!* It is the ransom of a king! If it were all mine! And why not? only those three know of it—could get rid of them all on the day of the games—and then there would be pretty, wilful Eutasia for my own, if she *has* rejected me—the little witch! if she *has* preferred that callow youth Rhesus."

He relapsed into reverie, and all was still again.

After a spell of silence Marcen suddenly drew his body erect and took a step forward, muttering again. Letting his blade rest on his captive's cheek to keep before him the necessity of silence, Rhesus leant forward, straining his ears to listen, and what he heard altered all his plans at once.

"Why not now; why delay? There could be no safer way; none more certain—and then the gold will be mine—and Eustasia—and—who knows?—perchance the purple robe and the crown. It only needs the barring of a door."

And as Rhesus started forward, Marcen stole softly but swiftly out of the shadow into the light, and then into the shadow again round the angle of the wall where the others had disappeared, and for a moment there shone the gleam of a dagger in his hand.

Rhesus had no time for reflection, his friend was in the Hall of Waters, in the guise of Hermiot, with the pre-

He fumbled with his fingers upon a little postern door.

tender: and this traitor was going to bar their way out and leave them there to die.

Thinking no more of the real Hermiot, who lay quite still, he, too, ran lightly and quickly round the buttress and under the frowning masonry as close behind the dim figure of Marcen as he safely could, and presently was pursuing him through the gloom of a narrow avenue between two high walls. At the further end of this ghostly avenue he stopped and fumbled with his fingers upon a little postern door set deeply in an embrasure of rough stone. Rhesus was behind, and quite close to him, as the door sprang back and he stepped into the inky darkness beyond.

(To be continued.)

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THE DOOR-KNOB.

WE came down from Circle City in December, because we were afraid of the climate.

We didn't care to face the keen winds that whistle about early in the year. Besides, we'd enough gold to last our time, if we were careful. Albert had his bag of nuggets packed with paper between them, and I had a trunk of them so heavy that I couldn't carry it. We drew our load on sledges.

It wasn't exactly safe to travel down from Circle City to the coast with your nuggets spread out like that, but Albert and I bundled the n up in rags as though they were cooking utensils and started out.

We were only going about fifteen miles together; on the other side of the plateau we were to separate and go our own ways.

I shall never forget how reluctantly we shook hands at the further end of the plateau; we were loth to part now that the minute had come for it. I remember we shook hands twice for the last time.

Scarcely had he gone fifty feet when I heard him shout:

"Remember, old boy, that you are to take the first right-hand path. Go along until you see a log-house up on the cliff, and then make a bee line for it. You're safe there."

Iceberg Inn was a resort well known to miners. It was kept by an old couple who tried their luck in the goldfields, but gave up to start the remunerative business of treating the miners well as they journeyed to and fro. As a half-way house Iceberg Inn was well known, and to its portals I was bound, for here could be found shelter and safety.

I could scarcely have gone the two miles when I was agreeably surprised to see the inn looming up on a cliff before me. It was a much shorter distance than Albert had given me to understand, but there it was with its rude front and its little windows nearly hidden behind the brushwood and trees that sheltered it from the north wind.

With a sigh of thankfulness I turned my sledge into the path that wound westward to the house, and began the work of pulling it steadily along the narrow way.

To my surprise, for Al had told me many tales of the hospitality of the inn, no one came out to welcome me; but I trudged on, thinking mine host of the inn must be asleep. As I drew nearer I was surprised to see all the shutters closed, and, although it was dark, not a light shone from any of the windows.

I stepped boldly up to the door and knocked.

No answer came, but from above there was a creaking sound of a shutter thrown open.

"Is this Iceberg Inn?" I called out.

For answer the voice at the window asked: "How many of you are there?"

"Only one man, but very tired and hungry. Come, hurry down and let me in."

There was a clattering sound, and in a minute the door was pulled cautiously open. Behind it stood an old man, and farther back crouched an old woman, a pistol in her hand.

"Don't shoot yet," I laughed, stepping into the room and hauling my hand sledge in after me, "because I've heard of you and I know enough to expect better treatment."

Still laughing I pulled off my coat and threw it on the floor, the old man meanwhile closing and carefully relocking the door.

"What do ye want?" he asked sourly.

"Want! Why I want to stay all night, the same as all the others have done, and perhaps a day or two longer."

The old couple looked at each other. "Suppose we let him," said the old woman, "but he'll have ter take things as he finds 'em."

That I had made a mistake in the place was now evident to me, but as the fire was warm within and the night bitter and cold without, I thought it best to stay. The house was safe enough—of that I had little doubt—and as for the feeble old couple, I had little to fear from them.

While I was engaged in my meditations and pulling off my heavy over-boots and wrappings, the old woman disappeared, leaving the old man to assist me.

"We can give ye supper and a bed; an' I don't suppose ye'll want any more than that," he said.

"Oh, no," I responded cheerfully, "and don't put yourself to any trouble. I'm used to roughing it."

At that moment the old woman reappeared and beckoned me into the kitchen. There upon the table, as though she had been expecting a guest, lay a plate, a dark-handled knife and fork and a cup.

"I see ye coming," said she, "an' I know'd ye was coming here, the same as all the others."

The expression "same as all the others" as she uttered it, grated upon me, though I could not tell why.

As I finished eating, I leant back in my chair and took out a small pocket mirror. Lifting it to my eyes, to take a survey of my face, I was surprised to see in its reflection the old couple bending over something in the front room; and turning the glass the better to see, I was astonished to find that it was my sledge. They

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were examining it. They had pulled off its coverings and were bending over the leather trunk, tapping it with anxious fingers and listening as they tapped.

"Ho, ho," I said to myself, pocketing the glass, "I shall have to watch this old couple, as well as guard against outsiders."

At the first sound they rose quickly, and the old man stepped to the door with a candle. "Suppose ye'll want to go to bed pretty early," he said; "wife an' I made the room ready for yer."

As he spoke he pointed up a dark, narrow, ladder-like staircase, which evidently led to my sleeping quarters up above.

"Thanks," said I, "I will turn in now; and, by the way," I added, as if it were an afterthought, "I will take my trunk up with me. I've got some things in it that I may want."

At this the old couple looked at each other.

"I'll unpack 'em fer yer," said the old dame quickly, "but I wouldn't take it up if I wuz you; the stairs is too narrow."

And too narrow they were. At first I tried to lift it on my shoulder. But I could not get though the low doorway, and finally giving it up, I rolled it end over end up the stairs, the old couple eyeing me evilly all the while.

"I am up safe," I called out, as, breathless, I arrived with it at the top of the stairs; "and as I see my room ahead of me, I will not trouble you any further to-night."

A minute later I was inside of the small square room, which occupied apparently the entire upper floor, and had bolted the door behind me.

The room, as I took a quick survey of it by the light of the open shutter, was a square one, devoid of furniture except a rude bedstead and one chair. There was no provision for washing in the morning, nor, that I could see, was there a lamp or candle.

I felt in my baggage for a candle, but the last piece was gone.

"I'll have to venture down," I said to myself, "for I don't propose to be without a light."

As I stepped to the narrow staircase, some instinct prompted me to go quietly. I crept down the stairs one by one until I stood on a level with the sitting-room.

There seated comfortably at a table in the middle of the floor were the old couple. A lamp was between them. As I paused to take a survey of them, I heard the old woman say:

"Did ye change the door-knob?"

"No; he got upstairs too quick for me."

A sound ma le the old woman turn round.

"What do ye want?" she snapped at me.

"Could you give me a light?" I said.

"Certainly," said she, springing to her feet; "an' I'll take it up fer ye."

She sprang up the staircase in front of me, showing remarkable agility for one so feeble; and by the time I had regained the top she was coming out of my room, while within flickered the light of a sputtering candle.

A few minutes later, with bolted door, I sat in my little quarters looking round. That there was a rough night before me I felt pretty certain; but how, and in what form, the trouble would come, I could only conjecture.

At this instant my eye chanced to fall upon the door-knob, and for a minute I sat and gazed at it in wonder. I could have sworn that it had moved. No, there it was, secure in its panel, with the bolt drawn below it.

I stepped over to inspect it. There was a whispering sound, and, bending my ear, I was positive it came from the next panel.

There was evidently a watch upon my movements.

I walked noisily to the table and blew out the candle. Then I crept back to the door, and silently turning the knob, I threw the door open, expecting to stand face to face with the old couple.

To my surprise a rush of air swept into the room, almost wresting the door-knob from my fingers. Cautiously peering out, I was horrified to see below me, not the winding staircase, but a steep cliff with an abyss below.

The whole thing was plain to me at once.

The house stood upon a bluff over the cliff, with the second story projecting slightly over the first. By opening this, the false door, I should walk out into space, and be dashed to pieces on the rocks three hundred feet below, leaving my trunk and bag of nuggets in the hands of the rascally old couple. A more fiendish scheme had never been devised even in this region of lawlessness.

But how had the door-knob been changed?

Undoubtedly during my absence downstairs, when the old woman had preceded me to my room. I felt softly along the wall. Yes, there was the hole out of which the old knob had been screwed. This hole then was in the real door—and behind it mine host and hostess were listening.

In an instant my mind was made up. I must pretend to fall.

Lifting my trunk to my shoulder I carried it softly to the false door, then fumbling at the knob, I opened it noisily, and in a minute my precious trunk went crashing to the rocks below. I counted, and it was nearly a minute before I heard it strike. Then it went bounding and bounding downward.

"Safer there than here," I thought.

Scarcely had I time to put my hand upon my pistol than I heard a prying in the wall, and in a second a hand came through and slid back the bolt. Then the door opened.

"He opened it sooner than we thought," cackled the old woman.

"Yes, his fine quarters didn't suit him. Wanted ter ask for something better, I expect."

He got no further, for with the butt of my pistol I felled him to the floor.

With a shriek the old woman bounded upon me, but I sprang past her and down the stairs, taking them at a jump.

At the door I fumbled a minute with the lock, and she was nearly upon me again, but I escaped into the night bareheaded and breathless, but without the stain of woman's blood upon my hands.

It was noon the next day before I overtook Al on the other side of the plateau, for I had to retrace my path of the night before; but worn and spent, I staggered into Camp Brill as he was leaving.

They act hastily Klondyke way, and by night, with teams and rifles, we were back for a raid upon the inn, only to find our old birds had flown. Whither, we knew not.

But we got the treasure all right, lowering each other by ropes to the rocks below until the nuggets by actual count were all found.

But it will be many a day before I forget that night on the cliff.

LOUIS ALDEN.

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Reading His Character.

"WELL, I must say good night, I suppose, Susie?"

"Good night, Ned!" she said, promptly holding out her hand.

"Oh, I say!" shaking it forlornly, "aren't you going to tell me it isn't late, or something like that?"

Susie coolly walked towards the door, while she theorised aloud.

"What a lot of character there is in hands, even in the way they shake!"

"You may be sure of that! When they shake it's a pretty bad case of boo——!"

"Ned, please don't be vulgar! You know exactly what I mean. I have been studying hands lately, and——"

"Whose hands?"

"And I find they are very reliable guides to character. The way you shake hands shows you to be nervous, self-willed, irritable and obstinate."

"Great Scott! Susie, I am nothing of the sort!"

"Oh, there is no use denying it. When one has studied palmistry——"

"Palmistry! What nonsense! Why, Susie, you are too pretty to take up that fad."

"Pretty! What has that to do with it?"

"Everything. It is generally the homely and antiquated girls who study it."

"How absurd! Why not the pretty ones study the science?"

He, seeing a grand chance of prolonging his stay, sat down again, and said doggedly:

"Don't call it a science. What's the use of learning the stuff?"

"Why, wouldn't you like to know a good hand when you see it?"

"I do, and I can play it well. If you could teach me to know a good hand when I couldn't see it, the lesson would prove of value."

"It's no use talking to you, I see."

"Oh, yes, it is. Come, tell me all about the mysterious science. How do you go to work? Do you have to have a photograph of the hand?"

"Photograph? No. I study the hand itself. I hold it so that a good light——"

"You hold it, do you? Susie, read my hand, won't you, please?"

He opened that strong, white member, and placed it alluringly, palm upward, under the rays of the lamp.

"I hardly like to. You don't believe in it."

"A fine chance, then, for you to make a convert of me by reading my character correctly."

She sat down and took his hand. It trembled a little in her clasp, but she did not notice it because she was saying, smilingly:

"We have been friends so long that I think I must know your character pretty thoroughly already."

"This is the opportunity of your life, then, to find out a few things you didn't suspect?"

"Oh, Ned! Here's a terrible sign!"

"What's the matter?"

"Your palm is longer than your fingers."

"Doesn't hurt, I assure you."

"It does! It hurts dreadfully! It is a sign of brutality."

"Get a better light on it," he urged, edging up closer.

"But there is a slightly counteracting value in the largeness of the thumb, and in the unlined mount of Mars."

"You don't say so? What does all this show?"

"That you can keep command of yourself, even under great provocation."

"Well, that's true, at all events," he muttered between his teeth, and the strong hand trembled.

"Dear, dear, dear!"

"What is it now?"

"Obstinacy and bad temper."

"Where?"

"In the broad part of your thumb."

"Well, so long as I keep them there, no harm's done."

"Let me look at the quadrangle. Oh, good! It's nice, broad, smooth and well defined. That means loyalty, Ned; the noblest quality a man can have. I am so glad you have it!"

In her pretty earnestness she clasped his hand in both of hers and talked deliciously straight into his eyes.

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Passionate words rushed to his lips, but before he had a chance to speak them she gave a little scream of dismay and turned the back of his hand to the light.

"Look at that!" she commanded. "Fickleness!"

"What shows it?"

"That," pointing with dainty horror to the few remaining hairs.

"Why, Susie, that doesn't mean anything at all. All men's hands are like that."

"It simply proves what I say. All men are fickle. I thought you might be an exception. But you are not."

"Go on," he said resignedly, turning his palm again to the light.

"Do you see that? That means conjugal misery, and lots of it, because it's a long, long line."

With interested pity she traced it with her soft forefinger, and the caressing touch sent an answering thrill from his toes to his hair roots.

"Do that again," he whispered, "that's perfectly delicious!"

"Delicious? A life of conjugal misery?"

"Deplorable. Perfectly deplorable. But do it again, to be sure you haven't made a mistake."

"No mistake; and if I read things twice I'll never be finished. Aunt Mary will be calling to me from over the banisters. Where was I? Oh, yes. Here's another long one—the line of the heart. That means jealousy of the most pronounced and unreasoning type."

"Look here, Susie, if there is a particle of good in my hand, I wish you would make a strong effort to find it."

"But that scream shows that you have found another unfavourable sign. What is it this time?"

"Do you see this bump? It's the mount of the moon. See the cross on it? That means—I hate to say it, Ned, but I must—it means that you are a l—that you tell lies, Ned!"

"I do not!"

"Oh you must! I believe now that it was you who sent those lovely flowers, though you swore not. Now didn't you?"

"Why—why——"

"And I firmly believe it was you gave all my poor people money, though when asked about it you said that you wouldn't give beggars a 'brass farthing'—those were your very words. I see by your face that I am right. Oh, it makes me miserable to find that you fib. Why did you?"

"Because you would think me generous and thank me for it, when I was giving simply for your sake, for your dear——"

"Turn your hand over. I haven't half finished. Let me look for generosity. Yes, here it is in the triangle; but it's too large and shows audacity. And you have an island on the line of Saturn."

"Have I? What a possession! The only real estate I own."

"Don't be silly. An island is a loop, like this," and she drew a warm little ellipse on his palm. That was too much to stand; his hand closed passionately over the sybil's.

"Oh, don't, Ned! You interrupt in the most interesting part——"

"This is going to be very interesting, too," he promised.

"For that island means a hopeless, untold passion."

"It may be hopeless, but it shall not be untold. You saw many things in my hands, Susie, but you seem to have missed the only thing worth seeing—love. Love for you, little girl! Did you see it?"

"N—no, Ned. Besides, palmistry isn't fortune telling, it's character reading."

"But the only character I have is built upon my love for you. There. I have you in my arms now. Don't try to get away, you cannot. Did you see in my hand, darling, that we love each other and are going to get married? Oh, please be kind when you answer."

"I—I saw something about conjugal misery, Ned," laughing and crying hysterically.

"But you saw loyalty, too. And that is true. As sure as there is a Heaven I will be loyal to you! I am poor, and have nothing to offer but that and love. Will you trust to them, little girl?"

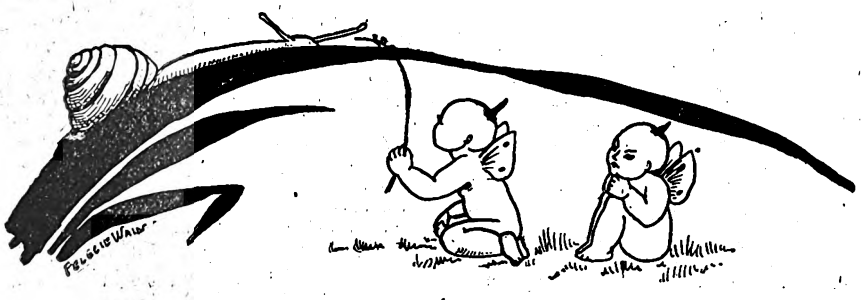
"Y—y—yes."

It was the merest whisper, but it was enough, and wafted them both out upon a sea of rapturous silence.

Finally she drew herself away, and with the charming perversity of a woman, who always belies her mood by her action, suggestively jammed his hat upon his head.

"Yes, little girl, I'm going. And you have converted me, after all. I now believe in palmistry—there's a great deal in it."

ALICE GARDINER.



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HER MOTHER'S DRESS.

THE sunshine was streaming into the rectory windows, where Ida Lynn's geraniums drank in its brightness, and Lilian Grove, from the great house on the hill, could not but own to herself that "love in a cottage" could be very beautiful.

Miss Grove was a belle, a petted favourite in society, and the rector's daughter was only a blue-eyed, simple-hearted little lass of eighteen.

The rector's daughter sat at her desk nibbling her penholder. She looked up in a second, smiling and gracious.

"Always busy," said Miss Grove. "I don't understand how you manage it."

"Oh, Lilian! I am so glad to see you," cried Ida. "I was just contriving about the charities for the poor."

"The poor," repeated Lilian. "I am tired of hearing of the poor. It seems to me that they are always wanting something."

"A very natural state of things, as you would soon find out if you were poor yourself," laughed Ida. "Oh, Lily, if I were only as rich as you!"

"What would you do?" inquired the heiress, yawning.

"I would give all the poor people something to make their hearts glad on the church dedication day; but I have only five shillings left after the household expenses are paid," she added with a sigh.

"How much would it take?" asked Miss Grove.

Ida's eyes brightened in anticipation of coming largesse.

"Ten pounds would be more than enough," she answered.

"I know how you can get it," said Lilian, surveying a tiny rip in her lavender kid glove.

"How?"

"I will give you ten pounds for that old lilac and silver brocade dress that was your mother's. I have taken a fancy to it. I want to have it made up again to wear to Mrs. Hawke's party."

"My only silk dress—the dress that mamma wore on her wedding-day! Oh, Lilian!" she uttered rather incoherently. "And I was going to wear it myself!"

And in the same second she remembered that Henry Mount was to be at the Hawkes' party.

"Oh!" said Miss Grove, "I thought you were really anxious about these people. And as I fancied the dress——"

"Stop, please, a minute, and let me think," pleaded Ida.

Was this all the benefit she had gained from her Bible studies, her father's sermons, her daily prayers? The dress was not honestly worth that amount, but if it pleased Lilian, there was nothing unfair about selling it. The trouble was that she had no other dress fit for the party, and no money to buy one—and she could not spend any of the ten pounds on herself, when she had said she wanted the money for the poor. And it was her mother's.

"I—I did not reflect. Yes, Lilian, you may have the dress."

"I should like it," said Lilian Grove. "And you are so young and so deliciously blonde, dear, that white muslin would be the very thing for you to wear. Get some——"

"You forget, Lilian," said Ida, with a faint smile, "that there are six children of us, and a new dress is by no means the every-day affair in our household that you seem to imagine it. Shall I get the dress at once?"

* * * * *

"But I thought little Ida Lynn was to be here, Susy?"

Mr. Mount eyed the gay assemblage over the plump, white shoulders of his married sister, the hostess.

"I am sure I invited her," said Mrs. Hawke carelessly. "I cannot compel people to come."

"Did she know I was to be here?"

"Of course, I told her so myself."

"It's very strange," said Mount reflectively. "I'd no idea she would try to avoid me. Why," with a start and a stare, "that is the very lilac and silver brocade that used to be in the old chest at the rectory garret when we were children. I can swear to it!" as the glistening ball dress floated past him in the waltz; "and how the dickens has that Grove girl managed to get hold of it?"

"I can tell you," said Miss Price. "I know how it happened, Mr. Mount. She bought it of Ida Lynn for ten pounds, and Ida isn't here just because she hadn't anything to wear, poor thing!"

"But—I beg your pardon, Miss Price, but all this is so incomprehensible to me. What could Miss Lynn want with ten pounds?"

"Why, that's the very cream of the story," said Miss Price. "I do think, Mr. Mount, that if Heaven lets angels walk about this every-day world, Ida Lynn is one! She wanted a little money to give presents to the poor folks that nobody thinks of or remembers; she remembers everyone, bless her dear heart; and so she sold her mother's dress to Lilian Grove."

"Lilian Grove would buy the eyes out of your head if she chose to take a fancy to them, and never thinks you have any feelings that money can't salve; and—why, dear me—where has that fellow vanished to? That's modern manners, is it? Humph!"

The second quadrille had hardly commenced in the stately rooms of the Hawke mansion, and little Ida Lynn had hardly turned the third page of her book, when Harry, her young brother, bounced into the room.

"Cinderella!" he cried. "Cinderella! The fairy prince is coming!"

"What on earth do you mean, Harry?" said Ida, looking up in surprise. But before he could answer Mr. Henry Mount stood before her, in full evening dress.

"I'm tired of Hawke House, Ida," said he, "and you shall be my party to-night."

When the rector, bald, benevolent, and near-sighted, came stumbling out of his study at ten o'clock, he found Ida looking into the fire, with carmine cheeks and eyes like glistening stars.

"Papa," said she, "I am very happy! Mr. Mount has asked me to marry him—and he is coming to see you to-morrow."

WINIFRED WOOD.

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The Professor's Joke.

"Well," began Harrowby, laying down his cigar and looking through the window at the rain that was falling in torrents, "did you ever know such weather? Did you ever see such a—such a—No, I won't say it!" And he picked up his cigar and threw himself into a chair.

"Isn't it raining?" asked Marsden, presumably for want of something to say.

"Of course it is," returned Welton savagely. "That's ancient history now, seeing that this is the fourth day we haven't been able to stir outside the door. Fine lot of sketches I shall get out of this trip!"

We four had been college chums. We had chosen different professions and had not seen much of one another since those days, but this year we had arranged to spend our holiday together as a treat. It was Marsden's idea, and we had succeeded in carrying out the arrangement. But we had scarcely got into our holiday quarters ere the rain began, and it didn't look like ceasing for a month.

Welton was an artist, Marsden a civil engineer and Harrowby a surgeon. All three had made a mark in their professions, but Harrowby was far ahead of us all, his studies in brain physiology and other kindred subjects having made quite a stir. I need not mention myself.

We were tired of card playing and various other methods of passing the time, so Marsden proposed story-telling, and set the example by relating how a bridge fell down just as he was about to test it—or after he had pronounced it quite safe, I forget which. It wasn't an exciting yarn. Then Welton told us how one of his pictures had been stolen—by some bad judge of art, I said. Then I told a very original incident about being nearly murdered and robbed in an inn on the Continent. But even that fell flat.

Then it was Harrowby's turn.

"I did have one exciting adventure in my early days," he remarked after a pause. "I have never mentioned it, because it makes me feel nervous even now. But I'll tell you about it as it's my turn."

He puffed away for about half a minute and then began.

"You know that I went to Leipsic to complete my studies under the great Sirdoff. I was provided with letters of introduction from some of the best men in London, and I did not lose any time in presenting myself to the great specialist. You can imagine that I was anxious to make the acquaintance of so celebrated a man.

"He was a man about seventy, white-haired, venerable, and with a look of gentle serenity on his face. He was quite benevolent in appearance; just the man you would trust at once and without hesitation."

"Died some few years ago, didn't he?" remarked Marsden, with his usual knowing shake of the head.

"He received me very kindly," continued Harrowby, paying no heed to the question. "I was soon at my ease and talking quite freely to him about my experiments. He seemed rather surprised at the extent of those experiments, and made many inquiries. I went back to my lodgings on very good terms with myself.

"For the next six months I worked steadily at my studies in brain physiology and other things, which you gentlemen don't know anything about, and, with the help of Professor Sirdoff, I made splendid progress.

"In my spare moments I continued my researches in connection with the medulla oblongata and its functions. That's the substance that connects the spinal cord with the brain. I had taken up that subject as a kind of hobby, but the more I went into it, the more convinced did I become that the current ideas were altogether erroneous. That was an irresistible inducement to go on.

"I did not mention this to Sirdoff, fearing that he might smile at my presumption. But one day, I was so preoccupied with a fresh experiment that I had half completed before visiting him, that he asked me whether anything was wrong. That led to my explaining what I had been doing.

"'No, Professor, there is nothing wrong,' I replied. 'but I was puzzling over an experiment. Some researches I have been making recently concerning the medulla oblongata, Professor,' I added in a sudden burst of confidence.

"He staggered as though struck, and I stepped forward to help him.

"'It is nothing,' he said, recovering himself quickly. 'It is a spasm. I suffer from my heart and sometimes swoon. But let me hear about your researches; have you done much?'

"I was quite grieved to think that he should suffer from an affection of the heart, and apparently a serious one, and was about to express my anxiety when he asked me—somewhat irritably I thought—to tell him about my investigations.

"I told him briefly what I had done. He seemed to take extraordinary interest in the work, and said that he must come to my rooms and see my laboratory—he might be able to help me.

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"A few weeks passed away and my researches had become absorbing. I felt that I was on the verge of a great discovery. I suppose it was my demeanour that made Sirdoff ask me how I was getting on. We had spoken very little on the subject and he had not paid his promised visit.

"'I must come and see you,' he said, without waiting for my reply. 'Will this evening be convenient? Very well. I will be with you at seven o'clock.'

"I was delighted, and intended to make grand preparations; but in my feverish anxiety I quite forgot all about it.

"It was autumn. I had worked until about five o'clock, but had not achieved the result for which I hoped. I was sitting in a chair, running through the notes I had made, when suddenly a modification of one experiment flashed across my mind. I jumped up as though I had received an electric shock, and went to work again.

"I usually make notes of all that I do. I write them out roughly on separate slips as I go on, and when the experiment is finished I make a fair copy of the formulæ in a little note-book. At that time I was using two note-books, one for the medulla, another for general things. I mention this, as it is important.

"I set to work again, and this time I was successful! I drew a long breath and pinched myself to see if I were really awake. Yes, it was true, and I had made a wonderful discovery! I was trembling to such an extent that I could scarcely make my usual notes.

"At the moment I heard the clock strike seven, and before I had recovered from my surprise at the flight of time, there came a knock at the door of my laboratory.

"I opened it, and beheld Sirdoff. The servant had told him that I was at the top of the house, in my laboratory, and he had found his way to it by a sort of instinct.

"'You look excited, my friend,' he remarked. 'What is it?'

"I took him gently by the arm and led him in, picturing to myself the old man's pleasure at my discovery. I did not tell him at once; I thought I would let him look about the place first.

"I had turned my back for a few seconds for some purpose, when I was startled by a hoarse cry. I turned and saw the Professor trembling like a leaf, his face as white as death. He was holding a sheet of paper. I rushed to his side.

"'My heart,' he gasped. 'The pain was dreadful just then!'

"I forced him into a chair and poured out some brandy, which, by good luck, I had in the room. He seemed better, but he declared that he must go home. I stated my intention of accompanying him, but he declined in the most positive fashion.

"'I will go alone,' he said decisively. 'You stop here; I can let myself out. It is my wish; I prefer it so.'

"Of course, I could not insist. He went out, and I heard him descending the stairs. Then I heard the street door shut.

"On the floor at my feet I noticed the sheet on which I had made my rough notes. I picked it up and proceeded to make a copy in my book.

"I slept very badly that night, owing to one thing and another. My discovery and its results disturbed my rest, I awoke with a start three or four times, and at last, out of patience, I determined to get up. I slipped on a dressing gown and went to my laboratory.

"Judge of my amazement on seeing a streak of light from under the door! I had a distinct recollection of having turned out the gas. Had I been walking in my sleep just before this?

"I put my hand on the handle of the door; it would not give. Someone was there and had shot the catch.

"I was about to throw myself against the door when it was opened quickly. Something dashed against me, knocking me over, and I heard the sound of a person tumbling rather than walking downstairs.

"I picked myself up and rushed after the intruder; but the front door was slammed before I reached the end of one flight of stairs.

"All the inmates were aroused. We searched the place, but nothing was missing, not even in my laboratory. I was thankful that I had taken all my notes into my bedroom. But what in the name of goodness did a thief expect to find in my laboratory?

"Early next morning came a kindly note from my master. He was not well enough to lecture, but he would be greatly pleased to see me at his house that afternoon. And he hoped that I would bring the notes I had made concerning my researches.

"I decided to accept the invitation, for I was anxious about his health and I wanted to tell him of my great discovery.

"I passed the morning in confirming the accuracy of my conclusions and found all was well. I was so excited that I ate scarcely any lunch, and I was half way on my journey to Professor Sirdoff's home before I discovered that I had actually forgotten the all-important note-book. I ran back, snatched it up from my experimenting table, placed it in my breast pocket for safety, and hurried off again.

"Sirdoff received me warmly. He looked pale and worn, but he said he was almost himself again. We were very soon talking about my researches, of course.

"'I have some news to tell you, Professor,' I said, hardly able to contain myself. 'I have discovered the true functions of the——'

"Crash! The glass which he was raising to his lips fell from his hand.

"I rang the bell for the servant, at his request. As I turned, I faced a mirror, and in that glass I saw the reflection of a face convulsed with malignant hatred. It was a sight such as I hope never to see again!

"I turned hurriedly, but the Professor was smiling blandly and benevolently. I began to think that my study had affected my brain.

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"'Let us go and smoke a cigar in my laboratory while the servant is removing the evidence of my clumsiness,' he said. 'Then you can tell me all about your wonderful discovery. For you know,' he added, 'so many have investigated that very point without result that it is just a little difficult to believe that you —so young—should have scored such a remarkable success.'

"I smiled in my pride as we descended a flight of stairs to the basement. The laboratory was in reality a cellar, which had been fitted up by Sirdoff for its present use. Everything was of the latest and most approved form; there were electric batteries of all sizes, instruments of——

"Never mind about the fitting," said Marsden. "Get on with the story."

"'You have brought your notes, I suppose?' inquired Sirdoff as we reached the door.

"'Yes, Professor,' I replied. 'You will find that the discovery is quite genuine when you read them.'

"We stepped inside, and I was surprised to notice that Sirdoff locked the door and put the key into his pocket. He showed me several of his treasures, and then, clapping me cordially on the shoulder, said:

"'Now, my dear boy, you shall sit upon this operating table and I will sit on this chair in front of you. You shall tell me what you have done. Up you go, that's it! Quite at home, as you say in your country, eh? Ha! ha! You look funny sitting up there!'

"I laughed too; but it seemed to me that there was something strained and unnatural about the Professor's laugh. I dismissed the idea; I put it down to fancy, and began to feel that I really had overworked myself and that my brain would suffer if I did not rest.

"'Let me see your note-book,' said Sirdoff.

"I handed it to him without a word. Hardly had I done so than I felt a shock and knew that a strong electric current was passing through me. All my strength was gone; I tried to struggle and cry out, but in vain.

"'Ha, ha, ha!' laughed the Professor as he threw the running noose of a cord round me and pinioned me. He had my arms and legs tied with surprising rapidity.

"I stared at him. What did it mean? Now I knew that my brain had not played me a trick; his face bore the same malignant expression that I had seen in the mirror.

"'Now, my young friend, you are aware that by pressing this knob I can send you into the next world—you are aware of that, eh? Well, that is what I am going to do with you! But first let me tell you why.'

"He switched off the current, and settled back in his chair.

"'You can listen more comfortably now,' he continued, with an evil smile. 'It's useless to shout; nobody will hear you. You baby-faced idiot! You English fool! Shall chance put into your hands the secret that I—*I*, Sirdoff!—have spent my life trying to discover? No! You shall never have the credit of that discovery! Can you guess who it was whom you surprised in your laboratory? Ha, ha! I wouldn't let you accompany me to the door! I shut the street door, but I was inside, and I stopped in the house till you were all in bed. You foiled me, and I arranged this little plan for getting possession of your notes.'

"He stopped for breath. What a demoniacal expression there was on his face. I could not help a slight shiver at the thought of the fate awaiting me. He saw the movement.

"'It is a pity that I have to kill you, but it cannot be helped,' he said. 'Had I obtained possession of your notes last night, your life would not have been sacrificed. I should have published the discovery as my own; had you claimed it, nobody would have believed you! Well, good-bye, my friend, I am about to press the knob.'

"I saw the movement of his hand and shut my eyes. It was all over with me.

"But something impelled him to open the note-book and look at what I had written before he completed his fiendish work. That saved my life. He read the notes eagerly at first; then he turned over the leaves and read here and there at random. Finally he put the book down, stood up and paced about the room.

"'You have discovered nothing!' he exclaimed in a tone of deep disappointment. 'Nothing! Your mind is wandering!'

"What did it all mean? I could not understand it; I was too bewildered. He cut the cord, and I jumped off the table, free once more.

"'You stood the test very well, my dear young friend,' he said with a smile. 'You must excuse an old man's joke. Ha, ha! Only a joke! Ha, ha!'

"I forced a laugh and said that I quite forgave him. I wanted to conciliate him till I could get away. As we went upstairs, I found out what had happened to the book. In my hurry, I had snatched up the wrong one.

"A few days later, I published my discovery. And on the day after its appearance, the newspapers announced that Professor Sirdoff had committed suicide."

G. DAY.

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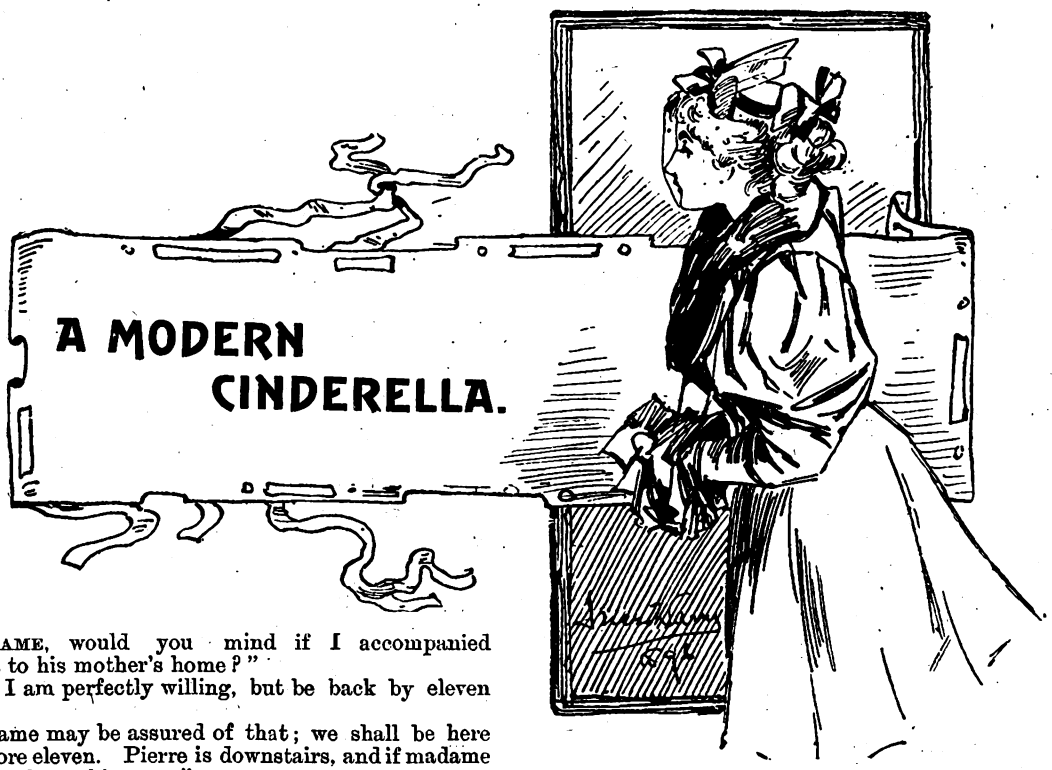

A MODERN CINDERELLA.

"MADAME, would you mind if I accompanied François to his mother's home?"

"No; I am perfectly willing, but be back by eleven o'clock."

"Madame may be assured of that; we shall be here long before eleven. Pierre is downstairs, and if madame should need anything——"

"All right; you may go, Mariette, and remember eleven o'clock."

The Countess of Laispare had left her château in the neighbourhood of Compeigne, and, leaving all her servants with the exception of her maid, whom she took with her to Trouville, intended to stay a few weeks in Paris—long enough to see all that was new and interesting—and amuse herself with whatever offered in the way of novelty.

Mariette, her maid, was delighted with the idea of the short sojourn in Paris, for she could see her *fiancé*, a brother of the janitor of the apartment in which they were stopping.

The Countess of Laispare, a pretty widow, was a trifle fatigued by a day spent in going from tailor to dressmaker, from dressmaker to milliner; she was stretched comfortably in a reclining chair, and her whole attention, after her maid's departure, was centred in the book she was reading.

The book was intensely interesting and she read on until midnight without noticing how quickly time was passing. The sound of the clock striking twelve aroused her.

"Is it possible? I had no idea it was so late. And where is Mariette?"

Sure that her maid had not yet returned, she passed out on the little balcony from her drawing room and began looking vainly for the figures of Mariette and François.

After a short time, as they did not appear, she began to feel anxious and a little irritated. In her impatience she struck her foot repeatedly against the iron railing of the balcony. And at this moment the heel of her slipper caught in the ironwork, the slipper was pulled from her foot, and, falling, just escaped the face of a late pedestrian who stood star-gazing beneath the balcony.

He uttered a startled exclamation and, stooping in amazement, he picked up the object, looked at it, turned it over, then carrying it to the street lamp examined it carefully.

His surprised look gave way to one of amused pleasure. In fact, the slipper completely eclipsed the legendary one of Cinderella. It was small enough for the foot of a child and made of black satin, embroidered with gold. The passer, feeling like a prince in the story, knew at once that the wearer of the slipper had a pretty foot and that the next thing to do was to find her.

"Well," he said to himself, "let's begin. This slipper didn't fall on my head from the sky; it came evidently from that lighted window. I thought I saw a figure there a moment ago. Well, then, here goes."

Concealed in the corner of the balcony, the Countess had watched the pantomime, feeling all the time a strong desire to laugh. The man, in approaching the light, had given her a chance to observe him minutely.

He appeared young and good-looking; in dress and bearing he was all that could be desired. The young Countess thought he had a very distinguished appearance, and so she felt not at all alarmed when he approached the door of the building and rang the bell.

As no one responded the first time, a second followed it, and then a third, prolonged, energetic and loud, which met with no greater success than the first two.

"He will awaken everyone in the house except that sleepy-headed *concierge*. What shall I do? I don't see anything but to go and open it myself."

And, accepting her part boldly, the Countess descended the stairs, blaming Mariette severely for having put her

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in such a position. Opening the door a crack, she said:

"A thousand apologies, monsieur, and please give it to me quickly."

But such haste was entirely contrary to the plans of M. de la Brière, the man who held the slipper.

"In truth, madame, I regret exceedingly not being able to grant your request, but the object which I have just found, is, I think, rather precious, and you will understand that I feel a certain responsibility. If the slipper is yours, it will, of course, fit you. Will you allow me to assure myself by the formality of trying it on?"

"Your conscience, monsieur, has a very keen edge, but as you are not satisfied in seeing me standing here on one foot, I suppose I must submit to the proof you ask for."

She seated herself in one of the large antique chairs in the hall, and, putting out her little foot, watched him as he gravely fitted the slipper upon it.

The instant it was on, the foot was withdrawn, and disappeared beneath her skirt, while Réné de la Brière arose, somewhat disconcerted.

The Countess of Laispare, standing on both feet this time, made him the most gracious and at the same time the most ironical of bows, and, opening the door wide, motioned the young man out with a gesture in which grace did not hide authority.

But at the moment when, decidedly chagrined and confused, Réné was about to obey the command, a loud report was heard a little distance from them.

The Countess, forgetting that it was the eve of July 14th, a day which all Paris celebrates with every kind of demonstration, thought only of the pistol shot and robbers.

Remembering that she was alone, she grew frightened and wished to keep with her the stranger whom she had already impressively dismissed.

Réné understood the situation in an instant, and, having quickly made up his mind as to the part he would play in the little drama, bowed profusely, and made as if to depart.

"Monsieur, did you not hear it?"

"Certainly, madame; it was a pistol shot."

"Then, there are thieves in the neighbourhood?"

"It is very probable, and now that I think of it, I remember observing a little while ago, a villainous-looking fellow prowling about."

"I heard no cry—"

"Perhaps the shot missed."

"Are you not running a risk by going out now?"

"No doubt, madame. But I do not see what else I can do. You have shown me clearly that my presence here is inopportune, and I do not wish to intrude."

"Really, monsieur, I am anxious on your account, and, to be frank, on my own also. My maid has not yet returned, and if I were not afraid of troubling you I would ask you to wait until she comes in."

Réné blessed his lucky stars and replied respectfully: "I am happy to do you so small a service."

The hall was lighted brightly, and they seated themselves in the big chairs. There was a moment's awkward pause, and then M. de la Brière mentioned his name and the Countess followed his example, which put them at their ease.

A literary man of great talent and merited reputation, a thorough man of the world, Réné was able to judge Countess Laispare at her true value, and the esteem he felt for her character as he knew it must be, was added to the profound admiration her beauty awakened in him. Graceful and pretty, she combined perfect regularity of feature with a mobility of expression, and in her clear eyes the depth of her nature revealed itself.

Learning that she was a widow, Réné ventured to ask her if, young and pretty as she was, she had never thought of marrying again. She responded with sudden sadness that her marriage had not made her happy; that her husband had not treated her with great kindness. Her illusions had been so utterly destroyed that she felt certain the only chance of happiness lay in keeping her liberty, full and entire.

Réné, under the spell of sudden enthusiasm, began to plead with ardour in a cause which he almost felt to be his own.

He tried to convince her how unjust she was in thus condemning beforehand any true love which might be offered to her, because her first choice had fallen upon a man incapable of appreciating his happiness and proving himself worthy of it.

He grew eloquent, animated, persuasive, and ended his pleading, so full of warmth, by saying:

"There exists an old Persian legend which places him who finds a woman's slipper for ever under the influence of its owner. I ask nothing better than to be allowed to fulfil the prophetic legend and remain all my life in the spell of the dainty slipper I found to-night."

And did the Countess allow herself to be convinced? Love and confidence work miracles. It is certain that when Mariette returned she was not scolded and her excuses were accepted in full. And later it was rumoured that the château near Compeigne had obtained a master.

AGNES CRAWFORD.

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MULTIPLICATION MADE EASY. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By H. VANE STOW, F.S.S., and H. T. EMERY. In this article there is explained, by means of some excellent photographs, an ingenious and entirely novel method of multiplication. So simple is it, that the product of two large numbers, such as 19 and 17, can be easily found by the most hopeless duffer at arithmetic, and the wonder is that this system of multiplication has never been thought of before.

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SNAKE-CHARMING. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By MARK LANE. Here are reproduced some extraordinary photographs of venomous snakes, curled peacefully round the neck, arms and legs of the most noted snake-charmer in the world, and even fondled by his little daughter. Such power over a snake would never have been thought possible were it not that the actual photographs, specially taken for this article, are reproduced.

AT THE SIGN OF THE "GOLDEN STAR." (Illustrated by E. F. Sherie.) By GEORGE GRIFFITH. This is an ingenious story of the illicit diamond traffic in South Africa, by Mr. George Griffith, whose stories of the I.D.B., which recently appeared in PEARSON'S MAGAZINE, were so deservedly popular.

NATURE'S PRACTICAL JOKES. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By R. BERTRAM. This feature embraces a marvellous collection of photographs of Nature's eccentricities, potatoes in human form, carrots like animals, natural wooden flowers, and many other strange and weird natural phenomena.

WOMEN WARRIORS. (Illustrated by H. Piffard.) By MARCUS TINDAL. Here you will find recorded the daring deeds of some of the bravest women of history, women who have courageously followed their husbands into the battle-field, and others who have clothed themselves in men's attire, and fought for their country with honour and bravery.

THE FINGER OF GOD. (Illustrated by J. A. Symington.) By WILLIAM BEATTY. This story is full of dramatic interest to the very last paragraph.

THE LAY FIGURE. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By AUSTIN FRYERS. This article, describing the many uses to which lay figures are put, by artists and others, is illustrated with the most amusing photographs of these human models taken in all sorts of grotesque attitudes.

A MAD GENIUS. (Illustrated with Photographs.) By ANNESLEY KENEALY. Confined in an asylum on the outskirts of London is one of the cleverest workmen who has ever lived. By special permission, our representative has been allowed to interview him and photograph some of his most wonderful mechanical triumphs. The interview and illustrations reproduced in this issue of the MAGAZINE together form a feature of extraordinary interest.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. No. XIII.—In Quarantine. (Illustrated by Stanley L. Wood.) By CUTCLIFFE HYNE. In this powerful story is narrated one of Captain Kettle's most characteristic adventures. No one should miss this, the first of a new series of stories of the plucky little Captain, who is certainly the most popular character, in fiction at the present moment.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. (Illustrated by Henry Mayer.) By W. L. ALDEN. Shoes, cyclometers and toys are amongst the worries of life which Mr. Alden so lightly and so deftly criticises in his most amusing *causerie*.

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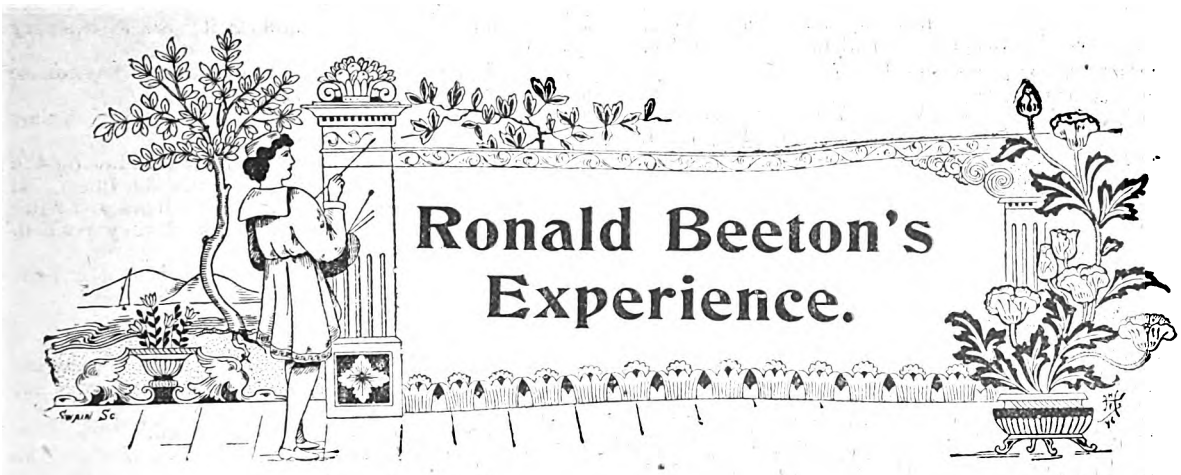

Ronald Beeton's Experience.

"I saw your wife this afternoon, Beeton—what a very pretty little creature she is—with Frank Audley."

"With Frank Audley?" echoed Beeton.

"And, look you," added his companion, in a lower tone of voice, "if that beautiful young girl were my wife, I shouldn't care about her going out so much with Frank Audley, though he is a second cousin. You know he's a reckless, devil-may-care sort of fellow, and people are beginning to talk."

"Are they?" Beeton's brow had grown black, and he bit his lip to keep back some strong, stormy emotion.

"You'll not be offended at my speaking so plainly, will you, Beeton? People will gossip, you know."

"Oh, no—I'm very much obliged to you for mentioning the matter. I'll take care they shall not gossip on the subject any longer."

His wife was sitting in her exquisitely appointed little drawing-room, turning the leaves of some new music, and humming the airs softly to herself in such a deliciously modulated voice that the very canaries in the window put their tiny golden heads on one side to listen.

She was a slender, delicately framed girl, with violet-grey eyes, and brown hair with auburn gleams dancing through its abundant folds; and as she sat there on a low velvet ottoman, in a dress of white muslin, with crimson roses in her bosom, she looked not unlike the fair creation of an artist's pencil.

"Ronald!" she exclaimed, glancing brightly up as her husband came into the room. "Surely you are home from the office earlier than usual to-night?"

"Earlier than you expected to see me, I suppose," he said, in strange, stifled accents, and then paused suddenly to pick something up from the carpet. "Whose glove is this?"

"Glove!" repeated Dora, leaning forward to take it from his hand. "Oh, it is Mr. Audley's! I suppose he has dropped it by mistake."

Beeton's cheek flushed purple; he set his teeth closely together. All the stormy impulses of his jealous, passionate nature seemed warring together in his breast.

"He has then honoured my poor house by his presence this afternoon," he said mockingly.

Dora looked up with wondering eyes.

"He came home from the matinée with me, about half an hour ago. See—here is some of that enchanting opera music he has just sent me."

Beeton snatched the scattered sheets from his wife's lap, tore them passionately into a score of pieces, and throwing them on the carpet, ground them under his heel.

"Ronald!" exclaimed Dora, shrinking back, while her face blanched with a nameless foreboding.

"That is the way I shall serve your very particular friend, Mr. Audley, the next time he shows his dastardly face within my door," hissed Beeton. "Beware, madam! This sort of thing has gone on quite long enough! I am not quite blind and deaf, although you seem to fancy I am!

"Now look here," he added, grasping her slender wrist until the bracelet cut into the flesh, "I may as well warn you first as last, that this unprincipled coquetry must come to an end!"

"Coquetry!" repeated Dora, with cheeks aflame, and eyes flashing with resentful sparkles. "Mr. Beeton, how dare you use that word to me—to your wife?"

He broke into such a torrent of angry invective and fierce vituperation that she shrank away like a hunted fawn, scarce believing that the man before her could be the husband whose love she had so blindly trusted.

"Ronald! spare me! Don't, for mercy's sake, speak to me so!"

He flung her hand away with a quick, passionate movement, and, hurling one last bitter sentence from his lips, strode from the room.

A moment afterwards she heard the hall door bang furiously.

* * * * *

The clock in some far-off church spire was striking eleven when Ronald Beeton slowly ascended the softly carpeted flight of stairs that led up to his drawing-room, and opened the door.

"I'm afraid I was too hard on Dora to-day," he thought. "I wish I hadn't said quite so much. The fact is, I've got such a wretched temper that it leads me into all sorts of scrapes. I must try to curb it a little more. Poor little dove—how frightened she was!"

As the door swung open, nothing but a dark, empty void struck his eye. All was shrouded in gloom, save one spot athwart the wall, where a faint glimmer of

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reflected light from the gas-lamp in the street below seemed to tremble through the surrounding obscurity.

"Dora! Dorie! Where are you?"

There was no reply.

"Pooh!" he ejaculated, trying to laugh off the chill feeling of apprehension which seemed to paralyze his nerves, "of course she's gone up to her own room to have a cry—that's what women always do when anything goes wrong."

And he sprang up the second flight, two steps at a time.

"Hallo!" he muttered, "this is strange—no lights here!"

He struck a match, and the next instant a brilliant stream of gas-light illumined the room.

But it was silent and empty. One of the drawers was left half open, with various articles of feminine apparel scattered about as if someone had searched through the drawers in blind haste.

Mr. Beeton jerked the bell-rope, his brain full of vague, undefined dread. Dora's maid answered the summons from an adjoining room—a sleepy damsel with her hair already twisted in curl-papers.

"Where is your mistress, Jennings?"

"Gone, sir. Didn't you know it?"

"Gone where?"

"I don't know, sir. I thought p'raps you'd sent for her, sir."

"When did she go?"

"Well, sir, 'twasn't long after you'd gone out this evening. I was going upstairs to get the laces and fine handkechers to do up, when I met her coming downstairs with her hat and things on. Her face was as white as a sheet, and she r n past me like a spirit! I dec'are, sir," went on the voluble Jennings. "It gave me such a turn I haven't got over it yet. I went to the parlour window, and saw her get into a carriage that was waitin' there, and then it drove away, and—Dear me, sir, are you ill?"

For Ronald Beeton had staggered back against the wall, pale as death, with a cold dew breaking out upon his lips.

"Did she leave no note—no message?"

"No, sir, I looked through the whole room. Do let me get you a glass of wine, sir."

Mr. Beeton shook his head, and motioned the girl to leave him; it seemed an imperative necessity that he should be alone to grapple with this terrible adversity that had come so suddenly upon him.

Gone!—fled away from him—the fair, gentle thing who had so leant on his love, and confided in his watchful care! Driven away by the storm of his ungoverned passion! It seemed too dreadful, too incredible to believe.

While he sat there, incapable as yet of forming any definite plan of action, a tap sounded softly at his door.

"I hope you'll excuse me, sir," said Jennings. "I told him you were engaged most particular, but he would come up."

"It's only I, Beeton," said Bewlay. "I'm in a desperate hurry to see Audley, and he isn't at his rooms, nor anywhere to be found, in fact. I thought perhaps he might be here this evening."

"I don't know," said Beeton, looking up with haggard face and bloodshot eyes. "I can't tell—I haven't seen him."

His head fell again upon his hands as the door closed behind Bewlay—his great grief seemed to close once more about him, weighing him, as it were, to the very ground.

Suddenly he sprang to his feet with a cry of passionate despair trembling on his lips:

"Audley gone! Dora gone! By all the furies, they have gone together!"

He was in the street, the cool night wind blowing the hair away from his heated brow, before the fancy had shaped itself into words—in the streets, blindly darting towards the Mansions where Frank Audley resided, heedless of everything.

"Mr. Audley—is he in?" he gasped of the hall-porter.

"Mr. Audley, sir. No, sir."

"Where is he? Quick! tell me!"

The man recoiled from Beeton's iron grasp upon his arm, beginning to fear that his interlocutor was not altogether sane.

"I don't know, sir; he didn't leave word."

Beeton leant against one of the walls and wiped the clammy perspiration from his forehead.

"Do you know where he has gone?"

"No, sir."

An agonised groan broke from Beeton's white lips as he turned away. No trace, no tidings of them.

Thus passed over his stricken head the first bitter night of loneliness and tribulation.

As he went slowly down the street the next morning, revolving in his mind the best method of instituting inquiries and obtaining some clue of the missing couple, he stumbled against someone coming in the opposite direction.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he said mechanically, and then as he looked up:

"Frank Audley!" broke from his lips.

"Why, you couldn't be more astonished to see me if I were risen from the dead!" laughed Audley, with the most perfect self-possession.

"My wife—Dora!" gasped Beeton.

"What's the matter? Is she ill?"

"No—that is—where is she?"

"I could not say, really," returned Audley, shrugging his shoulders. "I have not seen her since I escorted her home from the opera matinée, yesterday afternoon."

Beeton stared with a bewildered face at his companion.

"Tell me, where were you last night?"

"Last night? let me see. I dined with Lincoln, and we kept it up until after midnight. Then I went peaceably home to my rooms, and slept the sleep of the righteous!"

"Audley," said Beeton, in hurried, broken accents, "I have wronged you—I am sorry for it."

"Have you?" returned Audley good-humouredly. "I wasn't aware of it, but you have my pardon, all the same."

He was apparently about to question Beeton still further, but the latter gentleman had turned back, and was hurrying in an opposite direction once more.

"Poor fellow," soliloquized Frank. "I hope he isn't cracked; but it looks uncomfortably like it!"

Meanwhile Beeton was striding homeward, relieved, yet wretched still.

"She is as innocent as the daylight," he muttered. "I might have known that—my little girlish Dora—my soft-eyed bird! Yet all this makes my own folly plainer! I have lost her, and it has been through my own mad passion!"

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He went up to the desolate room where Dora's soft voice had made music so short a time ago, for he would fain have a moment or so of uninterrupted solitude to consider what steps it were best to decide upon next.

The morning sun was streaming on the odd patterns of the Persian carpet—the birds were singing shrilly in the windows, and a slight, delicate figure was standing in the middle of the room untying her bonnet-strings.

"Dora!"

"Did you think you had lost me, Ronald?" she said, smiling. "But it was very thoughtless of me to leave no word or note for you, dearest."

"My darling! my recovered treasure!" he stammered, holding her close to his heart, as if he feared that even then she would vanish into thin air. "You have forgiven my cruel words? You will forget their bitter sting?"

"I knew you could never have meant them, Ronald," she said fondly. "Then you were really frightened about your little runaway?"

"I cannot tell you how much the mere idea of losing you terrified me, darling," he said fervently. "But how did it happen? where have you been—why——"

One question at a time, sir," said Dora, laughingly holding up her finger to stem the torrent of inquiries. "I have had a fright, too, although not quite so baseless as yours."

"A fright, Dora?"

"Hush, sir, and let me tell my own story. You had hardly left the house last night when a telegram arrived, containing the briefly worded message that my mother was dying. I looked at my watch. It wanted just fifteen minutes from the starting time of the express train. I stopped a cab that was passing empty down the street, threw a few necessaries into my travelling bag, and just succeeded in catching the train."

"Well?"

"When I reached home I discovered that my mother had only been suffering from a sudden fit—that she was already nearly recovered, and you can easily imagine what a relief it was. So of course I took the earliest morning train back, and here I am."

She put up her pretty mouth to kiss him, as she spoke, with a childlike caress.

"And I fancied that my brutal words had driven you from me for ever!"

"You forget that I am your wife," she said with gentle dignity.

"My wife, whom I have at last learnt to prize as she deserves," he whispered tenderly.

"I shall never scold you again! Frank Audley may come here as often as he likes now."

"And you will promise to have no more spasms of jealousy?"

"I will promise never, never to doubt you again! The last twenty-four hours have taught me a lesson that I shall not soon forget!" ARTHUR VIVIAN.

FINDINGS ARE KEEPINGS.

TALKING of finding photographs, did you fellows ever hear about Kitson's romance? It happened in our freshman year.

I went over to his rooms that first evening after he was settled, and found him sitting in his big armchair before the fire. He jumped up quickly when I came in, and laid something slyly on the mantelpiece. It looked like a photograph, and I began to chaff him about being home-sick so soon, and asked if he were looking at mother's picture.

He flushed up quickly, and said it was nothing to be ashamed of if it had been his mother's picture, but that as it happened it was no such thing. Then he changed the subject and asked how I liked the room.

He was especially proud of his desk, which he had bought of the man who had occupied the rooms last.

"Thorne gave me the key himself, with his blessing, to-day," he said, "and when I asked if 'findings were keepings' he laughed and said I was welcome to whatever I found in the old ark, for he was pretty sure there was nothing in it."

"But you did find something after all?" I asked quickly, for though he is a good lawyer now, he never could keep a secret in those days.

"Oh, well, not much," he said carelessly; but I saw him glance toward the mantelpiece. I guessed in a minute what it was, and before he could stop me I sprang for the photograph at which he had been looking when I entered.

He jumped up angrily. "Give me that photograph!"

"Oh, ho! So it's a girl, is it? And a mighty pretty one, too. And her name is on the back—Rose Thorne."

Kitson had the picture by this time, and after putting it away in the desk turned upon me indignantly, and I dodged a Greek lexicon and cleared out.

It was one evening in early summer when one of the fellows—Goodrich—came running into my room out of breath with laughing, and threw himself into my chair.

"Oh, it's a rich joke about Kitson," he gasped at last; "it's the photograph he always carries about with him—'Rose Thorne'—oh, dear!" And he exploded again. "That picture—it's Thorne's own photo, taken last year in the theatricals. Here's a duplicate of it. I found it in Les'er's room to-day."

And he pulled out of his pocket another likeness of the fair Rose Thorne

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The joke was too good to keep. The idea of dignified old Kitson being in love with another fellow—a shaven and bewigged "Rose" blossoming on the Thorne tree!

"And he carried that thing in his waistcoat pocket next his heart!" roared Goodrich.

Then we concocted a fine scheme and waited for a chance to carry it out. At last the opportunity came.

We arranged one night for our meeting, and all the boys promised to be there. Well, that evening Harry was in his best mood. He had just finished his last examination and was feeling in good spirits at his prospects. He did the honours in grand style, and showed no signs of caring for any girl, let alone the photograph whose original he had never seen.

The boys began the game before long. Goodrich was the one to start it.

"I say, fellows," he called across the room, "don't you remember little Thorne? Yes, you do, at Adams' spread a year ago—little Rose in the red dress."

"Oh, yes," said another fellow, with a grin; "you mean the girl who took too much champagne——"

"And couldn't walk to the carriage," chimed in Eddy with his hoarse laugh. "I remember that, fellows; I carried her."

"She was more than a handful for Thorne, that little sister of his," said another.

And so they went on with their jokes about "Rosie," as they called her, each growing more personal in his hits, which were received with roars of laughter and assenting grins of delight.

Kitson was all the time sitting glum and quiet by the window, with his head bent in his hands, pulling fiercely at his pipe without a word.

Then Goodrich said suddenly:

"I say, fellows, how many of you have her picture? She only gives 'em to the ones she loves best. I got mine the night I took her to Marlow's for a little dinner after the theatre. How's that, Kitson? Is that the way you got yours?"

Harry jumped up quickly and stood facing Goodrich defiantly, with his eyes flashing.

"Oh, you've got it there, we know," went on Goodrich, tapping his breast pocket. "I've seen it; isn't it like this?"

And he pulled the duplicate out of his own pocket triumphantly.

But Goodrich overdid the thing—he always did. He was a coarse brute. He made some other remarks which were quite unnecessary for the purposes of our joke, and which we were all of us ashamed to hear, and then he stepped forward as if to grab the photograph out of Harry's pocket.

But Kitson was thoroughly waked up now. With a gesture he flung away his pipe and then, planting his big fist squarely between Goodrich's eyes, sent him tumbling back with a crash against the door.

"It's a lie; it's all a—lie," he said steadily and in a low tone. "She is Jack Thorne's sister, and I know she is a fine girl. I'm not ashamed to wear her photograph, but I won't take it out for you fellows to see. If any of the rest of you dare to say that Goodrich spoke the truth, let him step out and say it, and then I'll knock him down."

Just then there was a knock on the door, and in walked Mr. White, the proctor. He stood holding the door-knob in one hand and looking first at the crowd of us, then straight at Harry, who was still standing with his fists clenched, glaring down at Goodrich on the floor.

Of course, he wanted an explanation, and Kitson told him that Goodrich had insulted a lady, and showed the photograph. Mr. White looked at it; and then ordered Goodrich to go out and told Harry he did quite right. And not one of us tried to explain the joke, so we cut rather a poor figure.

Then turning to Harry again, he said pleasantly, as if nothing had happened:

"Mr. Kitson, there are a lady and gentleman waiting outside who would like to look at this room, if you are prepared to receive visitors now."

We all stood mute and awkward while the proctor, after receiving a puzzled, but gracious assent from Harry, turned and spoke to someone outside the door.

"Mr. Kitson," he said, re-entering, followed by the two strangers. "I think you have met Mr. Thorne before. He wished his sister to see his old college room. It is the first time she has ever been to the college. I assure you, Miss Thorne, it is not usually so noisy here. The boys were having a little fro ic to-night."

One by one we slunk silently out of the room, fixing our dazed eyes to the last upon the feminine counterpart of the unlucky photograph—a sweeter, far lovelier version of the handsome brother, by whose side she stood chatting graciously with Harry and looking coldly at us from under half-disdainful eyelids.

We all wondered, and wonder still, how much of that row she ever heard.

She had been studying abroad for the last three years, and now that she was home she wanted to see his old room, and had stumbled upon our joke.

No, it didn't get about the college. I don't know whether Harry himself ever quite understood it. You see, we naturally did not care to have it noised about much, for even Goodrich agreed that the joke wasn't exactly on Kitson.

Oh, yes, her name really was Rose. Thorne had written it on the photo because its resemblance to her was so perfect.

What's that? Of course he did. Harry always got whatever he tried for, in college and out! M. King.

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FARO says:—"I am sorry 'The Empress of the Earth' is finished. Are you going to let us have another war story soon? I hope so. Why not republish 'The Final War?' Many of us who read *Short Stories* did not read it in *Pearson's Weekly*."————I don't know, Faro, really, I don't know. To be candid I thought of letting war stories have a rest; then I get your letter and others of a similar kind. Suppose you and my other readers decide for me. Will you all send in a post-card saying whether you want a war story or not, and how many of you want "The Final War."

F. V. W.—Statistics prove that the most common cause of fires is the throwing down of lighted matches and other lights. The upsetting of lamps comes next. There are more fires in London during December than any other month.

I. N.—Justices of the Peace are appointed by the Lord Chancellor on the recommendation of the lord lieutenant of the county.

LOBSTER wants to know what it is that makes a negro's skin black?———The existence of a carbon pigment underlying the epidermis of the skin.

J. writes: "I am surprised to read that flints for guns are still made in this country. Do you know where they are produced?"————Gun flints are produced in the Lingheath Mines in Suffolk, and the output last year was 1,820,000. These flints are chiefly for guns intended for African and other savages, who, having been accustomed to flint locks for a long time, do not take kindly to more improved weapons. There are four sizes of flints now in use, and they are known as the musket, the carbine, the horse, and the single.

HAWK.—The entire coast line of the globe is about 136,000 miles.

D. S.—The electric light was invented in 1846, but it was not thought much of or made much use of before the year 1876.

C. P. H. asks: "Are the pigeons which frequent the various public buildings in London private property?"———Strictly speaking they belong to no one, although custom has enabled the officials attached to public buildings to lay claim to those birds which roost on their premises. It is believed that they were originally "strays" from private owners.

M. M. D.—A man's full mental power is not attained until the age of twenty-five. As a rule, the development of talent is most marked between the ages of thirty and forty-five.

A. P. T.—Moscow seems to hold the record for the largest hospital. It has one with accommodation for 7,000 persons and employs 900 nurses.

U. K. writes: "Is it really a fact that the late King of Spain is still unburied?"————Quite true. His body lies covered with a winding sheet on a marble slab in a vault of the Escurial. This is in accordance with a custom, dating from the year 700, for the body of a dead King to remain unburied until the death of his successor, when he is placed with great pomp beside the remains of his predecessors in the chapel of the Escurial.

BEN.—There are 169 Scotch mountains which have the prefix "Ben."

COAL.—The Home Office Return for last year will show you how we are using up our coal supply in the United Kingdom. 202,119,196 tons was the respectable quantity mined in 1897, which was an increase of 7,000,000 tons on the output for 1896.

R. M. writes to point out that man is the only animal that has a real nose or chin.————This is quite true, when you come to think about it. For horses have faces that are all noses, swine have snouts, elephants trunks, birds have beaks, lions have vast smelling organs, but none of them can be separated from their faces and called a nose. This fact is even more true of the chin, for it is particularly human.

CONSUL.—In the early days of Rome ladies wore such heavy ear-rings that they sometimes tore the lobes. Injuries to the ear were so numerous, that many doctors occupied themselves almost entirely with the healing of such injuries. The old idea that the wearing of ear-rings improves the sight, is nearly dead.

UNCLE.—The term "uncle," as applied to a pawnbroker, is a pun on the Latin word *uncus*, a hook. Pawnbrokers formerly employed a hook to lift the pawned articles, and the phrase was originally "Gone to the uncus." In the seventeenth century a usurer was called "my uncle" in the Walloon provinces, because, of his near connection with spendthrifts, which in Latin are *nepotes*, nephews.

M. R. A.—No, the Queen has never made use of the Royal Barges. They are in the care of Mr. Messenger of Teddington in his capacity of Queen's Bargemaster. These vessels are divided longitudinally by a gangway, the oarsmen sitting two on a seat on either side, as in the ancient Greek and Roman galleys.

HAIR.—A single dark-brown female hair will bear a weight of four ounces; a blonde hair will break under a strain of two and a half ounces.

G. T.—The cost of the celebrated Palace at Versailles is not known. It is said that Louis XIV. threw into the fire all the documents relating to the cost, so that the people should not hear of the vast sums he had spent on it.

VIOLET—The chrysantheum is the national flower of Japan. Once a year, when the chrysanthemum is in full flower, royalty gives a *fête* in its honour, invitations being only extended to those of high rank.

M. T.—Pembroke was a county palatine but was deprived of the title in 1535.

Q. R.—What are commonly called cats' whiskers are in reality feelers, which enable the animal in its wild state to find, or rather feel, its way through woods and forests in its nocturnal expeditions in search of prey. It is quite wrong to suppose they have anything to do with the sense of smell; they bear no relation whatever to the nasal organ.

B. B. B.—Photographs were first taken in England in 1802.

Notice to Competitors.

IN all Prize Competitions the Editor's decision is final. No correspondence will be entertained when once a competition is finished and the result published.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 497. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 9TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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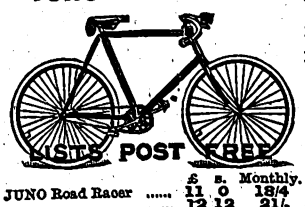

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SHORT STORIES

TALES OF LOVE WIT PATHOS HUMOUR STRATEGY ETC.

No. 497.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 9th, 1898.

A SCARE-CROW ROMANCE.

Edited by CARTHUR PEARSON

LESLIE FORREST went to bed a peaceful citizen and awoke a rebellious farmer. At first he knew nothing at all of the germ of war that slumbered under the ample folds of his yellow pyjamas. He lay in his bed reflecting, a letter in his hand, and his knees up-heaving the coverlet.

"Your Uncle James is dead and you are the heir to the Black Oaks farm," was all he had read of the letter. Visions of meadow and stream; of hillside cool beneath majestic trees; the grey of a lichen-covered wall, overgrown with brambles; the spacious house, outstretching arms of hospitality; and the curving path that skirted the ancient well on its way to the veteran gate, that never shut, came o'er his mind from long ago.

This mood was merely reminiscent, however, and not at all to be construed as a consent to become the owner of a farm.

"On the whole," he ruminated, scratching the top of his head, "the place is worth having, if only for a home—a sort of retreat; and then, if ever I should get married, well, let's see what the rest of it says."

He resumed his letter: "heir to the Black Oaks farm, including the Hilltop addition and a legacy of £5,000,

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providing you marry Abigail Matilda Smithers, a distant family connection. In the event of your refusal to wed the said lady, you to inherit the Black Oaks and she to have the Hilltop addition and legacy."

"Now, bother Abigail Smithereens!" ejaculated Forrest, bounding out of bed and sweeping away the coverlet, blankets and sheets. "It's perfectly idiotic. It's the kind of stuff and nonsense you read about. No, you don't, Uncle Jeems. She can have the Hilltop addition, and now, why on earth did he give her the whole of the cash? Five thou—I think I'd like—but, no, not with Abigail—no, Abby, go thy Smithers' ways, in peace and curl papers."

He danced the prelude of a marvellous serpentine gyration and sat down on the edge of the bed to think the matter over again. The rebellion was started and working well.

"Heigho," he mused, as with hands on his knees he looked with winkless eyes at the common design on the carpet. "It's just the luck—it always goes about that way; and just as a fellow is actually taking an interest in the loveliest girl in the universe, and begins to think he would like to settle down."

Here he grew as sentimental and retrospective as is possible to any man in pyjamas.

"Wasn't she charming!" he exclaimed in delight. "Such dear brown eyes! Such hair—it looked like—what?—like raven-coloured skeins of silk. Such colour, spirit and genius of expressing herself! And yet a touch of sadness, too. I wonder why she wouldn't dance—she said she liked it; well, perhaps we made better progress at getting acquainted as it was."

He was silent a moment.

"Miss Rockland—rather fine—I wonder what her first name is? And I don't know where she lives or anything about her—that's the trouble with a formal introduction at a seaside ball."

Slowly dressing himself in conventional attire, and fluctuating between rhapsodies on his unknown queen, and railing at Abigail, Forrest went off to his breakfast at last.

"I'll look the place over for a couple of weeks, and then I am going to hunt Miss Rockland up, or squander my youth and fortune in the effort," said he.

Three big crows were stalking about and cawing in a field that belonged to the Hilltop addition one morning, as Forrest came out of his farmhouse. He saw them out of the corners of his eyes, in the same way that he saw the woman who walked about the place from time to time. That Abigail would come to fetch him away, or that he might inadvertently wander down through the meadows into her possessions and there be trapped and wed in spite of himself, was a constant fear with Forrest.

Abigail, he reflected, looked aggressive, progressive, and acquisitive. She walked about her acres on the opposite hill with a certain surefootedness that was very suggestive, he thought.

On her head she wore a bonnet that looked like a piece of blue stove-pipe, and hid her face as if it were deep in a tunnel and peering forth. This and the calico dress, secured at the waist loosely, were exactly the "earmarks" of an Abigail, the young man said.

As he glanced at the crows this particular morning, he saw her come and frighten them away. They alighted in his field of oats.

"Tut, tut, Abby," he exclaimed, "I hanker not for crow!"

When she turned away, he went to the hill and shied a stone at the birds.

They settled again on the Hilltop property, whence, in half-an-hour, Abigail "shooed" them again to the field of her neighbour.

"Confound her impudence!" said Forrest. "I don't care now if she does see me, I am going right down to scare her saucy black scoundrels."

She was standing in her field with a very determined air.

"No, I don't care if she does see me," he repeated.

But perhaps he did; at least in that particular garb, for he donned a ragged coat, and a crumpled hat before he proceeded along the hill.

"Perhaps she won't be so anxious to get me if she thinks I'm a yokel," he mused.

But why should the spirit of Forrest be proud? The woman across the way was so very far from wanting to get him as to even avoid her own fields if she thought he was walking about in his. She trembled daily lest he come to her door or cross the meadows to pour a five-thousand-pound tale of love and adoration into her startled ears.

She had long before concluded, with every indication of logic, that she hated this person, suggested as he was in the will of her ancient distant relation, Uncle Jim, as a suitable future husband. And now to add further insult to the injury caused by his presence on the opposite farm, he drove his wretched crows into every field she had. This particular morning found her red, angry and determined; hence her obstinate stand against the birds.

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"Oh, ho, my Abby," chuckled Forrest, "you undertake to make a scare-crow of yourself, I see. Well, my doting Smithereens, I should very much enjoy removing my hat in acknowledgement of your eminent fitness—only I fear you'd think me proposing. But if you can be a scare-woman, I can be a scare-man, which same kindly remember."

He planted himself on the slope and the crows went off in dismay.

Thus stood the two, distantly glaring at each other, and telephoning messages of hatred along the filmy lines of web that spiders had stretched between.

"This will never do," mused Forrest. "I'll fetch a proxy; that'll make her wild."

Forthwith he proceeded to build a regulation scare-crow of masculine mien, that flapped its sleeves in the wind in a vacuous ecstasy.

Was Abigail disconcerted? No, not she. She caused to be erected a female scare-crow on the hill that was hers, with a bonnet on its head and a string about its slender unbending waist. It, too, waved its armless sleeves.

Now was a strange duet enacted, that was wrought by the breeze that wafted over the meadows and about the hills. Toying with the scare-crows from behind, the wind would lift the sleeves, first of the scare-woman, next of the man, and extend them towards each other, on the hills, in a shocking and palpable invitation to "come." If the breeze were strong it would lean the scare-man forward and nod his head in gallantry, and then go round and bend the woman sweetly and move her bonnet most coquettishly.

To say that the owners of the figures were indignant would be utterly inadequate; they were perfectly mad about it. They were also ashamed to pull the wooing figures down, for that would be, indeed, a confession that the spooning antics had been noticed.

At the end of the week the wind had loosened the joints of the scare-crows to such an extent that their frantic efforts to embrace across the intervening space were nearly equalled by their shameless bowing and scraping from morning till night.

Abigail meditated flight; Forrest thought of suicide and of slipping across in the night to inflict personal violence on the scare-woman with an axe.

"As soon as the hay is in," he muttered, "I'll get away from this and go to look for Miss Rockland."

Early one morning, while the various preliminaries of a thunderstorm were being completed, young Boreas, the blustering brother of Zephyr, came tearing along as a whirlwind that scudded hither and thither and up the hills and down. When he had gone, the landscape was utterly innocent of scare people, hats, bonnets and all.

Forrest was late upon the scene.

"Thank goodness," he said aloud, "the storm has pulled her scarecrow out by the roots." Then he added, as he took in the lay of the country: "Hallo! the confounded wind has levelled that Beau Brummel of mine."

He walked to the place where the Beau had flourished, and found a hole in the ground, wherein the leg of the scare-man once had been. From this a mark, as of something dragged across the dampened soil, indicated that the man of rags rested below in the hollow.

Down went Forrest. Coming at last to a little clearing, he leapt the brook—to find himself face to face with Abigail, who likewise sought her departed "crow."

"What! you!—Miss Rockland!" he cried.

"What! you! Mr. Leslie!" said she.

They stood a moment dumfounded.

"My name is Leslie Forrest," then said he, his face aglow with pleasant emotions.

"Oh! and mine is Abigail Matilda Rockland Smithers—but I—I sometimes leave out part of it," she said; and a merry twinkle began in her eyes and went all over her witching countenance.

Glancing towards the brook, in embarrassment perhaps, the two young people suddenly discovered the scare-man and the scare-woman, standing against the trees, an armless sleeve of the Beau flabbily wrapped about the lady's waist and her bonnet drooping coyly.

* * *

On the cards was written, "Mr. and Mrs. Leslie Forrest and Mr. and Mrs. Scare-crow, at home, Black Oaks, September 10th, 1897."

H. T. P.

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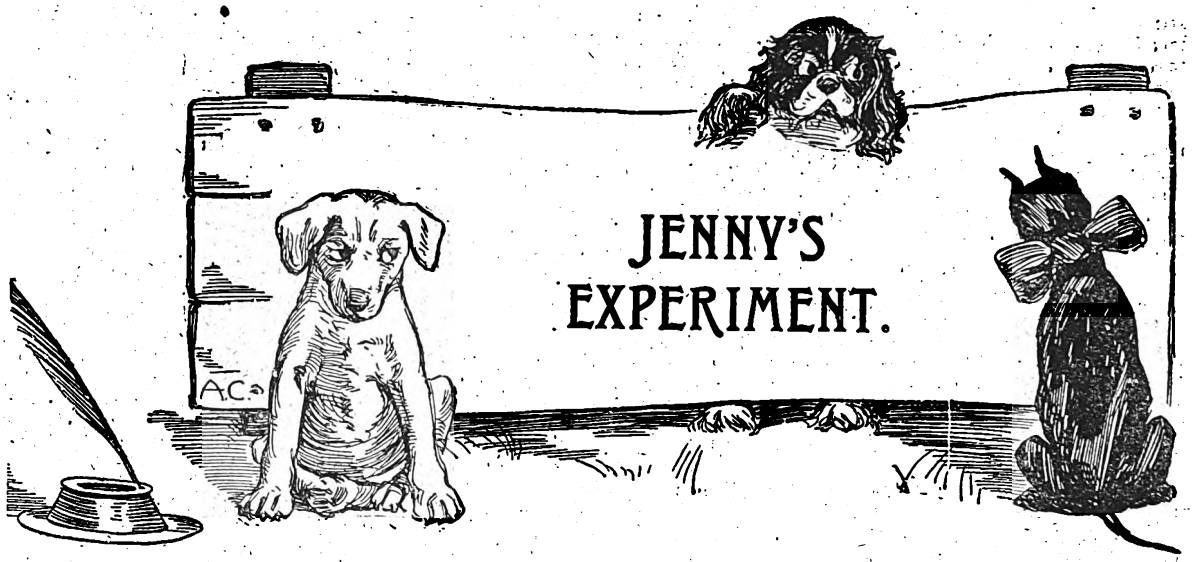

JENNY'S EXPERIMENT.

"I SHALL get along with him, I'm sure," said Jenny Read.

"Nobody could get along with him!" chorused the three other Misses Read.

Uncle Grant was the personage of whom they spoke—a crabbed, ill-tempered, little old man—who lived in a superb old country house in Derbyshire.

He had money to leave, but his nieces and nephews secretly believed that it would be much easier to go to Klondyke or West Australia and dig out fortunes, nugget by nugget, than to stay at home and earn them by making themselves acceptable to an old gentleman who had as many angles as a rose diamond, and as many prickly spikes (of temper) as a porcupine.

Lucy Read had tried it first. She was a soft-voiced, slender girl, with a head which reminded one of a drooping lily.

"No one can help loving Lucy," said Mrs. Read as she kissed her daughter good-bye.

But in three weeks Lucy came back half frightened out of her wits.

"He scolds so dreadfully," she said. "And he looked at me as the wolf must have looked at Little Red Riding Hood. Oh, mamma, I couldn't stay there, not if I were to be made richer than the Queen herself!"

Madge went next; but although a fine, tall girl, with a spirit of her own, she was cowed by Uncle Grant's savage eyes in less than a week.

"I'd sooner sweep a crossing for a living," said she, "than be uncle's heiress."

And so she came home without loss of time.

Amy, in no wise abashed by the successive failures of her sisters, was the third one to try the Grange and its possibilities. But she also succumbed before the terrible scourge of Uncle Grant's tongue.

"It's scold, scold, scold, from morning till night!" said Amy, as in a fortnight's time she tearfully related her experience to her parents.

"Oh, you don't know—nobody can know—what a dreadful man uncle is!"

"Oh, bother the old scamp!" said Mr. Read, who was of a free and easy nature, and thought his girls a great deal too sweet and nice to be snarled at by any rich old miser.

"Let him alone. My daughters needn't go begging for any man's money."

But here Jenny, the youngest, tallest and prettiest of the four girls, spoke up:

"I'll go!" said she.

"You don't know what you are undertaking," said Lucy, with a shudder.

"He'd wear out a stone," said Madge.

"He's a ghoul!" shuddered Amy.

"I shall get along with him, I am sure," said Jenny brightly.

And she packed up her little trunk and went to the Grange.

It was sunset when she walked up the flight of steps that led to the house.

Uncle Grant was standing at the top.

"So you are Jenny?" said he, surveying her with little twinkling eyes like glass beads.

"Yes, I am Jenny," said the bright-cheeked girl, giving him a kiss.

"You're late," said Uncle Grant.

"I am late," said Jenny. "I thought the wretched train never would have got here."

"It's a dreadfully warm day," growled Uncle Grant.

"I'm almost roasted," sighed Jenny.

"The whole summer has been intolerably warm," said the old gentleman.

"We might as well be in the tropics, and be done with it," retorted Jenny, flinging off her hat and fanning herself vehemently.

Uncle Grant gave her the keys that night, just as he had three times before given them to her three sisters.

"I shall expect you to take charge of the whole establishment," said he. "The servants are miserable——"

"No more than one might expect," interrupted Jenny, with a deprecatory motion of the hand. "Servants are no good at all now-a-days."

"And nothing goes right in this place."

"Nothing ever does!" said Jenny.

Uncle Grant eyed her furtively.

This was quite different from the determined cheerfulness and systematic good spirits of her sisters.

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At breakfast next morning Uncle Grant began to scold as usual.

"Fish again!" said he. "This makes four mornings this week we've had fish."

"I detest fish!" said Jenny, pushing away her plate with a grimace.

"And the rolls heavy again!" growled Uncle Grant, breaking one open.

"Please give me the plate, uncle," said Jenny as she rang the table bell sharply.

Mrs. Betts, the cook, a stout, good-humoured woman, made her appearance.

"Mrs. Betts," said Miss Read, "be so good as to throw these rolls out of the window."

The cook stared.

"Do you hear what I tell you?" said Miss Read with emphasis.

And Mrs. Betts flung the rolls out among the rose-bushes, where they were speedily devoured by Cato, the Newfoundland dog, and Rob and Roy, the two poodles.

"But what am I to eat for breakfast?" bewailed Uncle Grant.

"Biscuits, of course," said Jenny. "Anything is better than imperilling one's digestion with such stuff as this! And, Mrs. Betts, if you send up any more fish for the next month you may consider yourself discharged, do you hear?"

"But, my dear, I am rather fond of fish," put in the old gentleman.

"One can't eat fish the whole time," said Jenny imperiously. "Here, Mrs. Betts, this coffee isn't fit to drink! And the toast is burnt! And you must have put the cooking butter on the table by mistake! Let these errors be rectified at once."

Mrs. Betts retired with an ominous rustle on her stiffly starched apron.

"My dear," said Uncle Grant apprehensively, "Mrs. Betts is a very old servant, and——"

"I don't care if she is the age of Methuselah," said Jenny, "nobody can be expected to put up with such wretched cooking as this!"

"I really think she is not so bad, if—"

"Oh, pray don't apologise for her, uncle!" said Jenny. "They are all shiftless, lazy creatures, who must be discharged promptly if they don't do their duties."

Uncle Grant began to look frightened. He had kept Mrs. Betts, Annie and old John for ten years. Was it possible that he had scolded at them for ten years, only to have his niece outscold him now?

"I wouldn't be too hasty with them, my dear, if I were you," he remonstrated.

"Then let them do their duty," said Jenny, with the air of an empress.

"We are all mortal," pleaded Uncle Grant.

He ate the rest of his breakfast with but little appetite.

Annie, the housemaid, was finishing dusting his library when he entered it.

"Not done yet!" growled Uncle Grant, the fretwork of wrinkles once more coming into his brow.

"Annie," said Miss Read severely, "if this happens again I shall dispense with your services! Look at that clock! Is this the time of day to be dawdling about the rooms with a broom and duster? Remember, Mr. Grant does not pay you exorbitant wages to lie in bed until midday!"

"My dear," said Uncle Grant, "Annie is generally a very good girl, if——"

"Dear uncle," interrupted Jenny, "pray permit me to be the judge of these matters. You have ruled your household with a slack and indulgent hand altogether too long. I shall now institute a reform."

Annie had never moved about so briskly as she did that day.

Old John, the gardener, was not exempt from his share of the general turmoil. Miss Read chanced to hear her uncle reproaching the old man for some fancied neglect in the flower beds, whose diamonds, ovals, and crescents of brilliant colours were the pride of his horticultural heart, and she promptly came to his aid.

"Gardening, indeed! Do you call this gardening?" she said. "Uncle Grant, I'm astonished that you keep such a man as that about the place!"

And the torrent of reproaches which she showered upon the luckless head of poor old John was enough, as that individual observed, "to make one's flesh creep."

"My niece is a young lady of spirit and energy," apologised Mr. Grant, when at last Jenny had gone back to the house.

"Verra like you, sir, verra like you," said old John, scratching his head.

"Like me," said Mr. Grant slowly.

He stood full five minutes, quite speechless and motionless, staring at the mossy rim of an ancient sun-dial half sunk in the velvet grass. And at the end of five minutes he uttered the words again, slowly:

"Like—me!"

"There's no knowin' the master, he's that changed," said Mrs. Betts in the kitchen, a week or two later. "He's as mild as a lamb and as peaceful as a kitten."

"Isn't that what the young lady told us," said Annie, "when she came down into the kitchen that first morning after the fire was lighted, and told us she was going to try an experiment, we wasn't to mind a word she said, 'cause it was all by contraries? 'He doesn't know what his temper has got to be,' said she, 'and I am going to show him.' And, bless her sweet heart, her plan has worked like a charm."

It had, in good truth. Uncle Grant was a changed man.

And Jenny had relapsed into the original sunshine of her temper—and all the domestic wheels of the Grange seemed to revolve on velvet.

But Uncle Grant took all the credit to himself. He never knew that Jenny had taught him a lesson.

"We can get along very nicely," said he, "now that my niece has subdued those little tempers of hers."

And Jenny was his heiress and darling after all—for he will always believe that it was he "who formed her character."

T. Buchanan.

LOST—A MILLIONAIRE!

By A New Writer.

This is the title of the new serial story to commence in the August Bank Holiday Number of *Pearson's Weekly*. Get the paper. Read the story.

The August Bank Holiday Number of *Pearson's Weekly* will be a big thing in every way. Look out for it.

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Told in the Indian Bazaar.

By H. HUNTER.

No. IV.

THE MAGIC THREAD.

In the venerable hamlet of Kurungabad, on the lovely banks of the Jumna, lived a wealthy Brahmin named Benee See.

Three fine old banyan trees stood in front of his dwelling, screening it from the too persistent attentions of the sun, and affording a lodgment to a family of holy crows, which the good man fed daily with his own hand; and, what is even more singular, at the expense of his own pocket. He was a man of very strict habits, punctual and regular in his devotions; never scamping a single ablution, never omitting to perform a single ceremony mentioned in the Shastras, or neglecting to pronounce a single *Om* whenever that sacred syllable occurred in the service.

If you think this behaviour extraordinary in a man of wealth and station, I must tell you that Benee was past his meridian, which may account for a good deal.

To be sure, Benee had been rather a wild goat in his youth, so that he had a tolerably heavy lot of arrears behind him; and, alas! for this old-time "gay-and-festive," this now penitent son of twenty generations of Brahmins, there were only a few years left, out of what at the beginning had looked an interminable series, in which he could hope to "fetch up."

So Benee See, who had lived too free, was now become a devotee.

As a young "exquisite" he had preferred the pleasant service of Krishna to the gruesome slavery of Kali; and in the enjoyment of every sweet morsel he could lay hands on, had scorned to count the slow passing of the seasons, which nevertheless come and go as appointed, without caring much whether the children of this world use them to profit or employ them in vanity; and each had left the trace of its finger upon the handsome forehead of Benee See.

As a man of a certain age, Benee grudged the passing of every day, numbering even the smallest fragments of the hurrying hours, acting, indeed, on the well-known principle of "milking the bull when the cow's dry."

He, who had never troubled himself about times and seasons and rites and ritual, now never forgot, though it might be 10 p.m.—a most unseemly hour by the way for the serious minded—when he spread his mat upon the terrace, to repeat the night prayer, before stretching out his limbs to sleep.

Being long past his prime, Benee See was now in a fair way of becoming a holy man.

One day when Benee had gone into the jungle to pay his devotions at an ancient shrine in a banyan grove—a secret altar, erected by the dwarfs in honour of the forest deity—he was surprised to see, sitting under the shade of a peepul tree, a maiden of a beauty surpassing everything in the shape of female loveliness with which his youthful eyes had made him acquainted.

Why, oh! why had this adventure not come to him in the springtide of his years?

He was sensible of a strangely delicious thrill which made his head reel and his limbs tremble. Was the damsel of this world, or a visitor from another?

Never, thought he, had he beheld a form so alluring, features of such heavenly mould, lips red as a pomegranate bud, eyes dark as a moonless night, but brighter than the stars in Orion, teeth like a double row of opals, hands and feet whose shape and delicacy were proof beyond doubting that the lady was "good stock," and her caste the highest and purest in the land.

Coming unexpectedly into the presence of so much sweetness and beauty, Benee felt abashed, overcome, lifted up, and cast down. For a space he stood like one spell-bound. Why was loveliness so enchanting wasting itself among the groves and alleys of the jungle?

He felt a pain at the heart. The blood rushed through his veins like the nullahs of the Jumna in flood-time. The vows he had registered, the resolutions not to do "this," and not to do "that"—the list, he remembered, included a resolve not to talk to pretty girls by the well side—upon finding that, "this and that" had become more plague than pleasure to him, were swept away now like twigs by the current.

When he took up the part of devotee, Benee had convinced himself that it was the only *rôle* in the great drama that was left for him to play. Now, in the conflict of his emotions, forgetting that since they had lost flavour for him he had abjured the "pomps and vanities," he wished himself twenty years younger. Here was an

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adventure which promised to enlarge his experience, to lead to new and surprising developments; but, alas! his time was past.

Opportunity, thought he, mostly had the awkward habit of coming too soon or arriving too late.

He had regretfully determined that he would probably be better occupied at the temple of the Blue God than at the shrine of Kama—the lovely boy with the sugar-cane bow—when the lady, without the least speck of shyness—tired, perhaps, of so much staring without any talking—addressed him thus:

"I am the daughter of a king whose city lies on the other side of the jungle towards the west. I was betrothed to a prince of the Royal House of Meru; a man of handsome mien and noble presence. When the emperor who came from the North, having heard of the mine of glittering gems and the treasure in the mountains of Meru, spread himself over all that country, my father and the Prince, my betrothed, went out against him. But it was written that they should not return; and, alas! my eyes beheld them no more. They died, but their bodies were carried straight to Heaven by the Celestial messengers. On the spot where they fell, nothing was found but a heap of rose leaves.

"When the conqueror came to the city, I fled to the jungle. Azee, the King of the Dwarfs, found me, and here I have lived, protected by his people, ever since."

Benee, who had scarcely dared to breathe whilst the silvery notes tripped lightly off the lady's tongue, now ventured to ask if Her Highness had any commands for her servant.

From under her long dark lashes the Princess sent forth a whole sheaf of arrows before replying, every one of which left a flaming wound in Benee See's poor fluttering heart—the organ whose supersensitiveness had been both bliss and bane.

A dizziness came over him. He leant against a tamala tree for support. He heard the voice of the Princess murmuring soft syllables in his ear, but his head was humming like a bramra bee. What was it she was saying? His head was going round like a spinning-top. Not a word of her pretty speech could he distinguish, but her accents were sweet and low. The next moment he felt himself slipping to the ground, then he lost consciousness, and the world was a blank.

When he came to himself, which he did very quickly, Benee See was alone; but the flutter of a female garment, the peepul tree under which she had sat, and a sandal which she had left behind her in her hasty flight, were convincing proof that the scene he had passed through was no vision of the brain, but a very real and actual experience. After depriving him of his faculties by the magnetism of her glance, she had fled from his grey beard and uncurled moustachios.

He looked at the sandal mournfully, sighed, stuck it in his bosom, rubbed his forehead, and got up.

"Love," said he, "Love, mysterious, maddening joy! I never thought to know thy pangs again. But then," he added, "I never expected to meet this charming Princess; and, alas! also the infirmities of——" he sighed more deeply than ever. "Ah, me!" he went on, "that at fifty-five I should still be the slave of Kama. Love, thou art indeed a drunkard's cup—delicious, delirious, delusive. Yet now, if it were possible that I could marry that lovely Princess, and live again for just one circuit of the seasons as in the happy, happy days of youth, I could be content after that to beg my way to Benares on foot, and die a mendicant in the holy city."

"Take this thread," he said.

Whilst he had been speaking he had been walking in the direction in which he had seen the flutter of the silken scarf. He had a vague hope that he might see the Princess again. He had quite forgotten the Blue Shrine in the banyan grove. After walking for an hour he came to a road by the side of which sat a yellow fakeer, begging.

Now, Benee had never seen a yellow fakeer. The

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*gurus**, he knew, believed there was but one; and that he was only seen by those to whom he was sent. Benee wondered if he had anything to do with the charming Princess. He approached, and threw a coin on the dirty rag which was stretched at the feet of the yellow man.

"My blessing be upon thee, my son," said the fakeer; and drawing a short length of scarlet thread from a wallet that lay by his side, "take this thread," he said, "and before thou liest down upon thy carpet to-night, bind it round thy arm between the shoulder and the elbow. It is *Junwa*†—the sacred syllables *Bhuh* and *Svar* have been pronounced over it. It has the power of Maghrabi magic in the third degree. Wear it constantly, and no evil can harm thee. Wish, and it shall give thee thy heart's desire."

When he had gone a little distance Benee See looked back, but the yellow fakeer had disappeared; there was nothing on the road but a thin cloud of dust.

The Magic Thread, the yellow fakeer, and the beautiful Princess, filled Benee's thoughts so completely when he spread his mat upon the roof that the night prayer was quite forgotten. But the scarlet thread was wound about his arm—it was barely long enough, he had observed, as he fastened it carefully, to go round once. "However," he reflected, "there it is. It will not be necessary to remove it, so there it can stay." Then he lay down and fell asleep, wishing himself again a young man of five-and-twenty, and also that he might soon have another chance of meeting the amiable Princess. On awaking in the morning Benee was quickly sensible that a delightful change had passed over him. He had gone back thirty years. His youth was renewed, his vigour restored, his spirits had recovered elasticity. He dressed himself with care, annointed his person with attars and spices, curled his moustachios, put the lady's sandal into his bosom, and went off to the jungle.

Before doing so, however, he took care to rescind all the resolutions he had made on becoming a devotee, circumstances having now rendered them unnecessary. They could be renewed, if required, at a later opportunity. At twenty-five a man may surely be pardoned for declining to be bound by the vows of fifty.

Benee had not gone very far in the direction of the peepul tree before he caught sight of the Princess, who was sitting beneath it.

"Ah!" thought he, "she expects me evidently. But it's not I who'll be surprised this time, my Princess," and, twirling his moustachios fiercely, he marched up to the tree. Then, seeing that she did not start, shiver, or scream, but only drew her veil coquettishly across the lower half of her face, while the lightning of her eyes threatened to reduce him to speechlessness, if the spell were not broken, he addressed her.

"Great Princess," he began; but finding a difficulty in proceeding with those twin orbs scintillating in front of him, he drew from its hiding place the lady's sandal, and inquired artlessly if she recognised it.

"Indeed, I do," she said, smiling. "I lost it yesterday in the jungle, and have come out to-day to look for it. Where, pray, did you find it?"

Then Benee See, taking firm hold of opportunity, declared himself:

"I am he, Princess, who yesterday was smitten to the ground by the fire of thine eyes," telling how the fire had consumed his heart and done serious damage to his head; how he would rather live with her for one year than without her for a thousand, since beauty so bewitching must surely transcend even that of the Heavenly dancers. How he had seen the yellow fakeer, who had given him the Magic Thread, and how, having by virtue of its mystic power obtained a renewal of his youth, he had risen early in the morning and returned to the jungle, determined there to stay till he had found her, if he had to seek as long as it would take to travel from Patal-puri to Parigat.*

"The power of holy men," said the Princess, and in Benee's eager ears her voice sounded ravishing as the voices of the minstrels in the Halls of Dazzling Light, "is not to be questioned by the sinful sons of earth; but devotion so uncommon is a rarity in a mortal. And you really are the good man who passed here yesterday on his way to the Blue Shrine in the banyan grove? Excuse me," she said, looking at him provokingly, "I shouldn't have thought it."

"Let the sandal, oh, Princess, which I delivered to thee, make answer for me!" replied the unabashed Benee See.

"It is well," said the Princess, smiling upon him graciously, "yet nothing is so good but it might be better. A sandal? Well, fifty people may find a sandal, but only one man wears the Magic Thread. Show it me now, then shall I be convinced that thou art the man."

So Benee showed the arm on which was wound the Magic Thread.

"Dear! dear!" said the Princess, looking much concerned. "It's cutting the flesh. It's tied a great deal too tight. Surely you must find it very inconvenient to have the muscles confined in this fashion? Let me loosen it—just a bit."

"Take care!" said Benee, "take care!" for the Princess's fingers were busy with the Thread. "There's just enough to go round, but not a hair's-breadth over. I'd rather put up with the inconvenience and insure the advantage than——"

But the Princess had succeeded—the Thread was off, and Benee breathlessly watching her attempts to refasten it.

She tried here, and tried there, but try where she would she couldn't make the two ends meet. Benee, conscious that a change had already begun to come over him—his blood was running slower, his pulse falling lower—begged her to give him the Thread, or to tie it where it had been tied before. But she refused, saying that she could manage it very well if he wouldn't be so impatient. And all the time Benee was rapidly gaining in years and losing in spirits.

At last, when Benee found himself again a greybeard of five-and-fifty, it came to an open quarrel.

"I've seen many a better stick in the jungle," cried the Princess; and, calling him a "miserable double-dealing old deceiver," she threw down the Thread and walked off. But before Benee could possess himself of the magic filament, a crow flew out of a neighbouring tree, pounced on the prize, and bore it away.

Benee See was never seen again at his home on the lovely banks of the Jumna; but at the Blue Shrine in the banyan grove there has been a resident *Jogi*† ever since.

* Spiritual teachers. † Possessed of mystic virtues.

* From the lower to the higher regions. † Holy man.

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SAVED BY A RING.

"I HAVE heard you say that the West Coast of Africa used to be a rough spot, Captain, when you commanded a brig trading with that part of the world. Now, *you* can surely tell us a thrilling story!"

That was touching the Captain in a weak spot. He was just a trifle vain, and his vanity was tickled by being called upon to amuse the company with some story in which he had figured prominently. He made a pretence of modest hesitation; then "went ahead" abruptly, without any preliminaries.

"Sailing in those parts had been dangerous, but the piratical craft had been scared away by the British war vessels, and I felt pretty safe.

"I left port with a hold well stored with valuable merchandise and quite a respectable sum of money.

"In the forward saloon or second cabin were nine Spaniards returning to their own country. They had been employed out there and had had enough of it. They were swarthy-looking fellows, with scowling figure-heads, and glittering black eyes reflecting cruelty in every glance and expression.

"I never did like a Spaniard, never having experienced the fine boasted courtesy coupled with the high chivalry of the hidalgos of Castile.

"In the after cabin, for one passenger I had a fine-looking young fellow, a midshipman attached to a British vessel looking after slavers and the like, who had been down with fever. He was going home in order to fully recover his health.

"I had one other passenger, a Spanish maiden about twenty years old, who occupied the best state-room in the after cabin, and I must confess that her beautiful hair, black and luxuriant eyes, expressive and soft as a gazelle's, complexion like a peach, coquettish airs, and a form that rivalled a full clipper in rounded, swelling lines and, and——"

"Never mind, Captain, about the young lady. You have said enough, and we can imagine the balance of the loveliness."

"Hum—exactly! Well, to heave ahead. I rather pitied that young lady, for she could not speak a word of English, had nothing to say to the tawny-skinned fellows in the second cabin, while the midshipman could not make use of a single Spanish phrase, and *I* knew nothing of her lingo.

"But that part of it did not appear to affect the efforts of the young officer to make himself agreeable. He proceeded deliberately to make love to the señorita, every opportunity that offered, talking away as fast as his tongue would permit, with his hand on his heart and face flushed by the earnestness of his efforts. While she, laughing and jabbering in the soft musical tones of her language, would sing and coo, her voice ringing through the cabin with a rare cadence, when the handsome, careless dog was idling by her side.

"She was evidently possessed of wealth; at least I judged so from the fact of her having such a profusion of diamonds, which she displayed with childish pride; her costumes being revelations of lace, richness and harmony of colour, even if bordering a trifle on the fanciful in detail and conception. What she had been doing in those parts I did not know

"The middy had my best wishes for capturing the prize. He was a good fellow and jolly comrade. But what puzzled me was how they got on so well, when neither could understand the other; but love, it is said, has a language of its own.

"We were making slow progress, and waiting for a breeze, when one of the crew at work on the fore topsail yard reported a sail in sight broad off the beam. Now, a sail in those days in that vicinity required caution in approaching, for there was no knowing what moment a piratical craft might heave in sight, with chances in favour of all hands 'walking the plank.'

"I jumped into the fore-rigging to have a better look at the sail through my glass. It was not much larger than a gull's wing.

"The wind was light and variable, the sun dazzled my eyes and a slight swell rather interfered with my investigation, which tended to keep me aloft much longer than I had intended. I finally returned to the deck, satisfied that we had nothing to fear from the strange craft.

"Descending the after-companionway, I entered the cabin with the intention of taking a short siesta in my state-room while waiting for a breeze to spring up, but had hardly composed matters to my satisfaction, when a light, quick footstep crossed the cabin, and the middy entered my room without knocking, somewhat to my surprise and displeasure as well.

"I was on the point of reading the free-and-easy gentleman a lesson in etiquette, when I chanced to catch his eye, and I saw at once that something unusual had occurred.

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"His voice dropped to a whisper as he gained the side of my berth, and an electric shock seemed to run through my heart as he laid his white hand impressively on my shoulder.

"'Captain,' he whispered, 'our lives are in jeopardy. There are pirates on board.'

"'Pirates!' I exclaimed, hastily swinging my legs over the berth. 'Where are they?' and I was conscious that my face was blanched as we gazed into each other's eyes.

"'The Spaniards in the forward cabin, and their active ally, the señorita—the brains and leader of the gang.'

"I looked at the officer in astonishment, thinking for a moment that he had taken a glass of grog or so too much; but the steady gaze of his clear, grey eyes refuted at once the suspicion, forcing upon me the conviction that serious business confronted both him and me.

"'How did you discover all this, and how long have you been in possession of the facts?'

"'Oh, I've had my eyes and ears open since I first came on board, and have never neglected an opportunity to listen to any stray word that might fall from any of them.'

"'Why, look here, confound it! What do you mean? Did you not tell me yourself that you could not speak a word of Spanish, and have I not heard you using the most absurd broken English when talking nonsense to the señorita, as if that would help matters between you?'

"'I admit all as you state it, but had an object in view when denying knowledge of the Spanish language. I pleaded ignorance of Spanish because the day I came on board this vessel, I assisted that pretty-faced demon over the gangway, and noticed on her hand a gem that glittered and sparkled like the eye of a cobra. The mounting was so peculiar and odd that it could not fail to attract my attention, and you must have been attracted by it.'

"I nodded.

"'Well, sir, that ring was once the property of my uncle. He started two years ago from that very port to visit his relations in London, but has never been heard of since.

"My suspicions were aroused at once, coupled with the decidedly cut-throat, hang-dog expression of your Spanish passengers.

"'While I have been flirting with the señorita and she pretending to listen coyly to the unintelligible nonsense poured into those pink ears of hers—she knows English, though!—she was coolly plotting, at various times, with some members of the gang, who generally were not far off, suggesting how to slit my throat without creating an alarm.

"'They have full knowledge of the amount of treasure on board, which, together with the vessel, they purpose gaining possession of, then seek some haunt known to them. I have no doubt they murdered my uncle and will murder us, unless we manage to circumvent their plans.'

"'How have they arranged to carry out their murderous scheme?'

"'While you were aloft, looking after that strange sail, they had the opportunity they wished for, for a last grand confab. They are to rise to-night, and imagine the vessel will fall an easy prey to their superior numbers. The capture would have been made shortly after leaving port but for the advice of the señorita. She was apprehensive of the erratic movements of a British ship just now in the vicinity, and desired to gain a good offing with a clear run for their rendezvous. Now listen carefully to their plan of operations.

"'They will all sleep on deck to-night with the plea that it is too hot and stifling below deck. Two of them will be stationed aft to attend to the mate and man at the wheel, the officer off watch will be knifed by another scoundrel, who will then join his comrades forward in murdering the crew—the signal for the attack being three raps on forward cabin companion way.'

"'And who is to look after our interests? You and I?'

"'Oh, I omitted that! The pretty Spanish damsel has guaranteed to carve our windpipes in the most approved manner. Her stiletto has been sharpened to an edge and point fine as a needle. There, sir, you have it all from their standpoint, and I must say they have worked it out very well, in every manner but one.'

"'And that?'

"'Is the successful carrying out of their game. Life is sweet to me, Captain, and I presume it is to you. I have no desire to lose the number of my mess. I'll fight, depend upon that, and as captain of your own ship, I simply ask for my station and part of the work you desire me to attend to, with a full knowledge of your general plan of operations.'

"For the next half hour I can assure you I did some pretty hard thinking, for it was a matter of life and death, with but little time to devise means of defence or escape.

"To begin with, there were no arms on board the vessel, while the Spaniards were undoubtedly armed to the teeth. The midshipman had a pair of pistols and his light dress sword, the only weapons that could be counted upon for the defence.

"I relied upon our strong hope and the possibility that would count largely in our favour—the overweening confidence of the pirates, with their well laid plans and the apparent helplessness of the victims within their grasp.

"The men were quietly communicated with, the midshipman was made thoroughly acquainted with my plans, the officers were posted, while the steward easily carried the details to the men in the forecastle.

"The Spaniards only counted on having one watch on deck, but as it was necessary to have all hands, I resorted to a little stratagem. Quietly removing a portion of the quicksilver from its receptacle on the barometer, I summoned the mates in great excitement taking care to show the Spanish scoundrels that the mercury had dropped to an alarming point, fortune aiding me by a dense bank of black and threatening clouds hanging on the horizon. Sail was shortened, hatches battened down, extra lashings put on everything movable about decks; and I noted with one eye of satisfaction that a thick cloud of smoke was pouring from the galley smoke-pipe, while the men walked the deck with belaying pins close at hand, but carefully suppressing all appearances of excitement.

"The mate walked the top of the house with a hatchet stowed in the bosom of his voluminous shirt. The midshipman lounged on one side of the quarter deck with his pistol ready: while I stood by the main liferail, apparently intent upon studying the aspect and possibilities of the weather, my right hand clutching the butt of the officer's spare pistol, and an eye fixed upon all moving objects.

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"Gradually the men dropped into the shadows forward, apparently dozing, the positions of the Spaniards being easily detected by the small glowing light that emanated from their cigarettes.

"This disposition of the crew and officers of the vessel had somewhat disconcerted and upset the plans of the plotters; but they were by no means thwarted in the task they had undertaken.

"The Spaniards merely sent another man or two aft to cope with the middy and myself, and not a suspicion of discovery or defeat evidently had entered into their calculations.

"With the tap of the bell announcing ten o'clock, three distinct raps echoed through the ship, and in an instant the whole scene changed as if by magic. Pandemonium appeared to have broken loose in that little space, so calm and peaceful only a moment before.

"I had no time or opportunity to attend to anything for an instant but my own personal safety, for one of the Spaniards leapt upon me with the ferocity of a panther, the blade of his two-edged dagger glittering wickedly in the dim starlight; but, with a cool, steady aim, I covered the villain's breast, and he fell without a groan, shot through the heart.

"Seizing an iron belaying pin from the rail, I dealt the fellow who was hacking at the mate, a stunning blow, and then had an opportunity to look about me, as the mate rolled the body of his late antagonist overboard.

"The middy had not used his pistol, but, depending upon his sword, was on the point of giving the *coup de grâce* to a burly ruffian who had attacked him.

"Forward, the battle was raging fiercely, the loud yells of the combatants ringing out in terrible discords, varied occasionally by frenzied shrieks of agony, as Sam, the athletic black cook, dealt out his stock of boiling hot water, of which he had been instructed to have an unlimited supply.

"The Spaniards were capering about like so many dancing masters, having little or no opportunity to use firearms, not anticipating the slightest resistance, and depending upon their knives for the deadly work in hand.

"The seamen presented a bold front, while the cook kept up an increasing stream of scalding water, compelling the survivors to seek safety in flight as they were charged by the men flushed with victory.

"Amid the tramp and the turmoil, the cabin door flew open, and the woman appeared with a pistol in each hand, her eyes blazing like two coals of fire. She uttered a passionate cry as she realised that her scheme had failed, failed at every point, while the sailors drove a number of the pirates overboard.

"But one of the gang remained on the deck of the brig in possession of a weapon. He was the youngest and best looking of the party.

"He had his cape wrapped round his left arm, his dagger ready for instant action, as he crept round and round the middy, who, with sword carefully poised, watched every movement of his lithe foe.

"We were all more or less worked up and excited over the combat, and, having full faith and confidence in the naval officer's ability to defend himself, all crowded round to witness the duel *à la mort*. As a matter of precaution the woman had been disarmed, and was compelled to watch the phases of the closing scene in the tragedy.

"The pirate had retreated before an impetuous assault of the officer, when, tripping over a ring bolt, he was thrown off his guard for a brief interval of time, sufficient, however, to seal his fate, the bright blade of the middy passing through his body. He fell without a gasp.

"Wild and unearthly the señorita's voice rang out in fierce denunciation; then, wresting herself free, she picked up a dagger that had fallen on deck and plunged it into her bosom, sinking by the inanimate body while her life blood mingled with his.

"It was the last crowning act of death and violence in that struggle for life, and as I gazed about the deck it had the appearance of a slaughter pen.

"No, I have never been in any similar position since, and have no desire for further adventures of that kind."

R. Hawley.

THE PRESS IN PRAISE OF M.A.P.,

The New Penny Society Paper, Edited by Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR.

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It has the all-important quality of interestingness in a promising degree. Its paragraphs are fresh and striking; its tone is easy without being offensive; it suits the man or woman tired with serious affairs. The paper is brimful of gossip about all classes and divisions of society.

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The "St. James's Gazette" says:

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The "Bradford Observer" says:

It is extremely well got up, and full of interesting and readable matter.

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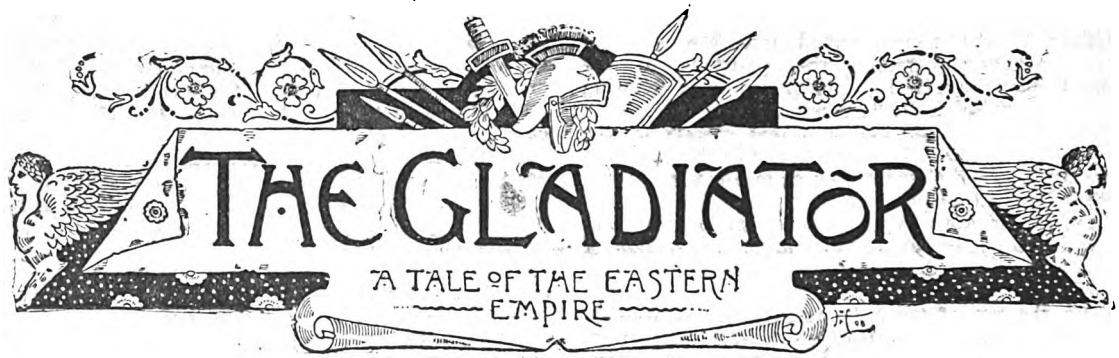

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE FIRST.

"The Ambitions of Youth."

SUMMARY.

The opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

A few years pass and Eutasia is affianced to Rhesus.

One night Proclus and Rhesus chance to overhear a plot between Hypatius, a claimant to the throne, Marcen, a gladiator of the green faction, and Hermiot of the Blues, to raise the city in revolt, remove Justinian from the throne, and make Hypatius emperor in his place.

Hypatius proceeds to take them singly down to the flooded catacombs under the ground upon which they are standing, where he has vast treasures stored with which he purposes to buy the sympathies of the people. Marcen goes with him first, leaving Hermiot on the watch. Rhesus and Proclus spring out upon Hermiot, bind and gag him. Upon the return of Hypatius and Marcen, Proclus assumes the blue sash of Hermiot, personates Hermiot under the cover of the darkness, and goes down into the catacombs with Hypatius in order to discover the whereabouts of the treasure.

CHAPTER V.

The Hall of Waters.

When Proclus and Hypatius had passed the door in the wall, and it had swung silently to behind them, the nephew of Anatasius bade his companion follow him closely, and went with confidence along a black, evil-smelling passage that sloped steeply downwards, emerging at last into a lofty chamber, lighted by a straggling moonbeam that crept through a slit in the stony roof. By the dim glow, torches were seen piled in a corner, and one of these Hypatius lit, and bound a dozen more in his belt, signing to Proclus to do likewise. He then went on his knees, and inserted his dagger point in one of the interstices of the rough flags, prized one up a little, and getting his hand underneath, raised it easily to a vertical position. The flickering glare of his torch showed the top of a flight of stairs, dark and damp with slime and green moss.

"You first," he whispered; "I follow."

Proclus, though carefully and rather afraid, went down as desired, and Hypatius, following, let down the stone behind him into its resting place.

Saving for the fitful yellow gleam of the torches, the two men were in absolute darkness, and in complete silence.

Between the damp walls, down that slippery stair, which to Proclus seemed interminable, in the gloom and the stillness, they went without speaking, until their footsteps echoed curiously hollow, and a strange clamminess was in the air; and at last the light from their torches fell on the level surface of still black water, and on the rounded shafts of several grey stone columns uprising from it, and losing themselves in the roof of murky shadow.

The stairs ended abruptly above the water, between two pillars, but a boat lay moored on that strange sea at the foot, and from the right hand pillar a thick chain, red and white with rust and slime, went out into the vagueness beyond.

Proclus, divining what was required of him, and not wishing to speak too much, stepped into the boat without a word, and drew out a pair of short sculls, which slipped between rowlocks of graven bronze. The boat had evidently seen better service than its present duty, he thought, noting this, and the elegance of her shape and lines. Then Hypatius placed torches in sockets in the boat-side, and steering close by the rotting chain, bade Proclus pull on without fear.

The great columns of smooth stone—the handiwork of artists whom the caprice of Constantine the Great had employed—loomed up out of the darkness they advanced into like grey ghosts of the under-world sailing slowly by. The unsteady light of the flaring torches cast long, waving shadows and bright, white gleams in alternation across the inky waters of that rippleless flood; and in the appalling silence the very sound of the oars dipping and rising seemed muffled and far away.

At length Hypatius spoke, his words sounding hollow and strange, and a faint refrain thereof went whispering weirdly down the shadowy colonnades that stretched through the slimy sea.

"It is a strange place, is it not, gladiator?" he asked. "A secure hiding-place for secret wealth; a fitting place wherein to bury the bodies of our foes? Methinks Belisarius, once here, would cause us no more apprehension."

"Indeed no," answered Proclus; "nor the Emperor himself."

A sardonic smile wreathed the face of Hypatius; a smile that well suited the gloomy place and the unnatural paleness of his features amid the encompassing grey and black shadows.

"A consummation devoutly to be wished, yet not easy of accomplishment," said he. "However, our other method has yet to fail. But have a care with the oars now, and slacken speed. We have passed the eleventh pillar, and the chain ends here. A little further on we should see the light of my brother's torch. He came in with us, and we left him with the treasure until our return. He is a worthy fellow, is Pompey, and did I not aspire to the throne myself. I would help him thereon. Ah! there is the gleam of his light."

Proclus half turned on the thwart and saw a dim glow ahead, just above the water; a yellow haze, at first diffused, but taking shape and definite outline as they neared. When the boat drew alongside it, he saw that the light proceeded from a torch held in the hand of an anxious-looking man

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attired in the garb of a monk, and that this man stood on a broad stone under a low arch that spanned a black looming passage in the wall. He noticed that the top of this passage sloped down sharply, and when, having secured the craft, they all went in, he found that it led, with sundry twists and turns, to a roomy cavern, whose sides and tops were thick with beads of moisture and clumps of moss.

And there, in the swaying light of Pompey's torch, lay massive ingots of gold, gleaming in dull, yellow pyramids built criss-cross fashion; earthern jars filled to the brim with costly jewels, both uncut and unpolished; a fabulous quantity of gold and silver pieces piled promiscuously against the farther wall; and drinking vessels and ornaments and arms of every shape and size, but all of priceless worth—the whole the ransom of many kings.

Avarice shone in the eyes of the three men as they looked on that huge hoard of wealth, and Proclus voiced the thoughts of his companions as well as his own when he said—disguising his voice:

"It is the legacy of a Crœsus! It is enough to buy the city twice over, and hurl a dozen emperors from their thrones."

"Then you are satisfied, Hermiot?" asked Hypatius, preparing to return.

"I am satisfied, and more," answered the cynic. "The crown is yours already. Let us get to work without delay. With a handful of those jewels and gold pieces the servants of the blue faction at the hippodrome are the servants of the Emperor Hypatius to-morrow."

"Take some then," said the claimant, visibly flattered with his supposed friend's enthusiasm. "Marcen has already taken a foretaste with him. And now we will go back."

"It is quite time," said Pompey, dashing his torch against the rock, and sending glowing sparks hissing to the damp floor.

"Yet one question," said Proclus. "How many know of this, saving myself and my friend Marcen? Too many tongues are dangerous."

"Saving yourself and your friend Marcen, none know the secret besides us two," Pompey replied, his brother assenting.

"Lead on then!" cried Proclus. "I am with you heart and soul, by the Holy Cross!"

Silently the three men went up the passage, and pulled back to the end of the chain, not finding it without difficulty and some anxious moments, and then rowed with a will to the foot of the green-covered steps, the torches casting huge and spectral shadows down the long dark avenues of the columns, and the swish of the sculls and the drip of the spray echoing faintly from the dim recesses, where the shades of eternal night brood over the sullen flood.

Half-way up the mossy steps the tramp of feet broke the dead silence, and as they hurried forward, the muffled thud of a heavy stone falling awoke their worst fears.

With blanched faces they dashed on. The flag was as they left it, and there was no sign of human presence, but when Pompey essayed to raise that bar to their egress, he found it immovable. Hypatius, white with fear, helped him, and Proclus joined, but though their muscles cracked with the effort, the stone remained firm.

The two traitors gazed at each other with wide-open eyes that said more than their lips dared utter, and despite the damp chill of the thick air, beads of perspiration broke out upon their foreheads, and their hands grew hot.

They were discovered, trapped; someone had found the secret of the passage, and barred the way, and made them prisoners in the Hall of Waters; and as one of the torches flared up suddenly and then spluttered out, the horror of their fate overcame them.

They leapt up at the impassive stone, beating it fiercely with their clenched hands; they called aloud like men possessed; they reviled and upbraided each other, and Proclus—who stood, not heeding them, with the one remaining light—and then sat down on the steps in helpless despair.

Proclus took two torches from his belt, and, lighting them with his, gave them into their hands in silence. The gruesome stillness remained unbroken, and the faint hopes of the three men died out slowly as the time passed and the torches steadily burnt down.

CHAPTER VI.

The Pursuit.

Rhesus was light of foot and very agile, so Marcen did not perceive his presence. The door swung back, and he went on down the dark passage hurriedly, but in silence. As silently as his ghost Rhesus followed. In the open space where the torches were piled, and a dim light shone through the slit in the roof, Marcen eagerly raised the stone flag, and bending down, listened at the top of the narrow stair. Rhesus remained in the dense shade of the passage, watching, and presently saw him rise hastily, let down the flag, drag another and a heavier stone from a corner, and poise it on one edge over the secret door. A slight, muffled sound seemed to come from underneath—Hypatius and his friend returning,

Proclus stepped into the boat.

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thought Rhesus—and hearing it, the traitor let fall the slab upon their only way of escape.

The thunderous crash of its fall rang dismally in the gloomy place, like a knell of doom, and from under it came a low babel of voices and a stifled cry. Blows were struck desperately on the under side of the flag, it shook with their violence, but it rose not, and soon all was still. Then the traitor, thinking his first task well accomplished, laughed softly to himself, and turned towards the place where Rhesus stood. Not wishing to cross swords with such a skilful fencer—at least until he had set his friend free—the latter stepped back quietly towards the door, intending to regain the outer air before he was seen, and then return to undo the foul work.

But half-way up the passage his foot unluckily slipped upon a smooth stone, and when he recovered his balance, Marcen was almost upon him. Scarcely thinking what he was doing, he ran on swiftly, casting caution to the winds,

Marcen came on furiously.

and Marcen, fearing treachery equal to his own, in close pursuit. He reached and passed the pivoted door, but even as it closed after him, it swung out again, and Marcen sprang through the gap and came tearing after the other, mad with rage. A dagger flew past Rhesus' head as he gained the open street, missing him only by a finger's breadth, and looking over his shoulder as he dashed into a narrow alley that led to the lowest and most intricate parts of the city, he saw that his foe was only a dozen paces behind.

Rhesus held on, threading the mazy streets of that vile quarter with a wonderful dexterity, and as he ran began to think more clearly. It was not in his nature to turn his back on a solitary foe like this, but once having started he had given up all advantage; and if he would save his friend Proclus from a fearful fate, he saw that he must not put his life in undue peril. He saw clearly now that he had made a great mistake in not attacking Marcen unawares in the dark tunnel, where he could easily have overpowered him; but now the opportunity was lost he must go on.

He rounded corners, dashed through little passages, under black arches, and doubled often upon his track, yet he could not shake Marcen off, and at last, growing tired of the ignominious chase, turned at bay in a wider street and drew his sword.

Marcen came on furiously, his own blade drawn, desperate indeed, but ere their weapons could cross, a car rattled past going towards the hippodrome. The driver wore a green badge, and striking up his foe's sword with a sweeping slash of his own, Rhesus sprang into the chariot, shouted to the man to lay on the thong, and as they whirled away, cast back a mocking laugh at his enemy.

But Rhesus laughed prematurely. Marcen was not shaken off so soon. Life and untold wealth were at stake, and he had many friends, and an unrivalled knowledge of the gay city.

He ran on a little way, then disappeared into a small inn, and presently, from a street at right angles to the one he had left, another chariot came rolling in pursuit. Two men stood in the car, urging on the fresh steeds with thong and voice, and one of the two was Marcen—his green sash changed for a band of blue.

The dawn was already breaking glorious from the portals of the golden east, and as the two chariots tore on, the streets and houses lost their shades and shadows, taking shape and brightness from the sun, and the people began to stir about the city.

Rhesus and the other belaboured their horses unmercifully, shouted, swore, and entreated them by turns; yet though steam rose from them and the white froth flecked their mouths, the traitor gained steadily.

Half-way from the circus the road made a great bend, at the farther end of which were stables for horses of the green faction. Could they reach that and change steeds before Marcen came up, they would escape. Leaving a smoking trail of dust on the dry street, they sped madly round the curve, Pelak, the driver, bracing himself in readiness to pull the animals to their haunches.

Rhesus glanced back. The pursuers were thundering after them like the sirocco, Marcen standing erect with bow taut and arrow drawn ready to his ear. The dwellings lay back in dim gardens there, and as the first car approached the stables, the horses made a good target for the marksman across them. Rhesus saw the driver slacken speed a moment, saw the shaft released, and heard the shaft rustle past him, and in an instant one of his steeds was down, struggling and kicking, and the other atop. The car lurched over, hurling Pelak to the ground, and by the time Rhesus had extricated himself from the tangle of horse-hoofs and traces, and dragged him out of harm's way, Marcen had dashed past on the other side, stopped and turned again, and with sword drawn, was advancing upon them. Leaving Pelak to recover from his faint just within the wicket of a great garden, Rhesus drew his blade and stood on the defensive.

A crowd was gathering now. The ever-ready rioters and assassins of both factions were flocking to the scene like vultures to a field of carnage, and someone raised the rallying cry of "*Nika!*" The arrogant wearers of blue clustered behind Marcen, hailing him as a new recruit, and Rhesus was not without backers who urged him to punish the renegade.

Yet now the two stood face to face, each felt disinclined to act. Marcen, naturally, had the least reluctance, but preferred to leave Rhesus until he had discovered whether he alone knew of the plot or had accomplices. For the other

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part, Rhesus was so concerned about his friend left in the Hall of Waters that he was loth to risk his life or his liberty in a street brawl. And the wolves of prey who were facing each other with deadly intent on their grim faces, were the lowest kind of villains that even Constantinople could boast. A stone flung at Rhesus—happily missing him—broke the spell of hesitation, and the two factions were at each other's throats.

As though moved by a common impulse, both Marcen and Rhesus slunk back as the others met, and losing sight of his foe for a moment, the latter entered the garden where he had left Pelak. The driver was recovered now, though his head had received an ugly blow, and said they had better be going to the hippodrome on foot by some quieter way, if thither his friend was aiming, "or, if not," he added, "we can help cut up this blue rabble."

He was a tall, bony fellow, wiry as an Italian, with a pair of fine black eyes, and Rhesus remembered, now that he came to look at his face more closely, that he was one of the charioteers who had raced for the green the first day he had trotted the steeds round the red sand of the arena. He was kind-hearted and true to the party, and a sudden resolve took hold of Rhesus.

"I care for neither of these things, friend," he said; "but if you care to help me in another desperate venture, which may mean death or a fortune to me and a goodly guerdon to yourself in any case, I shall be glad of your company."

The lanky giant seized the other's arm, and said:

"I am with you, Rhesus, in whatever wild work you have afoot. By all the vows of the Church which you believe not in, I am your man. Is it agreed?"

"Yes," said Rhesus, and straightway told him as much as he thought needful for him to comprehend that a great treasure, known only to a few, was hidden in the Hall of Waters, and that Marcen had played them false. He listened eagerly and asked for more.

"Tell me," he said, "whose treasure it is, and who is imprisoned there? I am asking a great deal, I know, but you can trust me."

Rhesus looked at him again, and felt that he could; he told all he knew; and they prepared to make their way back to the convent. At all costs Proclus must be saved.

While they had been consulting, the fight had raged furiously, new-comers had joined in it, and several were slain, but as Rhesus and the other stepped through the wicket the noise ceased suddenly, and a troop of soldiers came riding along, followed by a gorgeous chariot in which no less a personage than the Empress sat. Some of the rioters dispersed at sight of the soldiers, and the others followed when Theodora, mounting the seat of her car, railed at them for disloyal subjects in her most cutting style. Two of the assassins, both of the green faction, were executed on the spot by her command.

She was no longer a comedian; she had become an imperial tigress, a cunning stateswoman, a worthy counterbalance to her husband's failings. Her crown and white robe, enfolded by the cloak of purple, became her handsome form and features well, and as, after making some fruitless inquiries, she passed on, Rhesus followed her with eyes of admiration—which admiration turned to wonder when he saw the car stop a moment as Marcen mounted beside her,

Rhesus dragged him out of harm's way.

and then roll on again, bearing the two away in eager converse.

"I like not our friend's familiarity at all," said Pelak dubiously. "Our Empress is no ordinary woman, and has the threads of a dozen conspiracies in her hands at once, 'tis said. What if she and Marcen be in league over this treasure? It behoves us to hasten, Rhesus, if we would rescue the cynic; and it also behoves us to be cautious, for many doubtless know of the first chamber under the monastery, in which so many plots have been hatched."

They said no more, but quickened their steps, and going very carefully, knowing the lay of the streets well, at last came round the angle of the convent wall to the place where Hermiot had been left bound. He was not there, but scratched in the dust at the foot of the buttress was Rhesus' name. Obliterating the tell-tale writing with a sweep of his foot, Rhesus turned down the narrow way, and with Pelak behind, passed into the chamber underground.

It was tolerably light now, and Rhesus saw in a glance that the barrier stone had been removed and placed against the wall. With the help of Pelak he raised the lower slab feverishly. There was no one on the dark, slimy stairway; no sign of anyone. Rhesus went down a little way and shouted into the blackness with all the strength of his lungs. There came no response.—(*To be continued.*)

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DEAR C.—Meet me at the "Cyclist's Rest" at 5.45 to-morrow. We can talk the matter over on our bikes.

Very affectionately.

ELSA.

Charles Tracey sat on an office stool and turned this little note in his fingers at the same time that he turned its import over in his mind. The junior clerk who sat near him could not resist an inquisitive impulse to look at Mr. Tracey's face, and he saw that Mr. Tracey was smiling satisfaction at himself; also, he saw that the little piece of paper was a feminine note, and he drew conclusions.

Tracey took another dive into the four lines of very modern feminine handwriting to refresh his memory as to the wording, and then he meditated again. It was, no doubt, an original way of answering his rather old-fashioned proposal, but her originality was always one of Elsa's great charms to this devoted lover. The idea of meeting a girl at a club house on purpose to discuss a proposal of marriage with her while taking a spin!

And then there was something so sensible in the phrase "talk the matter over." Elsa really was a very sensible girl—so sensible as to be all the more piquant for this quite extraordinary good sense of hers.

So Tracey smiled as he sat at his desk. Then he looked at his watch and resolved to go and have lunch. He put the watch into his waistcoat pocket, folded the little note, and looked for the envelope, from which he had somewhat precipitately torn it when Elsa's brother had put it into his hand a quarter of an hour before. There it was, a pink little envelope.

The clerk next to Mr. Tracey at this point indulged his curiosity once more. He saw Mr. Tracey look with a tender smile at the envelope; then he saw the smile fade, and observed that Mr. Tracey had turned pale.

Then Tracey took up the envelope and the note and reached for his straw hat. He walked out of the bank gazing at the address on the envelope, which was: "Miss Clara Henderson."

This inference was plain. That young brother of Elsa's—young Harry—had had two notes to deliver. He was, in his own conceit, a born messenger, and it delighted him to ride his cycle all over the city, leaving notes and messages. If there had been no note for Tracey the boy would not have stopped at the bank at all.

The wretched urchin had no doubt whirled into the Henderson home, as he had whirled into the bank, dashed down his (Tracey's) fate-fraught letter with a curt "Letter for Miss Clara. No answer," and then sped away to chalk up his last record in letter-carrying.

He ate no lunch worth mentioning, but sat and felt cold chills running about all over him. He knew Clara Henderson so well. If it had been anyone else but that feather-brained——

That afternoon a ring at the door bell of the Davis residence was soon followed by a sound as if half a hurricane had suddenly been let into the front hall. The rushing was mingled with laughter.

"Oh, I must see Miss Elsa. Tell her I'm coming up to her room."

In less than one minute Clara was at her friend's door, standing behind the servant who was supposed to be delivering her message.

"Elsa! Won't you let me in? I'm in a tremendous hurry, dear——"

"I'm so glad to see you, Clara. Couldn't you go to-morrow?"

"Go? Go where? Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha! Elsa, don't be very angry. It wasn't my fault. I'm awfully sorry. Young Harry brought this for me, and it was meant for—for Mr. Tracey. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Clara! Did you open it?"

For answer, Clara held out a bulky packet, the flap of the envelope torn.

"I give you my word of honour, Elsa, I only read as far as, 'man can confer on a woman.' Then I nearly had a fit."

Elsa's face was a bright scarlet, but she retained her self-command. Clara saw that she was much upset, however.

"Don't you think you'd better put the letter in a fresh envelope and send it to him?" Clara asked, becoming very serious.

"My dear Clara," said Elsa, "I shall never speak to him again."

"Oh, don't say that, Elsa! Why won't you?"

"I shall never have a chance. I know that man too well. And you, of all people."

"Why me, of all people?"

"He's positively afraid of you. He thinks you the most formidable tease on earth, and he can't stand teasing."

"Then what do you think he'll do?"

"My own private belief," said Elsa, speaking very

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deliberately, "is that he will pack up and go to South Africa without saying a word to anybody."

The catch in her friend's voice as she spoke these last words brought a most unusually serious look to Clara Henderson's habitually joyous face.

"Elsa," she said, "give me that letter."

"What are you going to do with it? No, I can't, Clara. It will look like running after the man."

"Well, then, I'm off."

"What are you going to do?"

"I want my letter."

"Your letter?"

"Yes. You must have sent me some letter, or young Harry wouldn't have brought me Mr. Tracey's."

"But it doesn't matter. I can tell you now you're here. It was to meet me, about that picnic, you know."

"Never mind," said Clara. "I'm going to have my letter."

And she whirled away.

"Mr. Tracey," said the junior clerk, who was becoming really uneasy by this time, "a lady wishes to see you."

"Tell the lady I'm very busy."

The young clerk stared at what seemed to him the obvious untruth of the allegation, but nevertheless he took the message.

"Mr. Tracey, the lady says she has some very important business to settle with you, and will you please speak to her for two minutes."

"Who is the lady?"

"I know her face, but she didn't give me her name. She wears a brown velveteen dress."

"Fair hair done up in a coil?"

The young clerk nodded.

"Mr. Edwards," said Tracey, "I don't think I'm very well to-day."

"I noticed that you weren't looking well before you went to lunch."

"Mr. Edwards, I think I'll go home for to-day. My cycle is in the back corridor, I think. Please tell Mr. Glinn I'll be all right to-morrow."

He was speeding away on his machine a second later. He had been riding about ten minutes, and fancied that he was safe, when he heard a voice behind him that made him start.

"You must be very busy to-day, Mr. Tracey," a clear voice called aloud, "and very ill. Do you always ride like this when you are very busy—and ill?"

Physically, Tracey kept his balance, only turning to raise his hat; morally, he collapsed.

"Oh, Miss Henderson," he said, "how do you do? No, I'm not feeling very well to-day."

"Still, you're not ill enough to be in bed, are you? I should like to speak to you, if you don't mind, just for a minute. You have a letter of mine, I believe."

All this conversation was going on as they cycled side by side in a suburban thoroughfare.

"I? Oh, yes. I beg your pardon. I didn't mean to read it."

"That's of no consequence," said Clara. "But please give it to me. I want to see what Elsa says——"

"Hi! Hi!" came from behind the two. "I say! Can't you go when you are full on, Mr. Tracey!"

It was young Harry.

"Sister says I gave you the wrong letter, so I brought you this when I had done oiling up my machine."

Young Harry held out a letter to Tracey.

All three with one accord dismounted by the roadside.

"Please give me my letter," said Clara.

And Tracey, with smiles and nervous apologies, produced Elsa's little note from an inside pocket.

"Will you allow me?" he asked, as he took his own letter from Harry.

Clara nodded and turned her attention to her own little note. Harry stood wide-eyed while these two read.

"Sister changed her mind after you went, Miss Clara," he said.

It took Tracey a long time to even glance through his three sheets of upright caligraphy. Clara displayed the patience and self-restraint of a waiting angel.

At last she said. "Now it wasn't so very dreadful, after all, was it, Mr. Tracey?"

"Oh, no," said he. "Not at all. Harry, please tell your sister for me that I'll be round this evening."

"No," said Clara. "You hurry on home and tell your sister that I've caught Mr. Tracey and I'm going to bring him with me now." Then as Harry flew down a side street by way of making a short cut, she turned to Tracey and asked: "How do you feel now? Better?"

"Thanks," said Tracey. "I feel decidedly better now."

W. Williams.

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AN INVOLUNTARY ACCOMPLICE.

We were a party of Government surveyors of the British provinces now known as the Dominion of Canada, then under the governorship of Sir John Harvey.

Halifax had been our starting point, my brother, Captain Perry, being the leader of the surveying party which was to be the *avant-coureur* of the first railroad in the province of Nova Scotia. We were to startle the wild fowl in their greenwood, and do away with the usefulness of the stage coach for ever.

I had inflicted my presence on the party with a very scant show of welcome, even my favourite brother declaring that a woman would be dreadfully in the way. But I promised to take no luggage, to stop for an indefinite time whenever it pleased them to drop me by the way, and to ride rough shod with the rest of the party.

There were two others smuggled in who had no right to be there. One was an old army friend of Richard's, a subaltern from the Eighteenth Regiment of West India Hussars, and the other a college youth who was in bad health and wanted exercise.

We had been out a couple of weeks, when one night we rode into a camp of Indians and learnt that we were about eighteen or twenty miles from the nearest tavern, which was on the road to the next town, a pretty place named Truro.

We set off, but it was nearly eleven o'clock when we reached the little wooden inn called "The Queen's Arms." It was all lighted up, and we found there were two reasons for this. One was that the landlord was ill, and the other was the entertainment of a party of hunters, one of whom was Frank Harvey, Sir John's wild son.

We hastened to pay our respects to him and his party as they were just leaving. They had killed a fine bear the night before, on the very road over which we had just passed, and had dined off fresh bear steak.

They rode away and we entered the inn and ordered supper, which was served after some waiting.

As soon as we had finished, the men followed Richard to the bar-room, there to smoke their pipes and drink a modicum of spirits, and I went upstairs to the room allotted to me. I was quite ready to retire, being conscious of a pleasurable sense of fatigue. But before I could reach my room the most inexplicable circumstance of my life happened.

There was a dim lamp burning on a table in the passage, evidently left there to light my way upstairs, and on the upper landing the light shone from an open door, which was possibly intended for the same purpose.

As I passed, the most piercing groans, cries, and blasphemous execrations issued from this room. What impelled me to stop, and finally to enter and offer the sick man, for it was he, my assistance, I can never know. Enough that I did so, and never ceased to regret it.

"Marie! Marie!" he was calling fiercely between oaths and cries; "Oh, Heaven, I die! I die! and nobody will help me! Oh, Marie! Maledictions on her!"

"Can I help you? Shall I call some one?" I asked, stepping just inside the door where the sick man could see me. "Are you in great pain?"

He looked at me with such a wolfish glare that I retreated a step towards the door.

Then he said fiercely:

"I know you not, but give me quick the bottle—no, no, that one on the shelf. Ah, mees, thanks—you are good!"

For I had hurriedly crossed the room, seized the bottle which he pointed out and handed it to him.

He was certainly a pitiable object. His head was wrapped in white linen bandages, and this, added to his

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ghastly pallor, made him look as if already dead. He was emaciated, and the lower part of his face was covered with a stubby growth of beard. As I gave him the bottle he said woefully:

"They let me here lie and nobody come! Oh, I so sell! An' they glad me die—she, the wretch—Marie."

I got out of the room as quickly as possible. The fact was that I knew nothing at all of sickness and had been brought up with habits of prompt obedience. Had he commanded me to find Marie for him I should have gone at once. I concluded that she was his wife, but I had seen no other woman than the slattern who set the table. Not knowing what whim he might take next, I hurried abruptly away and locked myself in my own room.

The room was filled with sunlight when I was awakened by my brother's knock.

"Hurry your dressing," he called in a low voice; "we must ride to Truro for breakfast."

"I will be ready," I returned, wondering why we were not to breakfast where we had supped.

When I came down ready for the saddle, I noticed that the door of the sick room was closed. I saw men talking in groups and everybody looked serious.

"What has happened, Richard?" I asked.

"The landlord is dead."

I was not surprised. He had looked very bad, but I felt a shudder at the thought that I had seen him, and that the great mystery had come so near me while I slept.

I did not tell my brother of the service I had rendered the sick man. I do not know why, for it was on the tip of my tongue. It might have been that I had a vague idea that he would not have approved of it. But as soon as we were off I asked if the man had died suddenly.

"He killed himself," was the answer.

"What! Impossible! How could a man so ill as he was manage to kill himself?" I asked, astonished.

"It seems that he was left alone," said the subaltern; "his wife was at the bar—a pretty wench, on my soul. There was a fellow hulking round that was sweet on her, and the sick man, who hadn't set his foot on the floor for six weeks, got up and took a bottle of laudanum off a shelf in the room and drank it every drop."

My brother must have seen my lips whitening, for he said sternly:

"There! No hysterics. We've had enough of the fellow. Let's talk of more cheerful subjects."

And he touched his own horse and mine with the whip, and we went off at a hard gallop and further talk was impossible.

Oh, the misery that I suffered in silence and alone, for I could not tell Richard of that fatal visit, that it was I who put the weapon of death into the man's nerveless hand, that in my blind stupidity I had not looked at the bottle, or even stopped to give the sick man the medicine, as a child might have done. Oh, the anguish that my ignorance cost me then, and long after, until I was satisfied in my own mind that the poor wretch had only anticipated death by a few hours.

It will be supposed that this was the end of the affair, but the most tragic part was yet to come.

My brother made a trip into a depth of woods by a circuitous route, and on this occasion I waited for him at a farm-house a day and night. At the close of the second day—it was the third one following the event I have just related—he joined me and we rode down the hills, intending to take the main road and return to Truro.

It was a dark, moonless night. I was in depressed spirits, and as the rest of the party talked and laughed or sang songs, I became more and more gloomy, thinking of the strange share I had taken in that man's death, which seemed as real to me as if I had voluntarily poisoned him.

We were descending a long hill, and as we neared the bottom we saw lights gleaming and heard voices. Then we saw a company of men carrying something between them. As they monopolised the road, my brother called a halt, and we waited to see who or what they were. Then we saw that they were carrying a rude coffin and that some of them were digging a grave.

"It must be a murder," said the subaltern, in a whisper, that no word might attract their attention.

It was certainly a weird performance, and I became so interested that I forgot to be frightened. The lights moving about looked fantastic; the dark figures of the men, outlined distinct and clear against the dark forest; that long, fearful box on the greensward—all looked like the moving spectacle of a dream.

It was soon over, and I expected that the men would go. But no. A sapling that grew near was cut down and the men began to shape one end of it.

"They intend to mark the spot, I declare," said the subaltern.

"Be quiet," said Richard, lifting a warning finger as our men pressed impatiently forward. Those men must have known that we were there, for several times our horses had neighed impatiently, but they took no notice of us, and there was something in that unusual and lawless proceeding that few would care to intrude upon.

Suddenly Richard said aloud: "I understand it all now."

"What is it? Who are they burying?" I asked.

"Wait," said my brother; "they will soon be gone, then I will tell you."

One man now took the sapling, which was shaped into a stake with one sharp end, and held it in what seemed to be the centre of that spot of new-made earth. Now the other one gave it a great blow. This he followed up by a second and a third. Then a fearful sound of rending wood was heard.

"Begorra, they've driven it straight through the body!" said the subaltern in a horror-stricken voice.

"It's an old custom; I've seen it before this," spoke up one of the men. "Did ye naught hear tell, captain, of buryin' a man that kills himself at the cross roads at the dark of the moon and drivin' of a stake through his heart?"

"I know!" exclaimed the subaltern suddenly; "it's that fellow of the 'Queen's Arms.' I never suspected it till now."

"Yes," said Richard. "I guessed as much. But I thought that barbarous practice had died out. Who knows that the poor wretch intended to kill himself? He may have only tried to ease his pain."

I clung to the warm neck of my horse and held myself together with a desperate clutch. The scene would have been frightful under any circumstances, but at that hour, and to me with my horrible secret, it was a ghastly picture. To add to its grotesque horror I heard the man who had explained the custom singing some horrible verses in an undertone to the college lad, every line of which burnt into my memory.

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As this dismal ceremony ended, Richard spoke to me.

"I remember hearing of this old custom," he said, "but never expected to see it. Are you shivering? It is a rough spectacle, isn't it? I expect, little woman, you wish you had stayed at home."

Ah, did I not wish it? But assuming a bravado I did not feel, I assured him that I was all right, and began to prepare myself for another ordeal, that of passing the new-made grave which lay directly in our route.

The men were gone now, and their lantern lights were grown pale in the shadows as they hurried away from their dismal work. When they were gone we started up our horses, which were restless and impatient to be off. I braced myself for a final effort. I must pass that accursed spot.

We galloped down the rest of the hill, and at the foot, Kitty, my sure-footed, dauntless mare, was seized with a fit of trembling, and stopped so suddenly she nearly threw me over her head. I kept my seat with difficulty, and as no one had noticed me they went on without me, and I was left alone by the side, the very edge of that awful spot.

My heart seemed to melt within me.

"*Grâce à Dieu!*" I called out in the extremity of terror.

A provincial malediction turned to a blessing on my lips. The mare ceased to tremble, and gathering her limbs she made one mighty leap that carried me into the midst of the party, which had not missed me.

It all happened many years ago, and until now I have kept my own counsel, and I leave it to intelligent readers to judge if I was not an innocent and unconcious accessory to a crime.

M. Carter.

A Little Heroine.

It was sunset in Santa Rosalia. The rainy season was on in Cuba, and low, rumbling thunder had been heard all the afternoon. That is, the people who lived in the little cluster of palm-thatched houses called Santa Rosalia thought it was thunder. And so it was—the distant roar of Spanish artillery that came up from the south.

One little cottage stood by the road-side, some distance apart from the others. It was the home of the Lazcanos.

The father, José, was dead. He had fallen a victim to the last, the "Ten Years'" War. Three sons were left to carry on the fight, and they were then with Brigadier Lopez Recio.

Only the mother and Maria, the sister, a little girl of twelve years, were left at home to watch and pray to God to aid the Cubans in their struggle for liberty.

Suddenly the noise of clattering hoofs came from the south-west. The still night air bore the unmistakable sound with distinctness. In an instant every head was at the open door.

Nearer and nearer came the galloping rider. He was alone. His horse was covered with foam, and panting like a tired hound. Up to the little gate of the Lazcano cottage he staggered, and then his rider reeled and almost fell into the arms of his mother.

"Merciful Heaven! Enrique, you are wounded, my boy——"

"It is no matter; I can still ride. The battle of Saratoga is raging. I am on my way to Colonel Pena. He does not know of it. We need him and his cavalry. Help me to a fresh horse and I'll catch Pena at Santa Lucia to-night. I must—"

The poor fellow never finished the sentence. He had fainted. The arms of tender women bore him into the house.

Poor little Maria followed, the tears streaming from her eyes. She watched them draw off the riding boots filled with her brother's blood. She brought water to moisten his parched lips. She saw the ugly wound in his hip and murmured through her gritting teeth:

"Bad Spaniards! Bad Spaniards! They will kill us all yet!"

And then her brother's eyes opened. The cold water had revived him. He tried to move, but only groaned in agony. Once more he strove to rise.

"Mother, some one, help me to my feet. I must go on—I must go on. I have ridden many miles since morning. There are only ten more to Santa Lucia and to Pena. We must have him."

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And with a mighty effort he rose to his feet. Then he wavered, tears of helplessness came into his eyes, and he sank back on the bed with a sob of anguish.

"To think that I should go so near to the end of my journey and then fail!"

"How were you wounded, my boy?"

"'Twas near El Desmayo—late this afternoon. I had changed horses at La Vinda an hour before. Suddenly I ran into a body of Spanish guerrillas from San Miguel. I could not fight them, there were too many, so I took up a ravine towards Isidro. They fired five volleys after me and gave chase. They knew I was on an important mission.

"My horse was fleet and strong and I got away, but carried with me one of their rifle balls. I tore off parts of my sleeve and roughly bound up the wound, but it still bled. I'm better now; I'm rested! I'll go on."

And again he tried to get on his feet.

"Enrique, my boy, it is impossible, you are weak. You cannot ride; the motion of the horse will cause you to bleed to death. Guido must go. Maria, tell him to saddle a fresh horse and get ready to ride to Santa Lucia."

Maria started towards the door, but her brother raised his hand in protest.

"Guido is only half-witted. He might start for Santa Lucia, but he would never find his way in the dark. Even if he reached the place he would forget whom he wanted to see."

"But there is no other in Rosalia," pleaded the mother.

"True! Therefore, I must go, wound or no wound. Maria, tell Guido to saddle a horse and bring it to the gate quickly. We are losing time."

"Brother, we can't let you go. I'll never see you again," and the poor child buried her head on her brother's neck. Then, suddenly rising, she exclaimed:

"Oh, why was I not a man? Cuba so needs men! Yes, I'll tell him to get the horse ready at once. Colonel Pena must go to help Gomez."

Turning, she kissed her brother's forehead and hurried out to the stables. Soon the quick gallop of a horse was heard approaching the house. But it did not stop at the gate. On it sped in the direction of Santa Lucia.

A moment later Guido, the half-witted black boy, wandered aimlessly into the room.

"Where is the horse, where is Maria?" inquired her brother.

"Gone!" replied the boy.

"Gone! Where?" exclaimed everyone in the room.

"I don't know. She said something about Santa Lucia, jumped on the horse's back, and it seems to me she's gone."

And so she was; the brave little girl, although not a soldier of Cuba, had taken her brother's place. She had gone to Pena, to tell him that the fight between Gomez and the Spanish general Castellens was raging at Saratoga, and that every Cuban in Camaguey was needed.

On the little heroine rode, in the darkness of the night. She had been born and brought up in the country, and she knew the way to Santa Lucia, although she had never before travelled in the dark. But she was riding to save Cuba. Darkness, danger, nothing daunted her. Bareheaded and alone, she urged her horse over the road at a pace which would have made most girls tremble with fear.

Not even when the tropical storm broke in all its fury about her did she hesitate. Lightning striking the tall "palma reals" made the horse shy many times and almost bolt along the road, but the brave little rider held on and never loosened rein until in sight of Pena's camp-fires.

"Who goes there?" suddenly called out the picket.

"Cuba!" answered the brave little patriot. She reined up her panting steed.

"Advance!" ordered the guard, and Maria, pale wet and dripping, rode forward.

"*Caramba!* It is a child. Who are you? What do you want?"

"I am Maria Lazcano. I want to tell Colonel Pena that there is a battle at Saratoga. General Gomez has only 530 men against over 2,000 Spaniards, and he needs help."

A few minutes later, almost fainting with fatigue and nervous strain, she was borne to the presence of Pena.

"*Dios mio!*" he exclaimed, as he listened to her story, and then gave the signal for his command to mount.

"You poor little thing, you should be in bed and asleep."

Wrapping his coat round her little, trembling, wet form, he sprang into his saddle and had an officer pass the child up to him. The order was given to march, and in his arms the fighting colonel of Camaguey carried the little heroine back to her home in Rosalia.

"Take her," he said, as he handed her over to her half-crazed mother. "She brought us the news. I'll speak of her to General Gomez. She deserves the rank of a major-general. She has saved her brother's life, and her brave deed may win the day at Saratoga."

LEONARD LEWIS.

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BETWEEN TWO STOOLS.

"This," said Mrs. Brierly, "this is the last time, Martha Wilkin, the very last time. I've spent enough upon you since your mother died, and I took charge of you, to marry six girls who had their senses about them. I've dressed you and I've let you go into company, and here you are, four-and-twenty, and not so much as engaged.

"It's perfectly annoying, and what I have to say is, if you don't settle your affairs this summer I'll give you no more chances. I expect to die in the workhouse as it is. Why, I was married at seventeen and your mother at eighteen! What's the use of advantages—and you have looks, Martha—if you don't make use of them?"

"I'm sure I don't know what you expect me to do. I can't very well propose to anyone," said poor Martha, ready to cry. "I do everything I can, and they make love to me, and they say all sorts of things. If they don't pop the question, how can I make them? There now, I suppose you waited until Uncle Brierly asked you to have him before you said you would?"

"Your uncle would have committed suicide if I had refused him," said Mrs. Brierly. "You may not believe it now, but I was a beauty in my youth. As for what you can do, you ought to know; but what I say is this: Come home engaged or I stop all this useless extravagance!"

With which speech she inflicted on her niece's cheek a lukewarm kiss, and bade her good-bye.

Aunt Brierly was a good business woman, and would not be likely to spend any more money on an unsaleable article, and Martha shivered at the prospect before her, if this summer's campaign should prove a failure.

On the whole she looked so ill when she arrived at Blackpool that her mirror told her that her best plan would be to retire early and take as much beauty sleep as possible, in view of any eligible gentlemen who might put in an appearance next day.

Fresh as a rose and dressed in her most becoming morning dress, Martha took her seat at the breakfast table next morning, and nestled close to Mrs. Newman, her relative and chaperon, in the most bewitching manner.

That lady, an ample matron with a loud voice, greeted her affectionately, and at once introduced her to two gentlemen who were her neighbours.

"Mr. Holt, Miss Wilkin; Miss Wilkin, Mr. Downhill. All old friends of mine. Charmed to make you acquainted with each other," and then devoted herself to breakfast, and left those who preferred it to waste time on conversation.

And so Miss Wilkin, having the field to herself, made eyes at both her new acquaintances, and shrewdly noted, amid her infantile gigglings, that both were smitten.

They were of the age, or rather of the ages, at which the heart is most susceptible to Cupid's arrows. Edmund Holt was a youth of twenty, and James Downhill was at least sixty-five.

Never before had young Mr. Holt had such bewitching attention offered him. And as for old Mr. Downhill, his memory brought back some dove-like glances, such as those Miss Wilkin showered upon him, from the long-vanished years of his youth.

To cut a long story short, Miss Wilkin, having discovered that Mr. Holt was very rich and an orphan, and that Mr. Downhill was a very wealthy bachelor, at once set her cap for both gentlemen, resolving to accept the one who proposed first. She loved neither.

A girl of her views, who had made a rush into the matrimonial market with but one stipulation—that the man she married should have money—was scarcely likely to have a heart. A husband meant to her easy circumstances, freedom from her Aunt Brierly's incessant "nagging," liberty to flirt as much as she chose with ineligibles, who were often very interesting, and freedom from the dread of being an old maid.

Mrs. Newman, who was, on the whole, a good-natured woman, willing to see her friends well settled, furthered the little affair to the best of her ability. There were walks, rides, drives, chatting in cosy corners, and at last a proposal.

It came from Mr. Holt. Youth is hasty. Age is slow. Mr. Downhill was just making up his mind to do it, when Mr. Holt did it. And Miss Wilkin said "yes," and would have fallen into his arms but that they were in full sight of an old lady who had just directed her opera glass full at them from a window.

"Yes," Martha had answered, and young Holt blushed rosy red.

And afterwards, when they had had dinner, Martha locked herself in her room and wrote to her Aunt Brierly. Her letter ended thus:

"So you see I'm engaged, and you can't tease me any longer. I don't suppose poor Holt will ever set the river on fire, but he's a good-natured fellow, and I can twist him round my finger."

Mrs. Brierly signified her approval by return of post and Martha's mind was at rest. It did not trouble her much that in less than a week a telegram summoned Holt to town. She could use the fast-fading days of freedom better without an engaged lover at her side, and she certainly made the most of them.

She plunged into flirtation in a way that frightened even Mrs. Newman, and was happier than she had ever been since her search for a husband commenced. As for poor Mr. Downhill, she quite snubbed him, now that she had no views concerning him.

Meanwhile the absent Holt wrote love letters, and she answered them.

Poor Martha! Life is certainly full of ups and downs.

One morning Mrs. Newman opened a London paper and, having glanced down the column of marriages and deaths, gave a faint shriek and looked at Martha in a terrified way. The latter snatched the paper and saw this:

"Suddenly, on the 9th, Edmund Holt."

Edmund Holt—there was no doubt of it. Mrs. Newman looked at Martha expecting to see her faint. To her surprise, the young lady, though very serious, was quite calm.

"Poor fellow," she said; "I'm very sorry. Do be

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quiet, dear Mrs. Newman! Don't let's have a scene. No one knows we were engaged, and you need not tell them. I don't want my season spoilt."

Then she rose and went to her room, cried a little,

His memory brought back some dove-like glances such as those Miss Wilkin showered upon him.

bathed her face, and went downstairs to charm Mr. Downhill by beaming upon him and asking him how he could be so dreadful and neglect her so.

In a word, now that the old love was gone, she "took up with the new," and in a week Mr. Downhill had proposed and was accepted.

And the estimable Mrs. Brierly received an account of the situation which greatly surprised her.

Old Mr. Downhill was rather more obstinate than ever Mr. Holt had been. He asserted his rights, and insisted upon the open wearing of the engagement ring.

There was no more flirtation for Miss Wilkin, and everyone knew what had occurred. She wore a valuable diamond ring on her finger, and was guarded by her old beau from morning until night. He even wrote her several notes between their parting at night and meeting at nine in the morning, and in one of them he referred to her flirtation with young Holt.

Miss Wilkin was one of those unlucky victims to love of letter writing who can never resist putting things down in black and white. She wrote this sentence in her reply:

"You naughty, naughty goose! How could I care for a stripling like that? Poor fellow! he was very nice; but only a boy, you know."

And when she had written it she thought how much jollier it was to run about with him than to sit in a corner with old Mr. Downhill, who was always afraid of catching cold, and who would not let her dance because he could not. Still he was rich, and she was engaged at last.

One evening she strolled down the parade with her betrothed, leaning on his arm in the most confiding manner. The evening train was in, and people were waiting for the newcomers.

As the vehicles rattled past someone was seen waving a white handkerchief. A young man with very red cheeks—and then someone called out:

"Why it's Holt, alive and well!"

As the fly pulled up and he sprang out of the vehicle, they rushed toward him to shake hands and tell him that he had been supposed dead.

"Death in the paper, you know, old fellah," said one exquisite. "Weally vewy cuyous how death could be in the papaw when you weren't dead, you know."

"It was poor grandfather. I was named after him, you know. I never thought what people would think. I——"

Then he turned pale, fearing that the awful news had killed his poor Martha.

Miss Wilkin had seen him and had dragged Downhill away; she was really quite faint.

Downhill hurried her back to the house, not quite knowing what was wrong, for he had not noticed Holt. At her own request he left her alone in the drawing-room; she knew what must come.

A few minutes later Holt rushed in.

"My darling!" he exclaimed. "Did you think I was dead?"

"Yes—I—did!" gasped Martha.

He bent over her and caught her hands and pressed them to his lips.

"Oh, I couldn't die and leave you," he said. "I——"

But here a hand came down upon his shoulder and a thin voice breathed in his ear:

"Young man, I am very glad to see you restored, as it were, from the grave, but I can't allow such liberties with the lady who is going to marry me."

Mr. Downhill had returned unexpectedly.

Martha, not knowing what to do, took refuge in tears and silence. The gentlemen grew furious, and finally walked away with each other, with "pistols for two and coffee for four" in their faces.

But this was eighteen hundred and ninety-seven, and much is thought of documentary evidence. In a retired spot, where they could not be overheard, the hapless Martha's letters were produced. Poor little Holt read with the bitter agony of youth the woman's denial of her love for and engagement with him, written a week after his supposed death, and old Downhill gave a groan over another buried hope, as he read some lines written to Holt, in which he was set down as a superannuated creature only taken notice of out of pity.

After this the two gentlemen shook hands. They had no quarrel with each other, now. Neither of them wanted to marry Martha Wilkin. She received two little notes that evening telling her so.

That was last summer. This year Martha is not going away for a holiday.

Mrs. Brierly having dismissed her housemaid, for reasons that were clearly her own, it is a matter of wonder to the neighbours who the person who now cleans the windows can be.

It is barely possible that this is Martha. Mrs. Brierly is a woman of her word, and she considers her niece's chance of matrimony quite over.

DAISY GODWIN.

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HIS OWN STORY.

"HALLO, Marsden! I declare I didn't see you!"

Vickery had stumbled upon an elderly man seated in an arm-chair at the farthest window of the club room, which he had thought was empty.

"Who is it?" asked Marsden lazily. "Oh, how do, Vick? Where've *you* fallen from? Come, sit down and have some of this. It's innocent—claret and vichy. I say, isn't it hot!"

"As it happens," said Vickery, dropping into the seat on the other side of the small table, "you're the very man I wanted to see. I want to ask your help on behalf of a young fellow who——"

"Ah!"

The elderly man put down the glass that had been at his lips; and the interruption seemed a little peevish. With singular inappositeness he went on in a drawling voice:

"I was just thinking when you came up, Vick. Something I don't often do this sort of weather. I've been watching two beggars—one blind, the other lame. They've picked up some money from charitable people, but I believe they are frauds."

Vickery bridled a trifle.

"You misunderstand me," he said, "if you think I am asking you for pecuniary assistance. Nothing of the kind."

The elderly man smiled, and Vickery continued: "I've a reason for asking your assistance—your influence. Would you—er—is it too hot for you to listen to a little story? I'm going round presently to see this young man, and——"

"You want candour, Vick? Of course. Well, to be absolutely truthful, stories, and especially little ones, send me to sleep. You won't mind? Yes, I'd like to hear it."

Vickery looked annoyed as he leant back.

"Oh, it doesn't amount to anything," he said carelessly. "It wouldn't interest you."

Marsden leant forward; and there was light enough to show that his face had grown suddenly sober.

"Vickery," he said, "you misunderstand me. There's nobody in the world more serious than I am at all times. If it's beneath the surface, I'm only glad that I hide it so well. I'm not a very old man, Vickery; to be explicit, I'm fifty-seven; but I've had—oh—troubles that make me feel seventy. Some time, if you care to hear, I'll tell you *my* story—though Heaven knows it's one I've no reason for wishing to tell. No, my friend, you don't know me—nobody does; and if I'm commonly jovial and careless, it's because I hate to be otherwise, and have a terror of being a wet blanket." Brightening all at once, he added: "Come, the story."

Vickery lighted his cigar procrastinatingly.

"If you really care to hear it," he began slowly, "I'll make it short. I'm much interested in the young man, and I knew you could do so much if you would.

"This young fellow is ill and poor, and out of work, and that sort of thing; and that's the reason I'm down here. Miller his name is—or, rather, that's what he call's himself; there's reason for believing it assumed, as you'll see presently. Anyhow, he's the son of a rich father, a college man, and has been well brought up.

"Well, while he was at college, he was taken with typhoid and brought home. For several weeks he lay next door to death, then, at the crisis, took a sudden turn for the better and got well. So far so good.

"During his illness a trained nurse had been engaged for him. He believes that her extraordinary care pulled him through. What he believes is, of course, only of moment in the light of subsequent events. The upshot of it was that no sooner did he get out of bed than he married her—secretly. You've heard of that sort of thing before, eh?

"Well, of course it's quite in order to put more than half the blame—if blame there is—on the woman. It's quite possible to bring in her undue influence, her insinuation into his affections, and so on. I believe it's generally done, but in this particular case I happen to know it was otherwise.

"That part of it is immaterial, however; the point is, they got married. And when the family heard of it there was a pretty state of affairs. No sensible man would blame them for feeling cut up about it, when he was an only son and there were daughters; but young

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Miller—he was barely twenty, I believe—young Miller, boyishly, did not take kindly to the things that were said, and he and his father quarrelled. If I conjecture rightly, the old man ordered him out of the house. At any rate, there was a bother.

"The young woman he married, mind you, was about as well born and well educated as his own sisters; I can venture that because I know her. She was very young, too, but she was sensible. When she realised what the marriage had cost him, she was also self-sacrificing enough to want him to leave her and return to his family.

"And that's one thing I like about the boy. I'm not sure the words were used, of course, but I can very well imagine him to have said: 'I live or die with my wife.' H'm—on second thought, he wouldn't have been so theatrical, but in any case that's what he meant.

"Well, the young pair, with perhaps money enough in hand to keep them a month, got a little furnished room in some out-of-the-way region of the East-end and began housekeeping. The wife could have earned pretty fair wages, probably, and the young man little or nothing. One was practical, the other had a rudimentary education in the classics, which was for the moment a burden to him. But of course he could not let his wife work. The consequence was that in a very short time they were nearly starving.

"You see, so far, everything was going on quite like a book. Starvation came nearer. What with low diet, or no diet, and fruitless wandering about the streets in search of employment, young Miller was soon in bed again. Affairs were now at a grand crisis. Here was a sick husband in the house, no money, no friends, nothing. What was to be done?

"If it were still going on like the book there would have been a providential visitation of the family, eager for reconciliation, a few tears and other properties, and the curtain would have fallen happily. Or, perhaps, the girl wife would have gone to the obdurate parents—obdurate's the word, isn't it?—on her knees, and accomplished a like result by the force of her beauty. But nothing of the kind happened.

"What was to be done? Well, sir, that girl knew. She had to nurse her husband, you see, and she had to make some money. The doing of one or the other would have been nothing to her, but she had to do both. Without hesitating a moment she had her husband taken to a private hospital, where she was known, and obtained a nurse's place in the same establishment, her services being accepted as payment for her husband's maintenance.

"It was for several weeks. Then, as soon as he was able to be out again, young Miller began to fret about his wife's working—she had retained her place, you understand. But what else was there to do? The girl was sensible, of course, and the boy was sensible, too, only it cut him deep to let things go on that way. And at last he got a place. Yes, as a messenger and porter! But the pay was dreadful!

"But I managed to get him a situation with a friend of mine, where he earned thirty-five shillings a week, and he insisted that his wife should give up her work. But she said she wouldn't; they could begin to put something by in the bank, she said. And for six months or so she didn't give up. Then she had to."

Vickery paused to strike a match to re-light his cigar. By the flickering blaze he saw that his friend lay back in his chair, with closed eyes. He asked contritely:

"Do I bore you, Marsden?"

"Not at all, Vick. Quite—ah—quite interested."

"Well, as I was saying—the baby. That, of course, settled the question. The girl had to give up her place. They had saved a little money, and everything was going along smoothly. They were happy and contented.

"But one day little Mrs. Miller—pretty little thing, too! blue eyes, yellow hair, peachy cheeks—well, little Mrs. Miller came in to see me. She knew I'd done something for her husband. I can remember her visit just as if it were yesterday. Her big blue eyes wore a wondering look, and her face was whiter than your handkerchief.

"'Pardon me,' said the little woman, 'but I was just passing by, and I thought I'd call to see if you could tell me where I can find my husband—at—at this time of day.' (She stammered like that.) 'I know so little about the city,' she said. Do you see, she was 'just passing by'—eh?

"I looked at her a moment, surprised, I dare say, and asked if he wasn't at the place where he worked. She looked past me, and said she'd just been there, and he wasn't in.

"'Sit down a minute, Mrs. Miller,' I said; 'I want to talk to you.' I began to suspect something wrong, you see. She sat down, and looked at me steadily with those big eyes.

"'Mrs. Miller,' I said—I felt there was no use beating about the bush—'you haven't seen your husband this morning?'

"She merely looked frightened, and gave a little gasp.

"'He didn't come home last night?' I went on probing as gently as I could.

"Without answering directly, she cried: 'Oh, do you think anything could have happened to him?'

"The whole thing was clear as daylight. I knew in one instant exactly what had happened: young Miller

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had fought it out as long as he could, had been approached by his relatives, and had deserted his wife.

"The conclusion wasn't logic, however, but impulse; he was a young fellow of strong enough character, but I was aware, from what they had both let drop, that he had been an affectionate son and brother, and I threw into the balance the many influences which might naturally be counted as being brought to work upon him.

"As I say, that conclusion struck me instantly. And the heart-rending part of it was this: the little deserted wife divined exactly what was passing through my head.

"'Oh, not *that!*' she cried. 'You are mistaken!' Then, abashed and conscience-stricken at having bared her mind, she corrected herself, 'I mean something must have happened to my husband—some accident——'

"It was painful, sir, to see that little woman beating about for a plausible excuse. I saw I'd hurt her feelings, and tried to make it better by saying: 'I sincerely hope nothing has happened to your husband, Mrs. Miller. Upon the whole I think it's very unlikely—that is, anything serious. Have you made inquiries of the authorities?—but wait,' I interrupted myself when I saw her lips begin to quiver—'of course, it's too soon to think of that; he's doubtless merely been delayed somewhere.'

"And then I went on to give her what comfort I could, which was, of course, none at all.

"I went myself, just as soon as she was gone, to police headquarters, and had word sent to the hospitals and to the station-houses; but at none of them had he been heard of.

"In a day or two I put advertisements in the papers, calling upon him by his initials, and also left his description with detectives; the result was the same.

"I congratulated myself lugubriously on my intuition; he had certainly been bribed to go home. With even as little as I then knew of him, I had been trying to persuade myself that the going was merely the opening wedge of a general reconciliation; but that seemed now a false hope.

"As I have said, I doubt whether Miller is his right name. Had I known it, it would have been easy, or at least easier, to trace him. His wife knew, of course, because they were married in his right name, and merely assumed the other to avoid any pursuit by his family; but I believe she'd have stood the rack sooner than appeal to him, or to his people, deserted as she was.

"Well, at the end of a week, Mrs. Miller came in again. I had seen her at intervals since her husband's disappearance, and always she had appeared hopeful, even confident. I say appeared; what she really thought, of course, I don't know, but I honestly believe she never for an instant doubted him. I believe that truly, incomprehensible as it may seem in the light of the probabilities of the case.

"Well, Mrs. Miller came in, her face all rosy and the big blue eyes brilliant.

"'My husband!' she panted, before I could get out a word.

"'Yes, Mrs. Miller,' I said.

"'He is safe!'

"'I am very glad to hear it!' I said heartily. 'Where——'

"'I thought I'd come and tell you,' she interrupted, blushing and diffident; 'you've been so kind.'

"It seems that he had been attacked by some ruffians, who may have thought that he had some of the firm's money on him. He was found unconscious, and taken to a hospital, where he remained for a week before he really recovered full consciousness. In his semi-lucid intervals, they had not been able to get anything out of him.

"How was it that my inquiries led to nothing? Goodness knows! That is one of those things which cannot be explained.

"That was nearly three months ago. He lost his situation and they are nearly starving, for he has only picked up odd jobs.

"On Monday I had a letter from him. He is after a place with a good salary in the office of an engineering company. I am sure he could fill the post well, but he has no influence, and you know how those things go.

"And that's what I came for—to see if I couldn't help him. Marsden, I believe you're a director of that very company. I want the use of your name." Vickery pulled out his watch, and added: "It's getting late. I'm going round to see them, and haven't time to talk now. But to-morrow, if you don't mind——"

Marsden leant forward to look out of the window.

"H'm; beautiful night, isn't it?" he remarked. "Seems cooler out, too. Er—suppose I walk over with you? Like a business man, I'm cautious. If I'm to do anything for these people you've been talking about——"

"With all my heart," answered Vickery. "I'd like you to see them, and talk with them. We'll have a hansom. Besides, you look rather knocked up. My story—eh? No, but seriously, you ought to get out of town; this weather's enough to kill a man."

The cab took them to the East end. They alighted in a very poor neighbourhood, in front of a dilapidated house.

Vickery led the way through the open door, and up a steep flight of stairs. The younger man stopped before a door and knocked.

"I think this is the place," he said.

It was a minute before the door opened; and then a woman with a baby in her arms stood before him. Her cheeks grew rosy, her eyes kindled.

"Oh, Mr. Vickery!" she cried, "Henry's got the place! He——"

She broke off abruptly and reddened even more when she saw the other man behind.

Marsden brushed past his friend and the young woman. In a corner he had seen a rough couch, and upon it, hollow-cheeked and feverish-eyed, a youth. He crossed the room rapidly and sank to his knees beside it. There were some incoherent cries.

The young woman looked upon the scene for an instant, then turned her blue eyes wonderingly upon Vickery. The infant in her arms, with eyes just as blue and infinitely more wondering, looked at him also.

For a moment there was neither sound or movement in the room. Then the child, frightened doubtless at the foolish blankness of Vickery's face, began to cry.

In another moment Marsden had risen and come back to the door. He put out his hand to the woman. Then he turned to confront his astonished companion, who had become rooted to the spot.

Marsden mopped his forehead savagely with his handkerchief; then, with two wet lines down his plump cheeks, he tried to speak. An instant his lips moved mutely; but at last he blubbered:

"Oh, bother it, man! Can't you—can't you see you were telling me *my* story?"

Silas Green.

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THE TOUR OF THE FOUR.

It was Saturday afternoon, and I was on my way, in an omnibus, to make a long-delayed call upon a distant aunt—no favourite of mine—who, I knew, must be pining for my society. I had taken the only vacant seat, opposite a very pretty girl who held a huge box in her lap, while another occupied the space beside her.

She had cast a quick glance at me when I entered, as if she thought she knew me, and, indeed, there was something familiar about her own face; but I was at a loss to recall it.

She was a well-dressed girl, and the enormous cardboard boxes did not at all harmonise with her neat costume. Of this she tried to appear serenely unconscious, as well as of the fact that everyone was looking at her, and she really did it very well.

The boxes were tied and knotted carefully in every direction with stout twine; moreover, the covers and the sides were punched full of good-sized holes, and at last it dawned upon my slow comprehension that there must be something alive inside.

Hardly had I reached this astute decision, when a prolonged and mournful *meaou* from the box beside her betrayed its correctness. The passengers began to smile broadly, and the girl's cheeks flushed, but her lips twitched on the verge of laughter as she bent over the box and appeared to whisper words of comfort through the cover.

We had reached the suburbs and were jolting along not far from my destination, when the 'bus stopped to admit a lady, for whom the girl hastened to make room by hastily lifting the heavy box beside her on to the other in her lap. The box slipped, came down with a dull thud, and a sound of rending cardboard. There was a sudden frantic *meaou*, and through the side of the lower box was thrust a black head with bulging yellow eyes.

The sudden movement of its prison cell had also greatly disturbed the occupant of the upper box, and with wild kickings and scratchings a corner of the cover was unexpectedly loosened, and another head protruded.

With a little ejaculation of horror, the girl clapped a hand over each furry head, and tried to force them back. Several of us sprang at once to her assistance, with imminent danger of choking both cats, but among us all we succeeded only in increasing their struggles, to the further collapse of the boxes.

At that moment the girl, looking up wildly, cried:

"Oh! stop, conductor, please! I want to get out here."

Raising my hat, I begged her to allow me to assist, and forthwith seized one cat by the neck, entangled in a chaos of string and smashed cardboard, and followed her, she grasping the other beast in a like condition.

She thought I meant merely to help her off the omnibus, and looked surprised when I allowed the vehicle to go on and stated my intention of helping her to carry the cats to her destination.

She opened her lips as if to speak. She looked at me doubtfully, then at the struggling cats, which we each held at arm's length, and saw the folly of refusing my offer.

"I was taking them to the Home," she volunteered simply.

"I beg your pardon," I queried in stupid perplexity, "*the Home?*"

"Yes, the Home for Stray Cats; it is somewhere near here—close by the Common. These are both stray cats. I had to take them in, but I couldn't keep them, poor things—I have three already," she went on to explain with sweet compassion.

"I should say not," I assented fervently, as the grey villain I held began to struggle and scratch afresh in frantic efforts to regain his straydom.

She looked reproachful. We walked on in silence for a few yards. Then she spoke again:

"This is very unconventional," she began hesitatingly, "and I don't know that I ought to let you help me, Mr.—ah——"

"Smith," I prompted her.

She raised her eyebrows and looked at me queerly, and I saw that she believed it to be an *alias*, which frightened her.

"But there is nothing else for you to do," I assured her earnestly. "It may be unconventional, but it's common sense."

I tried to look affectionately at the cats.

"Do you know where this Home is, Miss—er—er——"

She hesitated a moment, then her eyes twinkled.

"Miss Jones," she said.

I saw at once that she had not given me her real name, though I had been more frank.

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She had launched into a vivid and enthusiastic description of the charitable refuge, and I was growing quite interested in it, when, with a mighty effort, the black cat which she was carrying kicked himself free of her arm, and was off like an inky streak.

"Oh, catch him!" she cried, turning piteously to me; "do catch him, Mr. Smith!"

Her tone was not to be resisted, and another moment saw me in the chase. The other cat, which I held under my arm, grew frantic at my pace, and struggled madly with my ill-protected flesh; but I heeded not.

Such a chase! Down the street, over the Common, did I pursue the wretched creature. I might be chasing him to this day but for the tangled mess of string and cardboard which he dragged after him, and which at last caught in a bush in a private garden.

I grasped him by the scruff of his neck, and breathed in his tattered ear some words not calculated to soothe his wounded spirits; then, with a beast under each arm, I strode triumphantly back to meet Miss Jones, who was hurrying towards me.

"Oh, you are so kind!" she faltered, as I came up. "How can I ever thank you? Here is your hat; I picked it up in the street."

I told her, of course, that I was sufficiently thanked already, as I sat on the step of a house recovering my breath, while she bent over me, trying to disentangle the graceless cats from their harnesses, and from one another, and from me.

The spirit of our adventure was fast sweeping away the barrier of conventional restraint, and she laughed aloud at the spectacle which I presented, and I know it must have been an unusually picturesque one, sitting there breathless and hatless.

"Patience on a monument," she laughed.

"If you will represent Grief, I think I can feel it worth while to smile at her," I remarked, with a feeble attempt to illustrate my words.

"Oh, don't smile," she hastened to add. "It was so much funnier before when you glared so tragically at the poor cats, Jer— Mr. Smith."

I almost thought she was going to say something else. But how could she know my name was Jerome? It must have been imagination. And yet again I caught that half-familiar look, which once more set me to puzzling my brain in vain.

We again took up our line of march, Miss Jones gathering up the black cat in both arms, and I holding the grey one less tenderly but quite as firmly. Thus we proceeded for nearly half a mile, till we came to a quaint little lonely structure, which from certain sounds we judged to be the Home.

Imagine our dismay on seeing this notice:

"Closed to visitors on Saturdays and Sundays. No animals received after 2 p.m. on Saturday."

"What shall I do?" asked Miss Jones in despair.

I looked at Miss Jones; I looked at her cat, and at mine; I looked about me, and suggested turning them loose. But she would not entertain the proposal.

"But—why, you must have some engagement," she said, as if this possibility had just occurred to her. "I must not bother you any longer—er—Mr. Smith. You have been so awfully kind already."

Her gratitude was charming; she had beautiful brown eyes. I assured her that I had no engagement. Aunt Rosa never knew how near she came to the great happiness of my company.

"But," I went on, "you simply can't carry both those cats," and Malkin gave a howl of anguish.

"Oh, yes, I could!" she replied, but somewhat doubtfully, as Tom voiced a contradictory sentiment.

"No," I said firmly, "as you won't desert the cats, Miss Jones, so I will never desert you until you have disposed of them to suit yourself."

It was a rash promise, but I was now thoroughly interested in the game. Even playing knight-errant to homeless cats (and a pretty girl) was better than an afternoon with Aunt Rosa.

She decided that we should try to dispose of them to some inhabitants of the place. She went on one side of the street and I on the other. I draw a veil over what passed. When we had at length succeeded in disposing of the brutes we were tired and hungry.

"I think they will really be happier than they would have been in the Home, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes, doubtless it is better—for the *cats*," I replied significantly.

"They were very nice cats," she retorted.

"I have nothing against them," I answered promptly. "On the contrary, I owe them a very interesting and thrilling afternoon, and a most pleasant acquaintance with—Miss Jones."

Her face changed immediately, and a return to conventional dignity took the place of her simple freedom.

"And now, when I have thanked you most heartily for your very great kindness, Mr. Smith," she said primly, "I will bid you good afternoon. I am going back on the next 'bus."

"So am I," I began boldly, but I stopped at the almost frightened look on her face.

"You—you mustn't," she said quickly. "We—we are strangers, you know, after all. I really—you know you promised as soon as the cats were disposed of—"

I argued in vain about this absurd convention of Society. She was firm, and I had to give in.

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"Very well," I said sadly. "I will leave you then; but really, Miss Jones, I must take this 'bus too, for I have to get back, and you know it is rather late."

She saw the implied reproach, for I had wasted a whole afternoon upon her cats.

"Well—then you must sit at the other end of the 'bus, or on top, please," she insisted. "I know I am doing only what is right to ask you this."

She was adorably confused and troubled, and so of course I had to agree to this also, absurd as it was. We formally said good-bye at the corner, and she thanked me very prettily again.

Then the 'bus came up, and as it was full outside, I went inside and took a seat at the other end. What an absurd situation!

When she alighted she did not even look my way.

For weeks I was haunted by the puzzling familiarity of Miss Jones's face. And yet—knowing that this was not her real name, I did not see how I could manage to meet her and gain an introduction. It was maddening, for I had never wanted anything so much in my life before as to renew our acquaintance.

I haunted the street into which I had seen her disappear, in the hope of learning her address even, but in vain.

I decided to write an exaggerated account of that excursion, and send it to the local paper of my native place.

One morning, three weeks later, I received a copy of the *Autocrat*. I scanned the pages eagerly for my story—for even my own history of that afternoon with "Miss Jones" seemed precious to me. I found the article and was pleased to see that they had illustrated it. But what—! How the deuce—! I looked at the first picture a second time. It was I myself, the very image, helping Miss Jones herself from the 'bus, with the two cats, as natural and ugly as life, between us. What did it mean?

I turned the pages. Yes—there was I, hatless and undignified—the artist was no flatterer—scouring wildly after the escaping cat, the other hanging under my arm. Here we sat on the step, liberating the cats; here, two weary pilgrims, we stood in despair outside the Home; here was I, hawking a cat from door to door, and lastly, our dignified return at opposite corners of the 'bus.

The whole story was told in a series of most clever pictures—it needed no words by Jerome Smith to complete the tale. It was all there. And the artist?

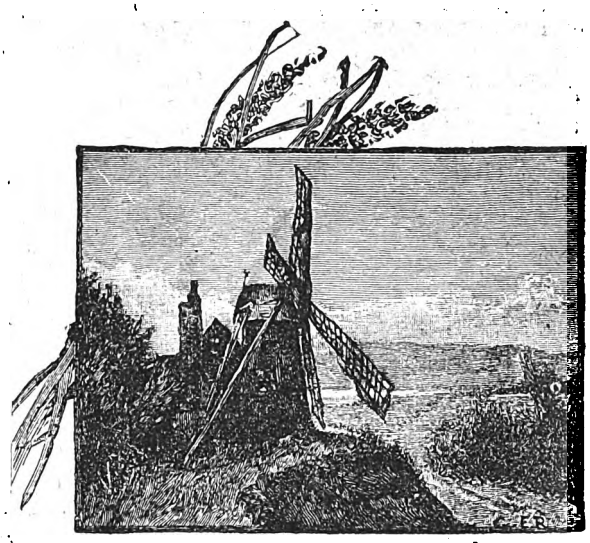
There was only one eye-witness who could have caught those sketches. I searched for the name eagerly, and at last I found it in a corner of one picture: "W. Irene Jones."

Her name was Jones then, after all. Hurrah! Now I could find her address from the publishers. Then a thought struck me: Why had she also favoured the *Autocrat*? "W. Irene Jones"—suddenly I understood it all—her familiar face, the smile that haunted me.

Why, I knew the girl! She was Winny Jones, of course, my little playmate of fifteen years ago, whom I had not seen since I left Shefton! My little Winny, whom as a boy of twelve I had carried pickaback, and teased and kissed and romped with, a baby of five. And now I thought of it, I remembered that when I was in Shefton last they had said she had come to London to study art.

I lost no time, you may be sure, in learning Winny's address. Two days later I called upon her.

She entered the room with flushed cheeks and her



eyes laughing to match the corners of her pretty mouth. She held my card in her hand.

"So it was your real name after all," she said, as she stretched out her hand cordially. "I thought——"

"So did I," I interrupted eagerly.

"I thought," she went on, "that it might be a false name, but I was almost sure it was really you. For you see I remembered you, though it is so long."

"But why didn't you say so, then?" I asked half impatiently.

She pouted:

"Why—you didn't recognise me, and I was provoked. I wasn't going to be the only one to remember."

"But a girl changes so much more than a man in ten years," I apologised. "You were only a little girl when I left, and even your name is different now. I used to call you 'Winny.'"

"And I almost called you 'Jerry' lots of times that afternoon, just as I used to," she laughed. "But I tried to be very dignified, so that you shouldn't guess."

And so we chatted happily about the events of that wonderful day, and she told me how she had sent the sketches to the *Autocrat* as a joke on me, not thinking that I had sent a story.

"I was sure you would see them," she said.

"And call?" I boldly hinted.

But she indignantly scorned the imputation, and we almost quarrelled. Then I asked what she thought of the ending of my story.

She flushed a delicious rosy pink.

"It was impossible—an altogether far-fetched and improbable ending," she declared emphatically.

"Oh, no, I don't think so." I rejoined. "I think it very natural and just what the story needed to make it end well. Don't you like stories to end well?"

We argued the matter for some time from a literary standpoint, and later we touched upon it from other standpoints. And in the end I succeeded in convincing her.

So it happened that our adventure finally did "end well" after all. And I hope each of those cats has as happy a home as I now enjoy. DOWNE PATRICK.

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LOVE'S DECEPTION.

Mr. Thomas Ward was a client of our firm for about thirty years. He had two daughters, Maud and Helen; they were twins, and as like as two peas.

I know that many a joke has been made about the resemblance of twins, but in this case it was an absolute fact that friends and relatives couldn't tell one from the other. And the striking similarity of form and features remained as they grew up—which is not always the case. The girls themselves, full of fun, took a delight in the general mystification, and purposely dressed alike in every detail.

Howard Britten paid particular attention to Maud, and after the first few weeks, as the matter began to assume a serious aspect, Helen ceased to pretend that she was Maud. But Britten himself admitted that, even when he thought he could well distinguish the one from the other, he occasionally made a mistake.

When Ward saw that it really was serious, he made inquiries about Britten, and finding that he was not possessed of a fair quantity of this world's goods, put his foot down, and said that Britten should not have her unless he could "give a better account of himself."

I pass over the tears and expostulations. Ward was firm, and Britten proud; the upshot of it was that the young man went to South Africa, and correspondence between the two was forbidden.

Luck was against the young man at first, and he toiled on for months without getting any nearer the goal. Once or twice he was tempted to send a few lines to his sweetheart, but he scorned to break the condition imposed by Ward.

After many months luck favoured Howard; in a short time after the change of fortune he felt that he had enough for his purpose. With his suddenly acquired wealth he could return to the old country, and purchase a share in a business, or do something else that would please Mr. Ward and gain his consent.

He sat down to write to Maud; but after having written a few lines, he tore up the paper. He would be his own messenger. How sweet the meeting would be! No one knew the depth of his love for her!

He sent word to his relatives in Ireland that he was coming home, but that he had first to go to London on an important matter. On arriving in London, he lost no time in making his way to the home of his sweetheart. A disappointment awaited him; the family had removed to a country house in Surrey. He obtained the address, and went off.

As soon as he came within sight of Heath Lodge, he recognised an old man-servant, who was doing something outside the house.

"Is Miss Maud in?" Howard asked the old man. "Did you hear what I said?" he added impatiently, as the man looked at him with a peculiar expression, but made no reply. "You know me, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," replied the man at length, slowly. "You'll find the mistress in the garden."

In his haste Howard forgot the old man's behaviour. In the distance, on a garden seat, he saw a form that he knew well. She had her back to him, and he crept along quietly, rejoicing in the glad surprise he was preparing for his beloved Maud. He reached the seat, and called her gently by name.

The girl started up with a cry and faced him. Before she could utter a word he was by her side and had folded her in a loving embrace, while he kissed her passionately.

"Maud, my darling, home again to claim you!"

At first the girl made a feeble effort to disengage herself, but giving way to an impulse, returned his kisses.

The rapture of the meeting over, they went into the house to find Mr. Ward. She left him in the drawing-room while she sought her father. She was gone so long that he began to get impatient, but at length the old gentleman appeared and welcomed him effusively. A few minutes later Howard asked after Helen, and learnt the sad news that she had died of fever twelve months previously. That was really the cause of their removal.

Six weeks after his arrival in London Howard was married to his sweetheart, and took her to a new home in Ireland, near his own people. It was Mr. Ward's express desire; he intended to sell Heath Lodge and live near them.

Mr. and Mrs. Britten were the happiest of married couples. His wife simply idolised him, and he was devotion itself to her. People who heard of the story of their courtship—if we may so term it—said that it was but just that two young people who loved each other so much should be mated, and they were inclined to blame Ward for his share in the affair. "But," said the neighbours among themselves, "would it not have been terrible had Maud died instead of Helen!"

The same thought occurred to Howard, and he expressed it to his wife; but she went so pale, and trembled so, that he reproached himself for having mentioned it and never referred to the subject again.

Their married life lasted several years; then Howard, still young, met with an accident that proved fatal in less than two days. In the one interval of consciousness—immediately before his death—he blessed his wife for her faithfulness in their hour of trial and for her great love and devotion to him during the years that they had been man and wife.

And the secret of her life remained untold! That secret was known only to her father and the old gardener; it came into my possession later, and there is no harm in telling it now.

Helen Ward had loved Howard Britten with that love which comes only once to a woman, but when she saw that he preferred Maud, she stood aside in favour of her sister. After Howard's departure, Maud's affection for him declined, and she said that she would tell him so if she knew his address. It was she who had been attacked by fever and had succumbed.

When Howard had surprised Helen in the garden, all her love for him was intensified, and yielding to the impulse of her heart, she conceived a plan that would spare him lifelong grief, give him the happiness to which he had looked forward, and enable her, Helen, to wed the man she loved. She won her father over to her side before she took him into the drawing-room, the gardener was bribed, and the removal to Ireland completed the execution of the plan.

Deception is never right? Well, strictly speaking, that is correct; but there are exceptional circumstances, and in Helen's case—as I always shall insist—it was not merely pardonable, it was praiseworthy.

G. D.

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DO STOUT PEOPLE LIVE LONG?

This is a question which has occupied the attention of medical authorities from time immemorial. Some argue that the lean kind take longer to shuffle off the mortal coil than their stout brethren. The statistics naturally favour this argument, and no doubt are correct to a great extent, because sufferers from obesity are more susceptible to disease in consequence of the debilitated state of the system when clogged with abnormal adipose tissue; but a curious fact has been overlooked, viz., that corpulence generally commences about the age of thirty-five to fifty, after which time it seems to decrease; therefore, before the proverbial "three score and ten" is reached, the whilom fat man is, by a natural process, again reduced to what may only be called moderate plumpness, and thus cheats the statistician. Stout persons can now, thanks to science, reduce their weight in a most extraordinary rapid manner, without the slightest injury to their constitutions, or without resorting to those drastic remedies which only operate for a time, or by the continuance of the use of toxical drugs extending over such a period that renders it baneful to the long-suffering patient. An eminent Continental therapeutist recommends the victim to obesity to eat fat meat, while an equally eminent American prescribes lean ditto, and the stomach is to risk an accumulation of serious disorders by swallowing a pint of hot water daily, a most nauseous remedy we should think, and not unattended with danger. The past master in the cure of corpulence is Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., whose book (256 pages), entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure," price only two penny stamps, seems to impress us considerably, for he reduces more weight by his system than the Continental and American physicians, without any of the absurd restrictions which would make life scarcely worth living. He uses simple herbs, the properties of which he seems to possess a more than usual knowledge, and he makes but little secret of his method, so refreshing after the mystery made of most chemical and herbal concoctions for various complaints.—*Wetherby News.*

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer heat, with the outdoor enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possible deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once came with the advent of the glad summer-tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its eighteenth edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates in some degree the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation that any over-corpulent lady or gentleman can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks, so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite, the larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained, post free, by sending two penny stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27 Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Gloucester Standard.*

CORPULENCE. INCREASING POPULARITY OF AN EFFECTUAL CURE.

Extreme Obesity Becoming a Thing of the Past.

Many of our readers are, doubtless, familiar with the nature of the extraordinary revolution in the cure of obesity which, within recent years, has been wrought by the original researches of that now eminent expert, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store St., Bedford Square, London, W.C. It is evident that the certainty, the rapidity, and the agreeable surroundings of his curative process have been recognised, in a very large degree, among ladies and gentlemen belonging to the highest social circles. Keen observers who have an opportunity of judging inform us, through the pages of Society papers and otherwise, that owing to the general employment of Mr. Russell's treatment, extreme obesity is becoming as much a thing of the past at fashionable gatherings as intoxication; and no doubt it will soon be regarded as nearly as disgraceful. The issue of an eighteenth edition of the author's singularly convincing little text book, "Corpulency, and the Cure," however, serves to remind us that the popularity of the system has now reached spheres far remote from those of West-end fashion. The book of 256 pages may be had post free, by sending two penny stamps to Mr. Russell's offices, as above; and it is worth the careful attention of those who wish to free themselves of a burden of fat—not merely because it is unseemly and adds enormously to the apparent age of the sufferer—but because extreme obesity terribly interferes with the energy necessary in these days of competition to make one's way in the world or even to earn a very modest competency. A large proportion of the letters of Mr. Russell's grateful correspondents refer to their delight at being enabled—within a very brief period, and without any irksome conditions implying semi-starvation—to attack their accustomed tasks with pleasure instead of wearied disgust, through being reduced to their normal weight. The popularity of the system is also largely due, doubtless, to the English hatred of mystery, which is utterly swept aside by Mr. Russell. He fully explains his *modus operandi*, and supplies the recipe for his preparation.—*Bicester Herald.*

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YOUR ESTEEMED INQUIRY DULY TO HAND.

Rain.—The East coast generally, from Grimsby to Southend, has a much lighter rainfall than the rest of the United Kingdom, and an extensive district to the south south-west of the Wash is the driest part of the Kingdom. The single place with the least rainfall appears to be East Linton, Haddingtonshire.

M. E. D.—It is very seldom that a tall or very stout person is admitted to a lunatic asylum, except insanity result from shock. As the mental condition improves, the weight increases.

Fare.—Railway travelling is cheapest in Norway and dearest in Turkey. In the latter country the fare is, on an average, three halfpence per mile for third-class, while in the former it is only one-third that sum.

Superstition.—The idea that peacocks' feathers are unlucky is based on the classical story of Osiris, King of Egypt. When he started on his Indian expedition, he left his Queen, Isis, as regent, with Argus as her chief adviser. Argus shut the Queen up in a strong castle and proclaimed himself King of Egypt. Mercury was sent against him with a large army, captured him and cut off his head; whereupon Juno turned him into a peacock and set his hundred eyes (spies) on his tail. The superstition has arisen from that legend and the additions that have been made to it from time to time.

M. E. would like to know which battle was called the "Battle of the Three Emperors."———Austerlitz, fought in December, 1805. It was called by the name you mention because the French were commanded by the Emperor Napoleon, and the Austrians and Russians by the Emperors Francis II. and Alexander I.

E. X.—The Spaniards put the notes of interrogation and admiration in front of the sentence or clause as well at the end. They say that it prepares the reader for the significance of what is coming, and enables him to give the proper tone to the words if reading aloud. The signs placed in front of the sentence are inverted.

No. 1.—Houses were not numbered in London till 1764. Lincoln is said to have anticipated the Metropolis in this respect; a row of houses facing the west front of the cathedral are called the "number houses" because they were the first in the city to be numbered.

S. K.—The weight of an average skeleton—that is, of a native of this country—is twenty-four pounds for the male, and eighteen pounds for the female.

Annie.—The daily use of curling tongs removes the natural oil from the hair and dries it, while crimping the hair with hot irons causes it to crack and break. That may not be of great importance in the case of young people, but in later years it induces baldness. In any case, it is not to be recommended.

Q.—It is estimated that about three-quarters of the land surface of the globe cannot be cultivated, because that proportion of the surface is covered by swamps, mountains, deserts, and the like.

Smoker is curious to know why meerschaum "colours."———Meerschaum would not colour at all but for the fact that it is boiled in wax. If used in its natural state it would become soiled very quickly, the material being so porous that it absorbs the slightest moisture from the hand or anything it comes in contact with. The wax, however, fills up the pores and gives it a sort of enamel.

Infant.—It often happens that strikingly clever children grow up mediocre or even stupid men and women. The human brain grows in two ways, size and weight, and structure and development. The very clever child is one in whom development is proceeding more rapidly than it should at the expense of the other form of growth. There is a given amount of energy bestowed by nature upon individuals, and if this is used up for development it is not available for growth in size and weight, which stops short. The child grows up lacking in the qualities of reasoning power, judgment, grasp of detail, and others which make the clever man.

Z. Z. writes: "What is meant by 'hunger stones'? I think they have some connection with a Continental country."———When the Rhine falls very low in the winter certain stones are exposed to view. The people assert that this is a sure indication that the ensuing year will be one of scarcity for them, so they call the stones by the name you mention. The date is sometimes cut upon them.

Flag.—All the flags, except the Royal Standards, required for the British warships are made in the Government dockyards. In the colour-loft of Chatham about 18,000 flags are made each year.

S. W.—Although a day is usually reckoned as being twenty-four hours in length, strictly speaking it is a mistake. The standard unit of time is the "sidereal day," which is 23 hours, 56 minutes and 4·091 seconds.

Jaw.—There are eight muscles in the human jaw, and in the ordinary man they exert a force of five hundred pounds.

Level.—The average height of the British Isles above the level of the sea is 714 feet. In many parts of the world the average altitude of the land is either rising or falling. Observations in connection with the most important peaks of the Cordilleras show that their height is gradually diminishing. Quito is 76 feet lower than it was a century and a quarter ago. On the other hand, the coast of Finland is being gradually elevated; during the last century islands have become peninsulas.

Tommy A.—The most murderous battle of modern times was that fought at Borodino, a Russian village, on September the 7th, 1812, between Napoleon and the Russians. The battle was one of the most obstinately disputed in modern history, and about 80,000 men were placed *hors de combat*. The fights before Plevna in 1877 were very sanguinary; the Russians had nearly 30,000 men killed or wounded in one battle.

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Write distinctly and fully your name and address, put name of this paper at top of your letter, and send in your order for the **Marking Ink** as soon as possible.

The competition will close on July 30th, 1898. The prizes will be awarded and results posted in the following week. The solution of this competition has been sealed and deposited with our solicitors, and will be opened at their offices on the appointed day.

In connection with this exceptional and Genuine Competition, we would particularly point out that competitors will receive not only full value for their P.O.'s in the shape of a bottle of **Wolff's Imperishable Egyptian Marking Ink**, but the bottle we supply for 1s. 6d., post free, contains three times the quantity usually sold by other makers for 1s., and is the largest bottle of **Marking Ink** in the Market for the price. We are willing to spend a considerable sum of money in advertising our Egyptian Marking Inks, and we prefer doing it this way to expending it on newspaper advertisements, etc. We ask all competitors who do not receive their Marking Ink in a few days not to jump to any hasty conclusions. Parcels sometimes get lost in the post, in which case we will willingly replace same if you will communicate with us, giving number of your P.O.

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WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

When you can get a real *safe* remedy like KAPUTINE?

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vescicle tissues generally."

NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.

All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.

The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

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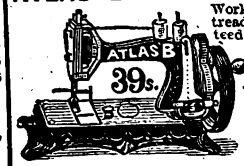

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SHORT STORIES

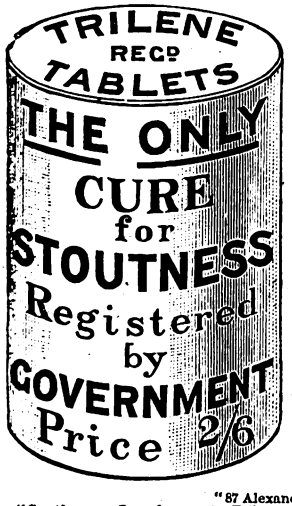
EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 498. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 16TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

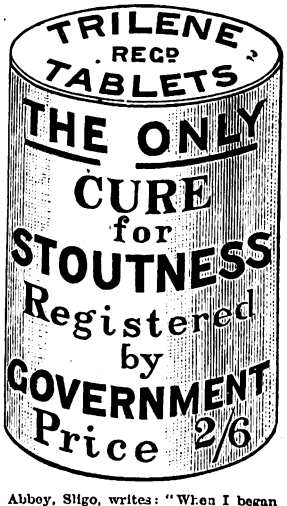
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.
"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.
"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.
Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

25 Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.
Miss M FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."
Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."
Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.
"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."
Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.
Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."
Mrs. WOODS, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."
L. LUDDRINGTON, "Sunnyside," Station Road, Sidcup, says: "I have benefited greatly, and have lost a stone."
Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."
A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."
Miss A. ATKINS, 329 Southdown Road, Liverpool, writes: "I lost nearly a stone from taking one box."
Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."
Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."
Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."
Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."
"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets deserve every success."
Mrs. O'CONNOR, 2 Kensington Square Mansions, London, writes: "I am much less stout for taking them."
Surgeon Colonel E. S. BRANDER writes from Ihansi, India, in September, 1897: "Your Tablets in my own experience form an excellent remedy for reducing weight."
The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."
Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Balgowan Lodge, Methven, N.B.
Miss MCPHERSON writes: "I have taken a box, and am reduced 1st. in weight."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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Promptly sent by Parcel Post direct from

The Largest Firm of Costumiers in the World.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE,

together with the New 84-page ILLUSTRATED DRESS AND DRAPERY CATALOGUE to all who name *Short Stories*.

Colours of Cheviot Serge & Costume Coating: Black, Navy, Brown, Ruby, Purple, Fawn, Grey, Electric, Myrtle.

The Three Stock Sizes are 34, 36, 38 in. round bust (under arms); Skirts being 38, 40, 42 in. long in front. Larger or special sizes can be made to measure for 1/6 extra.

Bankers: London and Midland Bank Ltd.

Model 900.
In White Piqué, Cheviot Serge, Costume Coating, Stout Drill, (Fawn, White, or Blue) Tailor finished. Open Coat and full cut Skirt. **10/6** wide well-Price 10/6 complete. Carriage 6d. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d.

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MANCHESTER.

Model B.S.
Tailor-made, to fit Boys up to 8 years. All sizes the same price, 5/-. Suits consist of Blouse in stout Serge, Knickers, **5/-** Cap, lanyard, whistle, &c., complete, 5/-.
Colours: Black, Navy, Fawn.

A. A sum of from **10/-** to **20/-** per week offered for spare time to either sex everywhere. Work can be done evenings. Send addressed envelope to Box 60, Eclipse Works, 89, Aldersgate Street, London, E.C.

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Cheltenham House 15 MORTIMER ST., LONDON, W.

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Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

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PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron Frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Riveted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

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Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Cabinet, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 sets of Reeds. 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality **39/-** and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly Call or write for designs and Samples of work.

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO.,
188B, High St., Camden Town, London, N.W.
63 Seven Sisters Road, N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

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No. 498. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 16th, 1898.

AUNT SOPHIE'S PORTRAIT.

"SOME people would call it superstition, said grandmother. "I said it was nonsense when I first heard of it; that people fancied the different expressions which they declared they saw on the features of the portrait. Of course, I had heard of pictures with eyes that seemed to follow you wherever you went; but this was something entirely different."

"But why was Sophie Windham's portrait never placed with those of our other ancestors? It would have been quite an attraction to the gallery to have a constantly changing portrait to show visitors."

"Sophie Windham was a beautiful woman," returned our grandmother gravely, "and her intellectual abilities were so far in advance of her time that she was regarded as a witch by many persons; and had she not died young, she would probably have had the charge of witchcraft brought against her. This portrait was

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finished after her death and was hung with the others."

"Then why did it not remain there?" I asked.

"Because almost everyone was scared by it. One declared that it glared at him as though it would like to kill him; another asserted that it smiled contemptuously; and so on. It caused such a disturbance in the household that it was taken down and placed in the lumber room, where it remained until I came here.

"When I heard the story I did not believe it, as I have said. The idea that a portrait would reflect the conscience of the person who looked at it seemed absurd to me."

"Did it do that?" we all cried in a breath.

"Yes. In the light of later experience, that is the most fitting description of the vagaries of the portrait. I had it brought down and hung up in the drawing-room. To me, the expression always seemed gentle and loving; but I couldn't keep a servant—except one—for more than a few weeks, and many of my visitors said they didn't like it. In fact, people refused our invitations and my husband finally insisted that we must put it away. And I have not seen it since."

Then I remember that they all clamoured to see the picture, and that at first grandmother would not tell them where it was. But at last she reluctantly yielded, and bade my cousin Maud go to the attic with a light and bring it back with her, because she best knew the old house.

Maud was gone a long time, until one of the other cousins got up and declared that she was going to find her. But just then the door opened suddenly and Maud stole into the room—without the picture. It was the last time I ever saw her, and I shall never forget the expression of her face. She groped her way across the room to the dark corner where she had been sitting, but as she went the firelight streamed across her pallid face and showed it drawn with horror, repulsion and fear. Her hands were trembling, and she had barely strength to reach her chair, into which she sank heavily.

All the cousins jumped up to help her, but she thrust them back impatiently, and they looked at one another in wonder, while grandmother's hands trembled on the arms of her chair. Then someone asked about the picture.

Maud sat silent, covering her face with her hands; then suddenly she cried, shuddering:

"It's horrible! Oh, grandmother, how could you say it was beautiful? Don't let them bring it down. Don't let them touch it; it is—oh! I cannot say what it is!"

Grandmother's face blanched, and she looked at Maud with an expression of fear.

"Yes, let it stay there," she said. "It is the best place for it, in the attic. I should have known better. I will never let anyone touch it again."

Our fun for the evening was spoilt, and I remember that we all crept silently away to bed, frightened and awed.

But the next morning my curiosity got the better of my nervousness of the night before, and I stole secretly to the attic to see the dreadful picture for myself. I found it in the darkest corner under the low eaves, but already someone had been before me. Whether it had been done by grandmother or by Maud herself I never knew, but the face was completely obliterated under a fresh coat of black, thick paint, and so my curiosity remained unsatisfied.

The family separated after the holidays. A few weeks after that night came the tragedy which forms the only stain on our old family name, and which destroyed all our loving associations with the old homestead. One morning Maud was found drowned in the pond near grandmother's house!

I was too young to understand then, but years later I learnt with a second shock that my cousin had not fallen into the pond by accident, as I had always supposed, but that she had drowned herself, and that it was better so.

When grandmother died, some years afterwards, her precious heirlooms were divided among us all; and to me, the youngest grandchild, was given, among other things, the choice of all I wished in the old garret. And so it happened that when I married I carried to my new home the blackened and disfigured old portrait of Sophie Windham.

I scarcely know how I came to take it, except that from childhood its story had left a deep impression upon me, and I could not bear to have the picture thrown away.

At first, remembering Maud's face that night, I was loath to have the fatal features uncovered to view in my own happy home. At last, however, I yielded to my husband's curiosity, and indeed, to my own, which had not remained idle all these years, and the picture was sent to be cleaned and to have the coating of paint removed.

When the portrait came back I hesitated long to look at the face. But John was standing by me, and, together, at last, we raised the wrappings; and, lo! we had merely a quaint and curious portrait of olden times, an ancestress of whom, indeed, I might be proud.

It was a beautiful face, smiling and very happy. The powdered hair was brushed high from the fair white forehead, and below shone the deep, liquid, searching eyes, which held and attracted one. The only fault I saw was a haughty, almost arrogant poise to the long, white neck, and an expression of self-complacent satisfaction in the curved, full lips. John, indeed, did not notice this, but fancied he read a tendency to jealousy and a little sadness in the droop of the eyebrows. Perhaps we were both right.

We placed the portrait first in the dining-room. But this made trouble. Servant after servant gave me notice without reason, until at last one confided to me that none of them could bear the horrible picture, which glared at them when they passed and caused innumerable accidents to gravy dishes and soup tureens. Evidently each read her own shortcomings—which were not always trivial—in that sweet young face.

My only relief from constant turmoil was to remove conscience from their path, and the picture was taken to the drawing-room, where they would not see so much of it. I did not wish to put it away altogether, for *I* liked it.

But here I found my ancestress even more embarrassing. The comments of my guests, who did not know how this powdered lady was betraying them, kept me in a constant state of anxiety. To one the face showed cruelty, to another deceit. One declared it to be villainously suspicious, melancholy and morbid.

I was repeating my grandmother's experience, and finally had the portrait placed in the nursery.

Here, at least, I knew that it would cause no trouble, for it could reflect only baby purity and innocence in sweet, sympathetic eyes. I hung "Aunt Sophie" (as we called her) above my Harold's cot, and left her there in peace to smile down upon him and to watch over his happy dreams.

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My baby dearly loved the pretty lady, and would often beg to be lifted up so that he might rub his little cheek to hers and kiss her smiling lips. For in her eyes he at least read nothing to fear.

We lived in a quiet suburb, where John was then superintendent of a large factory. Among the hands whom he employed he was brought into contact with some rough characters, though his tact and kindness of heart made him a general favourite and he never had trouble with any save one.

Three years after our marriage he had been obliged to discharge from the factory a certain Dick Harlow, a surly man, who had never come under John's influence and had always seemed to dislike him. He was a ruffianly fellow, an habitual drunkard, though when he first came to the factory he had been an excellent workman. His manner was at times wild and strange, for already, though we did not guess it, his drunken habits had begun to unsettle his brain, and he caused continual trouble among the other hands. Outside the district he bore a very bad reputation, and, indeed, as we afterwards learnt, he had already served time for house-breaking.

He bore a bitter grudge to John, and came to let us know it. For the morning after his discharge I saw his horrible face at our gate and heard his oaths and threats of vengeance. But he disappeared altogether from the neighbourhood after that, and we hoped it was for good, and gave up thinking about the matter.

Several months passed uneventfully, with peace restored to the factory and a feeling of security lulling our instinct, which was to be on guard. June had come, and already we were beginning to make preparations for our summer trip to the seaside.

It was a warm, beautiful night, and the moonlight flooded our east rooms. The air was oppressive and kept me awake and restless, while I heard the church clock strike the hours several times.

Little Harold slept alone in the nursery on the second floor, in the room next my own. He was a very sound sleeper and seldom stirred in the night. And yet as I lay there with my eyes closed, in the small hours of the morning, I thought I heard a slight sound in the next room. Instantly I was on the alert, raising my head to catch any indication that Harold wanted me. All was quiet for some seconds, and I began to think that I was mistaken.

Then suddenly there arose, sharp and shrill and piercing, the most horrible scream of mortal fear and anguish which I have ever heard. Then came a heavy fall, followed by silence, and after that a second scream, in which I recognised Harold's frightened voice.

My heart sank with a dreadful sickening throb of fear, and I rushed wildly to my baby's room, not daring to think what I expected to find there. John also had jumped up as if shot when the cry came, and followed me with his hand grasping the little pistol which he always kept under his pillow.

I ran instantly to the cot. Harold was sitting up in a flood of moonlight, sobbing with fright, his eyes big and wild, looking fearfully into the darkness over the foot of the cot.

"Are you hurt, darling? What is it?" I cried, as I clasped and kissed him passionately, finding him apparently only frightened.

He pointed with his chubby finger past my shoulder into the room.

"The man!" he sobbed, clinging closer to me in terror. "Man wiv big eyes."

Then I heard an exclamation from John and the click of the trigger as he cocked his pistol quickly. Turning with the sudden rush of new fear, I saw him bending over something lying in the middle of the room where Harold's eyes were staring.

Then I noticed the writhing body of a man at John's feet, and a streak of moonlight fell across the distorted face with its set teeth and pain-drawn features. But it was the eyes that thrilled and terrified me. For glaring and protruding with mortal fear they were fixed upon something above my baby's bed.

I followed their direction and gazed into the calm and tranquil face of "Aunt Sophie," which stood forth vividly in the moonlight. I turned to the man again, and clasped my boy tighter as I recognised the brutal features of Dick Harlow.

"Get up!" cried John hoarsely, with horror and loathing in his voice, covering the wretch with his pistol. But except for the convulsive twitching of his limbs the man lay motionless, his eyes still fixed in their look of horror on the picture.

"He is in a fit," said John. "Call the servants, Grace, and send for the police. I will see that he does no harm."

He stooped to the floor beside the fallen figure, but recoiled with an exclamation and turned quickly as if to keep me from seeing. But I had noticed the long knife clenched in the powerless hand, and also something more on the floor beside him.

Wrenching the knife away John stooped and picked up the huge handkerchief which I had seen. It smelt strong and pungent, and from the folds fell a sponge saturated still stronger with chloroform.

John turned to me with a sob.

"Take the baby away," he said, "and thank Heaven that he is safe and sound!"

"Thank Heaven and Aunt Sophie!"

Harlow lay there helpless in his fit until the police came and took him into custody, his eyes fixed to the last upon the face which reflected we shall never know what horrid vision to that guilty soul.

For he never spoke again. The shock of that night's fear was too much for his enfeebled strength, and his mind already unsettled by drink and passion. He was taken to the lunatic asylum, dumb and hopelessly crazed for the short remaining span of his evil life. And the look of fear, they say, remained in his haunted eyes to the end.

We never knew Harlow's full purpose in entering the house that night, except that he evidently came for revenge. But whether with a half intelligent cunning he had meant to chloroform and then kidnap the child, or whether in a fit of insane revenge he had contemplated murder itself, we have never dared to think.

The secret of that portrait may never be explained to us, but it shall always hang in that room while our child sleeps there, and when, in course of time, he leaves us to fight the battle of life for himself, he shall hang it in his own house.

ELIZABETH GUTHRIE.

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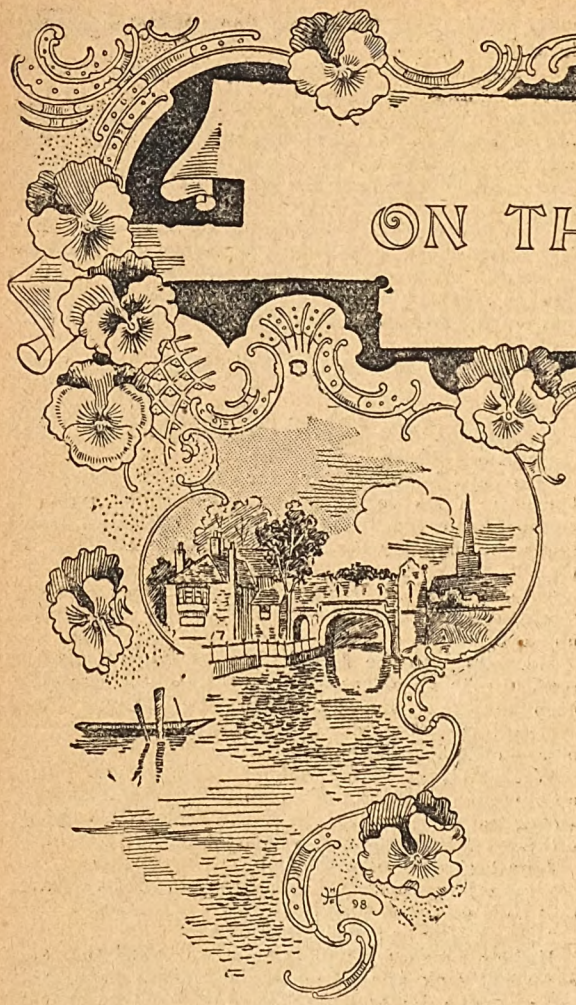
ON THE BRINK.



It was too late when they met, for she had been married to Jack Alton for a month—a month that had been an awakening for her, in which she saw the man she had wed, slowly emerging from the dream-like mist of the days of courtship into the clear, cruel light of truth. Already she had begun to despise him and to look drearily into the coming years as a galley slave might look forward to the deadening years at the oar.

Henri Vibois knew the truth about Jack Alton. Vibois was not a sentimentalist nor much given to consideration of the happiness of anyone, but when he saw Hulda Alton he pitied her.

Every man has respect for purity, hard and careless though he may be, and Hulda Alton combined purity with a strength and gentleness that made her a noble woman. She was of the world, to be sure, and took her part in its frivolities and make believes, and when she found Jack Alton to be what he was, she simply made the best of a bad matter, and hid the scar under the robe of womanly dignity and self-restraint.

Henry Vibois, the prospering and courted artist, had drifted through a score of flirtations before he met Hulda Alton, and nothing had changed him. Women! He cared for none of them.

He admired Hulda Alton. She was so strong, so womanly. She was a revelation. He once went so far as to say that he might be induced to marry, if two such women existed. She was the ideal of his thoughtful moments.

Vibois saw her often, and each time he wondered at her self-control. This was, indeed, the one perfect woman. He knew Jack Alton and he knew the horror that a woman so noble must feel toward such a man. He admired her faithfulness. Hulda Alton remained the strong, pure woman she had ever been. And it was this strength and purity that drew them together.

Hater of women and scoffer at men, Henri Vibois found his admiration for Jack Alton's wife growing rapidly. He spent much time in her company, pleading to his conscience that he drew strength and inspiration from her. But it was impossible for Hulda not to see. She saw, but gave no sign, and Vibois would not have risked the idol he worshipped by proposing aught that might shatter it.

They were friends. And thus the year passed.

It was at a private view where Vibois had a couple of small landscapes that he first saw sorrow darken her eyes.

She was standing before a panel by Herter when he pushed his way up to her.

"Ah!" she said; "I thought you would be here. That was why I came. I am alone—and you?"

He nodded "Yes."

"Then let us go out. I want to say something to you. There is a cab at the door. I came in a cab to-night—for—reasons."

Vibois handed her into the cab.

"Where, sir?" asked the driver.

"Where?" Vibois asked Hulda.

"Tell him to drive in the park," she replied.

The cab rolled away, and for a minute there was nothing said. Then Vibois spoke.

"I know," he remarked.

"But you cannot know all," she cried. "It is too dreadful! I have tried so hard. I have done everything I could, and it has all been very difficult. I have no one to whom I can go for help or advice."

She was leaning back in the corner of the cab, her head thrown back listlessly, while her hands were tearing a rose that had fallen into her lap.

"You can't know how I hate him! how I despise him! You do not know him as I do, nor what it is to live with him and to feel that it must go on for years."

She paused and put her hand to her forehead.

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"I have tried," she continued, "but what is the use? Am I to go on year after year suffering as I do? Must I always bear it? Is it right that my life should be made miserable by what is no fault of mine? It is not just! Why should I have no joy, no love in my life? What have I done that I should have to bear it?"

Blessed are those who, to such a storm of questions, can answer:

"It is the hand of Heaven. Have patience and all will be well."

Vibois writhed. Why, indeed? And what could he say? Trite platitudes rose to his lips, but he scorned to offer them to a scarred heart. It was not dead words this woman needed. Not hackneyed sentences. Fighting alone against a host of sorrows, she craved the living sympathy of a living heart.

Vibois was silent, and the cab rolled on past other cabs coming and going. He was trying to formulate his thoughts, to find some phrase that would tell something of his feelings, but not too much. He wanted to help her, but he did not know how.

Hulda was silent, waiting for him to speak. Twice he began, only to stop before he said five words.

"Tell him to drive me home, please," she said at length, and her voice was tinged with disappointment.

"No!" said Vibois, "not yet! Let me do something for you. Let me help you in some way. Don't you see I would gladly do anything in my power, if I but knew how?"

They were passing a lamp and the light fell on her face. He saw the tears in her eyes and her brave lips tremble, and all the love he felt swept over him.

He put out his hand and laid it on one of her hands, but she drew it quickly away.

"Hulda," he said, "let me help you. If in no other way, let the knowledge that I love you—I who have loved no other woman—give you strength. I know how hard it is, I know all you have to bear, and I, too, suffer when you suffer. You are not alone, Hulda, for I love you."

"Stop!" she cried, "you must not! It is not right. I should not have come. But I was so sad, and I did not know where to turn for help. I thought perhaps you could help me, but not that way. I see it all clearly now. I must try to bear it. It is the only way. Tell him to drive me home, please."

When he had left her he drove to his apartments.

"She is a woman after all," he thought, "but such a woman! She will go on day after day suffering in silence, until——"

For six months Vibois kept out of her way. He knew he loved her too much to run any risks, and he had no wish to shatter his idol, even if by that means he would come into possession of the pieces. He gave himself up wholly to work, and meanwhile kept his eye on Jack Alton. The fellow was becoming a drunken wreck.

One day in May he received a letter from Hulda. It only said: "Please come this evening."

He went.

He found her dressed ready to go out.

"You once said you loved me," she said. "If you do, take me away. I can bear it no longer. I—oh, Henri, take me away!"

"Hulda," he said, "I love you still and I shall always love you."

"Then take me away," she cried. "Anywhere, I will go anywhere away from him."

Her cheeks were bright and her eyes glistened. Vibois hesitated.

"Do you mean——" he began.

"Yes," she replied, "I mean I will go with you. I love you. See!"

She held out her arms toward him. He took her in his arms, and she held up her face for the first sweet kiss, and then she looked up smiling.

A cab was waiting and they drove away. She let her head fall on his shoulder, and one arm she slipped round him.

His idol was tottering on the brink.

The cab rolled on, round many corners, through dark streets, and over rough pavements.

"Where is he taking us?" Hulda asked at last.

Vibois looked down into her face and smiled.

"To perdition!" he said quietly.

"What?" she cried, sitting up, and gazing at him with frightened eyes.

"To the realm of fallen idols," he said, "to the place of tarnished honour and vain regrets, and long days of self-accusation and growing dislike that lurk in the shadow of lost self-respect, to——"

"Stop!" she cried, covering her ears with her hands. "Stop! Oh, why do you say such things?"

"It is the truth, dearest," he replied gently, taking her hand; "to all these he is driving us, and I go willingly with you. I know well all that follows; but were it a thousand times worse I would go, if you wished, but with one regret."

"And that?" she asked.

"That the one true woman I have ever known has fallen from her high estate."

"Henri," she said, "tell him to drive me home, please."

The cab turned and bore them back. He to worship his idol, she to slow and soul-slaying torture. They did not speak as they rolled homewards, and at her door she would not let him help her to alight.

She climbed wearily up the steps and paused a minute at the door before she let herself in. Inside was all she hated. Outside—well, at least Vibois still loved her. She had not made him despise her. She had gone far, but he could forgive much. She had been tortured to madness. Yes, it was best!

She entered the hall and met a physician descending the stairs.

"Madam," he said, "I have sad news. Your husband has been run over. He can scarcely live until morning."

She put her hand on the wall to steady herself and then gazed closely in his face.

"Is it true?" she asked.

"Too true, I fear," he answered.

"Then," she said calmly, "I will go to him at once."

And she walked calmly up the stairs.

F. Gregory.

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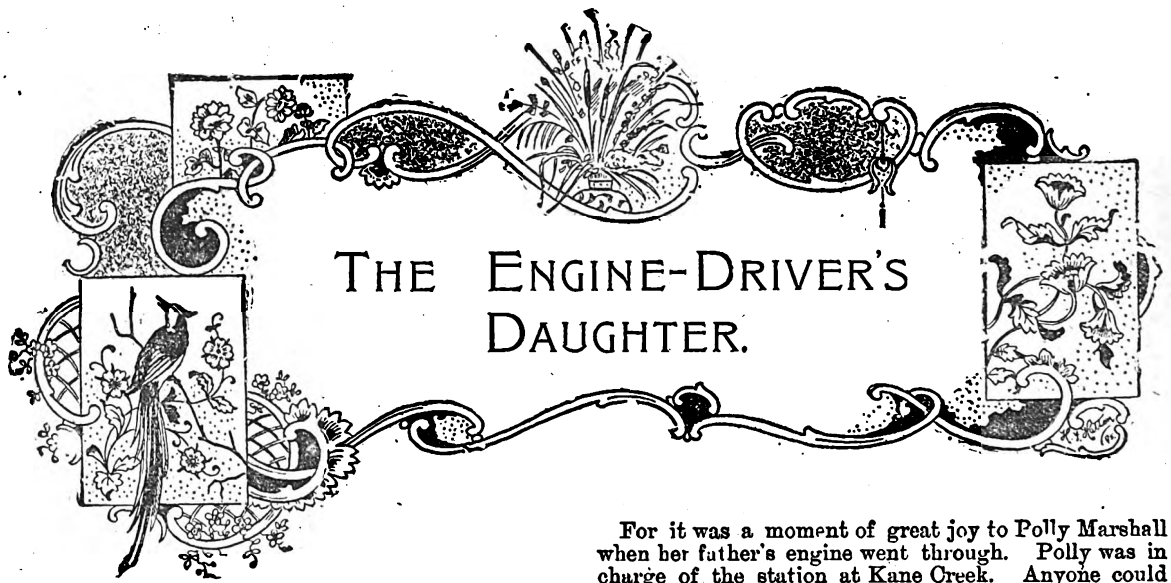

THE ENGINE-DRIVER'S DAUGHTER.

Kane Creek was a station on a branch-line of the Canadian North-West Railway, about two miles from the junction at Mercer. It was in the midst of a scrubby pine forest, with a sandy road running out from the trees on one side and into the trees on the other.

There were only two or three houses, a little general shop, with a porch like the visor of a military cap, and a school, all arranged in a scattered row along the line. The dusty station was an oasis in the midst of a timber desert, with a great many telegraph wires singing overhead.

A dozen trains whirled through Kane Creek every day with only a shriek of greeting and a wake of fine sand. Only two of them paid the slightest attention to the girl in a blue gingham dress who stood in the little look-out window.

One of them was a goods train, which stopped at Kane every time it came by for the conductor to hand the girl a bundle of yellow papers, and receive another like it in return. The other was the night "express," running at forty miles an hour.

This latter was a splendid train—ten carriages, with the finest engine on the road, big No. 606. As its glaring eye flashed round the bend in the direction of Mercer, the girl in the gingham dress often thought of the great train as a powerful and ferocious beast roaring westward on a race with the sun, and she knew the hand that guided it.

When the train was a mile away there were always two blasts of the whistle. Everyone in Kane thought they meant simply "Wake up, look out!" for that is what all locomotives say at every crossing, but the girl in the gingham dress heard, "Hallo, Polly!" and darted out on the platform and waved her handkerchief.

As the great train thundered nearer a hand was thrust from the engine, and, although it was usually dark, she could see the flutter of something white, and often, as the engine darted through the station, she heard the blurred sound of a voice and caught a glimpse of a grimy face and a blue jacket. Then she went back to her place in the little station with a sigh of content.

For it was a moment of great joy to Polly Marshall when her father's engine went through. Polly was in charge of the station at Kane Creek. Anyone could have told that a woman presided in the little station, for was there not always a bouquet in the window, and dainty pictures surrounding the grimy time-tables on the walls, and a kitten curling upon the doorstep?

At seventeen Polly had gone in as assistant to learn telegraphy, and when Clark, the "station-master," was promoted, the company had left the independent girl in charge. She and her father lived in one of the wooden houses a stone's-throw from the station, and since Polly's mother died they had been everything to each other.

Marshall was a big, silent man, and some of his companions thought him gruff and ill-tempered; but to Polly he was always as tender as a mother. Often when she was a mere girl he took her with him to Mercer on his engine, and he explained to her how the big black creature was started and stopped; what this brass crank was for, and how, when the engine squeaked here or squeaked there, a little oil was needed in this cup or in that crevice, and Polly had learnt to know an engine as well as she knew the neat little pantry in the house at home.

Indeed, she had more than once managed the levers and throttle, although it was very heavy work for a girl to do.

It was one night late in the autumn that Polly Marshall had need of all her knowledge of engines. She was sitting at her desk in the little look-out window, a shaded light throwing its rays down on her telegraph instruments and the sounding key clicking sleepily. Suddenly she was startled by the call of her number.

Instantly her fingers sought the keys, and she gave the answer that signified that she was all attention.

"Look out for——" clicked the sounder, and then it suddenly ceased, and try as she would, Polly could get no further communication from the station next to the eastward.

What could the trouble be? Polly sprang to her feet, remembering that the night express, of which her father was the driver, was the next train due. Could anything be the matter? She ran out on the dark platform to see that her lights were all in order, and that the switches were properly set, so that the express

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would slip past the station without an accident. Then she went back and called up Mercer.

"Can't you get Pullton?" she asked.

Pullton was the station which had sent her the warning so mysterious interrupted. She knew the operator at Pullton well. Every night he told her of the approach of her father's train, and whether or not it had left his station at the proper time.

"Pullton quiet. Can't get answer," was the report of the wires. "What's the matter?"

Polly answered as well as she could, and Mercer made another attempt to arouse Pullton.

Her father's train was now due. It should be whistling cheerily at the lower bend. Polly stepped out on the platform and peered up the line. Yes, there was the familiar headlight. She would have known it among a hundred.

Then came the whistle, "Hallo, Polly!" and Polly ran back into her office much relieved and sat down to warn Mercer.

At that instant she heard a peculiar cracking sound that sent her heart quivering deep in her bosom. Then there was the shrill scream of the locomotive whistle, suddenly interrupted as if the hand that had drawn the lever had been struck from its place.

Polly knew it was a cry of distress. It seemed to say "Help!" in a long, tremulous wail. Instantly Polly darted outside and flew up the line. Already the express should have thundered past the station, but she could see its headlight a hundred yards or more away.

With a hundred terrifying questions flashing through her mind, Polly ran on through the gloom. When she was within a few yards of the big head-light, she saw half-a-dozen armed men swarming round the engine, she heard fierce oaths, and then the engine started up again.

She saw in an instant that it had been cut free from the train. In the place where her father usually stood, there was a big, unfamiliar figure managing the lever and the throttle. Terrified, Polly sprang to one side into a clump of bushes. As the locomotive passed her on its way up the line she saw that the man who was driving wore a black mask on his face, and then she knew what had happened.

She understood why Pullton had tried to warn her and failed. Robbers had "held up" the train, and were preparing to rob the express carriage.

For a moment Polly was torn with doubt and terror. Had they shot her father? She knew that he never would submit to have his train captured without a struggle. Should she go to him? Then she remembered her station and the telegraph, and in a moment she was flying down the line towards the station. She would send for help to Mercer.

But squarely in front of the little station the locomotive stopped, and the black masked man sprang from the engine and darted across the platform. Hardly thinking what she was doing, Polly ran up on the other side of the engine, and, raising herself up, peered into the tender. She had half expected to see her father's dead body lying on the floor, for she had heard much about the terrible doings of train robbers.

Through the look-out window she could see the robber sitting at her own little desk in the station sending a message. It flashed over her all at once that he was wiring Mercer that the express was delayed, thus preventing any alarm. The robber had pushed up his mask, and she saw him plainly.

What should she do? She dared not enter the office, and she, a mere girl, could be of no service where the robbers were making their attack on the train.

At that moment three shots rang out, clear and distinct, from the detached train. The man at the telegraph instrument sprang to his feet, and ran to a side window in the waiting-room and looked up the line.

Now was her chance! Hardly thinking what she was doing, Polly threw back the reverse lever and opened the throttle steadily. The big steel wheels began to turn, very slowly at first. Farther and farther the throttle opened and faster and faster turned the wheels, and yet they did not go half fast enough to suit Polly, who was now glancing fearfully over her shoulder.

Suddenly the station door was thrown open, and she saw the robber darting up the line. He had a pistol in his hand. He was pointing it at her and shouting for her to stop, but the engine was now going at good speed, and, run as he would, the robber could not catch it. But he stopped and fired, the bullet whizzing over Polly's head.

The engine was now tearing down the line at full speed. Polly knew that it must be fired or it would not go far, and so, leaving the throttle open, she flung open the firehole, and with the heavy shovel in her small hands threw in load after load of coal.

When she returned to her place she could see the first signal light of Mercer already blinking into view. She pulled down on the whistle valve and the engine shrieked its distress.

Two minutes later Polly strained at the heavy reverse lever, turned hard on the airbrake and brought the great iron horse to a sudden standstill. How she ever managed to stammer the story she never knew, but in a few minutes the engine was speeding back with half a dozen armed men. Behind them came another load of men on a switch engine.

They heard the firing before they reached Kane Creek, but it ceased soon afterwards. The robbers had gone. They had taken with them much plunder from the passengers, but they had not been able to get the express safe open, although they were at work drilling when relief came.

From the time that the engine stopped Polly was missing. When the rescued and excited passengers and express messengers began to crowd round and inquire, the Mercer men remembered her. A party of them went out to find the girl who had brought help to the beleaguered train.

In a little clump of bushes they heard a man moaning, and an instant later they saw Polly kneeling in the sand with her father's head in her lap, crying bitterly, and they gathered up the brave engine driver and his daughter and carried them down to the train.

Marshall was not badly hurt, and he was able to be in Mercer when the general manager of the railway thanked the blushing Polly officially, and offered her a new and better position in Mercer. And of course, all the passengers and express messengers heard about Polly's brave deed and said a great many pleasant things about her, but Polly, being a sensible girl, only blushed and said that she had to do it, and that any other girl would have done the same under like circumstances. Which no one believed, of course.

Later, when the robbers were captured, Polly was able to identify one of them positively—the one who had run the engine—and through him the entire party was convicted and sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

GEORGE ERNE.

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The Love that Was Lost.

She had charge of the glove counter in a large establishment, while he looked after the black goods across the way. She was plump and fair, with merry brown eyes, and hair that waved about her face in a most distracting manner—a faithful little soul, busy from morning till night, her stock in perfect order, and her manners to customers at once sweet and obliging.

He found that she was unselfish also, for she often helped to do the work of the girl who stood next to her—a delicate creature, who always looked tired.

In short, he had in his idle moments, or while arranging his sombre stock, learnt a great deal about his fair neighbour.

Her name was Helen Clare. Her favourite colour was pink. She had a small foot, and a musical voice.

It took him three months to find this out, and with it came the knowledge that he was deeply, hopelessly in love with her.

As yet, their acquaintance had progressed but little further than a "good morning" as they took their places each day. Prudence suggested to him that it would be as well for it to end there.

On his salary of twenty shillings a week he supported his mother and himself. Could he ask such a girl as Helen to share the future he saw before them?

Whether it was the effect of his hopeless love or the close confinement at the shop, he grew thin and pale, and his large eyes looked so melancholy that the clerks christened him "Mournful Harry," and joked about his funeral goods. Helen seemed to grow pinker and prettier every day.

At last, one night, they passed out of the shop together. It was raining and he offered to take her to the tram under his umbrella. He found to his joy that she walked home, and that she lodged with an aunt very near where he and his mother lived in modest apartments.

So it came to pass that they often went home together. Her aunt found that she used to know his mother, and that they were very respectable people indeed. After that the acquaintance progressed rapidly.

With her merry talk, and still merrier laugh, she tried to cheer up his spirits, and he, warming under the influence of her smiles, found himself quite another being.

But this could not last. The more he loved her, the drearier the future seemed, for he could not ask her to marry him. She divined his feelings and in her innocence of heart felt that she loved him in return.

Several months had passed this way, when one evening Harry came over with some wonderful news. An uncle of his had come to see them, who owned some land in Australia. Noticing Harry's failing health, he offered to give him some land and pay the passage out for his mother and himself if they would go out there and live.

"He says it is a grand country and that I shall have better health and far better prospects there," explained Harry eagerly. "Oh, Helen, if I could only take you!"

But he did not ask her to go, and he was too honourable to bind her by any promise to wait for him.

In a year at most he would be well enough off to send for her. No doubt of success crossed his mind. If he had been melancholy before, he was jubilant now, as he thought what this great chance meant for him.

So he went away. She missed him, of course, but being a very sensible person made herself as comfortable and as happy as possible. The day came, however, when her step lagged and the colour left her cheeks. Harry's letters at first were wildly enthusiastic. It was a glorious country. The pure air and the outdoor life were making a new man of him. His mother liked it, although it was lonely. He had built a cosy house with his own hands.

It took him several months to get down to dry facts. Then he wrote that there had been a drought. Everybody told him he must not expect to make anything this year. It would certainly be better another season. After that, weeks passed without a word.

The long, hot summer was drawing to a close. Helen had lost all her pretty colour, and her big brown eyes had a pathetic look. In the autumn she received another letter that explained his silence. It told of trouble and disaster to crops and stock.

She went to the shop and took her place. But her feelings got the better of her and she laid her head on the counter and cried. Someone stepped in front of her and said kindly:

"Are you in trouble, Miss Clare?"

It was the senior partner, Mr. Seaforth.

Helen dried her tears quickly, she felt very much in awe of him, although he had always been exceedingly kind. She remembered after she had answered him, and he had passed on, that he had been very thoughtful for her of late.

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He rarely passed the counter without a pleasant word or look for her. A year ago she had fitted black gloves to the plump hands of his little daughters, and watched them trip out of the door of the shop to their carriage, attended by their governess. They had just lost their mother.

At last, one morning, after weeks of keeping up by exerting her will power, Helen could not get up. Her aunt, quite alarmed, sent for the doctor. He said all she needed was rest and quiet.

The next day someone sent a box of lovely roses. The next day, a basket of fruit; and, finally, one morning, when she was able to sit up, her aunt came to her, with a look of amazement mingled with triumph, saying that some ne wanted to see her in the parlour.

Then, as the girl started to go down, her aunt caught her hand and said pleadingly:

"Be sensib e, Helen, do be sensible!"

On entering the room Helen was surprised to see Mr. Seaforth waiting.

She was still more surprised to hear what he had to say.

He was a fine-looking man, with iron-grey hair and clear eyes—very kindly eyes, she thought, as he told her that he wanted to marry her. He did not say that he loved her—and that hurt her a little. This practical little girl had a romantic side to her nature; carefully kept in the background 'tis true, but still there.

"You are just the one I want for a mother to my little girls," he said. "I have been thinking of this for a long time, and I think I could make you happy."

She thought a moment, then with quivering lips told him of Harry Graves. He smiled, as if pleased with her frankness.

"I know all about that; but I understood that you were free or I would not have spoken. Don't answer me now—take a week to think it over."

After he left, Helen flung herself on the couch and cried for a long time. Her aunt looked in, but went away again very softly.

A week later Helen made her choice, and before her fellow employés had time to recover their breath after the astonishing news, had married the senior partner, had been to Paris for the honeymoon, and was settled in her beautiful new home.

There she soon won the hearts of her little step-daughters and had the reins of household affairs well in her firm little hands. Mr. Seaforth had been a good judge of character. She was a capital housekeeper, a firm yet loving step-mother, and under her rule all the rough places in his life seemed to be smoothed over.

There was nearly a year of this life, when one day as Helen came out of a shop to enter her carriage, someone touched her arm. She turned and saw Harry Graves.

She hardly knew him at first. He was gaunt and thin. His clothes were ill-fitting, and his hands looked hard and brown. Under his wide brimmed hat were the same dark eyes—only now they had a wild look that terrified her.

"Why, Harry," she cried, offering her hand, "when did you get back?"

He said nothing and seemed not to see her hand. He looked at the coachman in his fur cape, at the dainty little carriage, with its green satin cushions, then at her, clad in rich furs and picturesque hat.

"Won't you come home with me to dinner?" she asked timidly. "I would like you to meet my husband."

He shook his head and murmured hoarsely:

"I am going back to Australia. I only came—I did not know."

Then he turned his head away.

She got into the carriage and laid her head back upon the cushions. She was very pale. The coachman shut the door with a sharp slam, then drove away.

She sat for a while as in a dream. Once her lips moved as she whispered:

"Poor Harry, I had forgotten him."

She dressed as usual for dinner, said good-night to the two little girls who were in the nursery, then sat by the library fire and waited for her husband.

The carriage had been gone a long time, and still he did not come. He was usually the most punctual of men.

At last she began to worry; a terrible thought came into her head. How wild Harry looked, what if—oh, why did he not come?

At last there was the sound of wheels and someone entered the side door. She arose, her heart beating wildly.

Just then the butler came to the library door.

"There has been a little accident, ma'am, and the master——"

She heard no more. With a scream she rushed past him into the hall, then into the arms of her husband, who was just removing his muddy and dripping coat. Then she hung about his neck sobbing and murmuring words of endearment.

"Why, Helen!" he cried. "Helen!"

His face seemed transfigured as he bent over her, and gently drew her into the library. The butler retired to the kitchen.

"The dinner is just about spoilt," said the cook gloomily.

"Never mind," chuckled James, "they won't never know the difference."

"What's the matter?" cried the children's maid. "I thought I heard somebody scream!"

The butler told them.

"She loves him, then," said the cook, as if surprised.

"I should say so—that lovely new dress against his muddy coat," replied the maid. "What did he do, James?"

"Do," said James scornfully, "what 'ud any man do with a pair of pretty arms round his neck? I must say he acted quite like a young man, did master."

The cook, who was a grass widow, sighed as she stirred her soup, while the maid blushed and looked coquettishly at James.

* * * * *

On the deck of a second rate steamer, sat a man with a wide-brimmed hat pulled over his eyes. He was quite motionless for hours as if absorbed in thought. He seemed unconscious of everything. Above the noise of wind, wave and machinery, another sound seemed ever in his ears—a sound that had been like a death knell to his hopes. It was the slam of a carriage door.

Agnes Ferrers.

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By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

SUMMARY OF PART I.

The opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

A few years pass and Eutasia is affianced to Rhesus.

One night Proclus and Rhesus chance to overhear a plot between Hypatius, a claimant to the throne, Marcen, a gladiator of the green faction, and Hermiot of the Blues, to raise the city in revolt, remove Justinian from the throne, and make Hypatius emperor in his place.

Hypatius proceeds to take them singly down to the flooded catacombs under the ground upon which they are standing, where he has vast treasures stored with which he purposes to buy the sympathies of the people. Marcen goes with him first, leaving Hermiot on the watch. Rhesus and Proclus spring out upon Hermiot, bind and gag him. Upon the return of Hypatius and Marcen, Proclus assumes the blue sash of Hermiot, personates Hermiot under the cover of the darkness, and goes down into the catacombs with Hypatius in order to discover the whereabouts of the treasure.

Meanwhile it occurs to Marcen that if he were to cut off the only means of egress from the catacombs, his fellow conspirators will be heard of no more, and he will be the sole possessor of the hidden treasure. He returns to the entrance of the catacombs, followed by Rhesus, who watches him carry out his murderous designs. Marcen discovers the presence of Rhesus and rushes at him. Rhesus eludes him, and a hot chase follows. Rhesus finally gives Marcen the slip, and, together with Pelak, a charioteer of the Greens, returns to the catacombs in order to release his friend Proclus. Upon arriving there, however, they find someone has been before them, and the place is empty.

PART THE SECOND.

"In the Toils of Treachery."

CHAPTER I.

The Key of the Treasure.

Overworn with exertion and want of sleep, Rhesus came up the stairs and let the stone fall into its place again. Then, judging that no attempt would be made upon the treasure during the day, he arranged to meet Pelak the following night just after dusk, and the two parted, Rhesus making the best speed possible towards home.

To his inexpressible joy, who should meet him as he entered the peristyle but his friend, dressed in his usual attire. He thanked the gods for it, and for all his stoicism, his eyes were dim with unshed tears. He sank on the couch exhausted, and as Proclus bade the slaves wash his feet, and set before him a draught of reviving wine, and a goodly meal, he told the exciting incidents of the night.

"It seems to me," he said in conclusion, "that we have been drawn into a most complicated conspiracy, and one that is likely to bring us into trouble."

Proclus did not answer at first, but stood gazing through the casement into the dark-avenued garden in silence, nor until Rhesus had finished the meal did he speak.

"You have assuredly had a busy night," he said, "and a most narrow escape, and now, I should think, you will begin to see the reason of my cynicism. Who is there one can trust in this accursed city; who worth one's consideration, saving only as to what service can be got out of them? A plague on them all! But that's neither the one thing nor the other. Plot or no plot, it will go hard with us if we cannot get enough of that tremendous hoard in the Hall of Waters to make your fortune and replenish mine—I am a sad squanderer—and enable us to shake the dust of this corrupted place from our feet for ever. I am weary of it all, and I think I will travel. And think what a fortune would mean to you, Rhesus! Power, name, Eutasia, and the opening of your father's door to you again. We must foil these traitors, and particularly that arch-villain, Marcen—who is no doubt on your track even now—and secure this treasure for ourselves."

"But how, Proclus?"

"That you will understand better when I have answered your first question as to my adventures while you were racing over the city."

Then he told Rhesus of the Hall of Waters, which many knew by repute, but few had seen, owing to the few inroads to it, and the danger of getting lost therein—small though it really was—where the treasure was secreted, how vast it was, and how he and Pompey and Hypatius came to the top of the stairs to find the stone fast.

"And you were so near and acted so foolishly," he went on. "Well, that is over. One cannot pluck good opportunities from the clutch of the flying past. I must own that I felt the chill of the shades on my face, Rhesus, when the stone refused to move, but fortunately I preserved my disguise as Hermiot and kept my tongue pretty still. The brothers suspected Marcen at once, and said so—I felt sure of it, but affected to laugh the idea to scorn. The torches we had steadily burnt down, until at last we each held one alight and had no more. Then the others gave way to utter despair. I left them, and in a careless, aimless manner, went alone down the steps and back to the treasure. Anything was better than inaction.

"About half way down the last passage I noticed a curious projection on the left wall, make the sloping tunnel at that place rather narrow, and a close scrutiny showed

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that the broad stone which stood out was of a different nature to the wall. It was smooth and shining, where that was rough and dull, and had sundry tracings cut on its face. Holding my flaring torch close to these tracings, I saw at once that it was an inscription in the ancient Assyrian characters, which I—and two others only—had learnt to decipher when I studied at Athens. So far as I know, no one in Constantinople, saving myself, can read them, and therefore the plotters had passed them by—as, doubtless, plotters and criminals and refugees have passed them by for generations—in ignorance. I hastened to read the inscription, thinking to perchance discover a way of escape. With patience and the exercise of memory, I translated it, and in our tongue it would run thus:

"'I, Imgur, once the favourite of Hatensit, the Queen "of Nineveh, being cast into this noisome dungeon to "die, do hereby bequeath my hatred to the world in its "folly and sin, and hurl my maledictions at her whose "wayward fancy has thus requited my loyal service and "deep love. And lest any should be cast here in the self-"same plight, in this foul vault under this far fortress of "our empire, I leave behind me the key of this sliding "stone; so peradventure, when the assassins come to "finish their task, they may, like me, move back the "stone and seek death instead in the quiet water below, "in the blackness of the pool that is so near my prison. "Search diligently the edges of this stone until thou "seest a small round hole on each side—a hole that "will admit the passage of a finger—and then count "two stones away downward from the right-hand hole. "The third will yield to the pressure of the hand at "either end, swinging on a central pivot, and in the "dark recess behind is a long slender key that fits the "holes above. Place it therein and turn it twice "round, and the stone will fall across the passage or "recede to its resting-place, according as it may be at "the time. This secret was told me by one who loved "me, but whom I loved not; one who knew of my "doom and could not help me otherwise; one, who for "love of me, bought it from the builder of the fortress "with her kisses, and then slew him.'

"It was no message of hope for a man to read who felt that the same or a worse doom was his," went on Proclus, "but it took my thoughts away from my own misery for a while, and I stood in mute contemplation of the writing and the memory of the ages and the nations that have passed since the hand of Imgur scratched it on the stone; and I reflected that if that deep dungeon was there in his day it must be old indeed—older, perchance, than the Christians would have us believe the world to be. But presently my thoughts took a fresh turn. If Imgur's writing was true and the key was still in its recess, it was in my power to close up the passage and bar the way, and I alone would know the secret.

"With trembling hands—for, for the moment, I had forgotten the helplessness of my position—I found the swinging slab and the key behind it, and with a grim smile of exultation, pressed it in the small hole on the left of the smooth rock and turned it twice. By the expiring flame of my torch I saw the great mass move forward from the top, with a slow falling motion. Noiselessly, almost steadily it came down, and at last settled with a dull shock upon the floor. It rose to the roof and touched both sides, filling the square of the passage. And then my torch began to flicker with the last efforts of its flame.

"The horror of my situation came back upon me in full force then, and I hesitated, before I rowed back and joined the others, whether to keep the key or not. However, I placed it in the folds of my sleeve, and went back, landing at the foot of the steps as the last red ember of the pine-branch smouldered out, and stumbled to the top. The other two sat in darkness also, but just as I reached them

"I hastened to read the inscription."

footsteps sounded overhead and a heavy crash, and presently the flag was raised, dim light shone down, and someone cried to us to come out. That someone was——"

"Hermiot!" cried Rhesus, remembering that he had escaped.

"No," said Proclus, "Marcen. Who more likely?"

"But he wished to imprison you all there until you died of starvation!" Rhesus cried. "And I saw him in the chariot of the Empress not long before I came to rescue you."

"That may be," said his friend. "But who more likely than he, I repeat, when he knew that you had discovered his treachery and evaded his vengeance? And, surely, the steeds of the Empress would take him thither swifter than you or Pelak could walk. And he was in great haste, too, and laid our imprisonment to your charge. We needed little bidding to leave the gruesome place and get out of the mephitic exhalations that were suffocating us slowly, and still preserving my identity concealed, I made excuse to be away on urgent business. As I ran round the angle of the wall I saw a couple of monks bending over the prostrate form of Hermiot and unloosing his bonds. I barely got out of sight before he was liberated, and my last glance back from the shelter of an empty dwelling's portal was of the meeting of the four plotters and their expressions of consternation and amazement. I stayed to see no more, but came here without delay, intending to seek you when I had changed my attire and eaten. And now you are here."

"But who wrote my name in the dust where Hermiot had been?" asked Rhesus, bewildered.

"Who else, again, but Marcen, to show that he knew you? We shall have to play our game with subtle skill, Rhesus, to overmatch that arch-traitor, but I think I have the best of matters so far, in possessing this key, even if he suspects its existence and that I have it."

"But he cannot know of it at all, nor of your identity when you personated Hermiot!" cried Rhesus incredulously. "And why carry it about with you—why not have left it in the secret recess?"

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Pelak knocked thrice.

"My young friend," said Proclus gravely, "I will wager that he knows already that it was I who took Hermiot's place. Think. He was, up to to-day, a champion of the Green, yet we know him to be in league with the Empress, who favours the Blue. He is a traitor to both factions, then—to Theodora as well, very likely—and he means as we do, to secure this treasure for himself. He will have spies everywhere—amongst the slaves of his own household, in the palace, at the hippodrome—and they will by this time have told him of our movements last night, when I returned, and how, and where your friend Pelak now is. He will see at once that we know the secret, and will argue, from the fact that we stay at home, that we have either set men to watch the entrance or have discovered something that he has not.

"To lead him astray I have already sent two experienced ruffians to keep an eye on the convent and report to me his doings. As for keeping the key, Rhesus, there is no other way, for the secret recess is on the lower side of the great rock door, and the door is shut. It is a curious piece of workmanship, is it not?"

He drew from his sleeve very carefully a long thin rod of bronze, with a curious design cut into one end and a round handle formed at the other.

"It is very old," said Rhesus, examining it with interest, "and it would be difficult to imitate. We must guard it well. And much as I should like the half of this wealth, for it would mean, as you say, Eutasia and home for me—I think we had better let it be in safety for awhile let the ides of January pass, and see whether Hypatius relinquishes his plot or no."

"That will be the better plan," said Proclus. "And when you are rested we will go and make arrangements with old Sibron for the games, and see Eutasia."

CHAPTER II.

In the Shadow of St. Sophia.

When Marcen escaped from the *mêlée* in his patron's chariot, he was raging bitterly at his foolishness in not having been more careful when he entered the convent for the second time. Yet he masked his chagrin with a good-humoured smile as he turned to answer Theodora's questions.

"It is true, your Majesty," he said, "that I have not yet discovered the exact whereabouts of this hidden treasure, but I know that it is somewhere near the Convent of St. Conan. Will your Majesty drive me thither swiftly? I was on my way there to keep watch on these conspirators, when I got entangled in this rabble."

And in his mind, Marcen was at that very moment resolving to liberate the said conspirators, since by so doing he could shift the blame of their imprisonment on other shoulders. They were certain to be rescued, now Rhesus and perhaps others knew of their position; and who better fitted to free them than himself?

Whilst he thought, Theodora gave orders to her driver, and they were rolled rapidly across the city. On the way the Empress pursued her queries, Marcen answering as vaguely as possible; and reposing a fuller confidence in him than was usual with her, she agreed to let the plot of Hypatius go on until the day of its *dénouement*, and then unmask all the traitors at once and wring the secret of the wealth from them.

"Always providing, my Marcen," she said, with a warning gesture, "that you do not discover it yourself in the meantime."

"Always providing that," he echoed, smiling inscrutably. "And before I leave the sun of your presence, Majesty, for the darkness of this intrigue, I would pray of you a favour that you can easily grant."

"Say on, most useful of men. There is much I would give you for your past services alone."

"It is only a little matter to you, perhaps, Empress, but it means a great deal to me. There is a maid I love to distraction, and whom, I have courage to believe, I could teach to love me in return by the time she comes of marriageable age; but she is kept at the house of crusty old Sibron, under the patronage and love-designs of that very Rhesus I spoke of to you yesterday, that meddling country youth, who flaunts his paganism in our faces and has been overheard to utter veiled treason. Could you buy this maid for your own service in the palace, I might yet hope. Her name is Eutasia, and a pretty little golden-haired witch she is."

"I have seen the wilful jade often," said Theodora. "It is a thousand pities that she is not given a better chance in life. I grant you your request without more words. She shall enter the palace this very day."

And leaving Marcen returning thanks with a real gratitude, the Royal harpy drove away.

Marcen turned down the passage and set free his friends, as Proclus has told us; but his confidence received a ruder shock than it had yet done when he found that Hermiot had never been in the Hall of Waters—that someone unknown had been in his place, penetrated their whole secret, and yet got away safely and still unknown. He raved and called on all the saints in the calendar, and blank surprise and deadly fear sat heavily on the faces of his three friends.

"It is the work of that pair of wretches who thought me their friend!" he cried. "'Tis Rhesus and Proclus who have spied on us and unearthed our plans! It is clear that we cannot pursue our scheme at present. We must wait."

"But why, and for what?" asked Hypatius.

"Because our intentions are known and our secret also, and the slightest move on our part would bring all to public notice. At the same time they know we are desperate men, and beyond trying to secure the treasure themselves, will

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not molest us if we refrain from action. In that case we must set a watch on the convent and endeavour to trap them here or elsewhere, and make away with them quietly. Failing that we shall doubtless find means to bring about their ruin at the circus, for a riot is almost certain when the games begin, and it is hinted that Justinian contemplates strong measures if the green faction proves troublesome. After that, we shall be free to proceed with our project."

Deceived by the words of their co-plotter, the three men agreed to his plan, and promising that the convent should be well watched and guarded, parted with assurances of mutual fidelity.

Marcen, too cautious to return to his own house now that the news of his change of colour was abroad, sought the private palace of Theodora, on the shores of Propontis, and there, later in the day, received and welcomed little Eutasia in her new finery of silk embroidered robes and pearl-crusted tiara. She, not knowing but that the hour of her good fortune had arrived, greeted him merrily, and was full of praise for the great Theodora, who, seeing in her a useful tool for the future, had exercised upon the impressionable girl those graces of speech and manner that had won her so much in the past.

But there was a note of regret in the girl's happiness because she had not bidden farewell to her Rhesus, because he did not know of her success; and Marcen, inwardly full of wrath at her fancy, had to promise that he would bring them together in the garden next day.

"It is a perilous thing to do," said he, "for the green badge is not in favour here, and there are sharp-eyed spies in hiding everywhere. But I will risk much for you, my blue-eyed beauty, and I will bring Rhesus—if he dares to come!"

The giant staggered for an instant.

"Rhesus will dare anything for me, because he loves me," said Eutasia boldly, "but you must be careful, Marcen, or I shall not like you. Tell him I will walk in the garden every night, under the trees over there, with the leaves of gold."

Marcen repeated his promise, and with less reluctance now, for his fertile brain saw a chance of making his rival's love lead to his rival's destruction, and before night fell, he had made his preparations.

* * * * *

Rhesus, not knowing the depth of the world's cunning, fell easily into the trap. When he and his friend entered the hippodrome and greeted old Sibron heartily, they found him strangely silent and morose. He answered their questions regarding the condition of the horses and bears, and who was to drive in the race, and how the betting stood, very grudgingly and shortly, and listened to their nocturnal adventure with scant attention. At last Rhesus grew impatient, and asked where Eutasia was, who was usually so ready to meet him in the portico. Sibron's brow blackened yet more at that, and he replied:

"It is just that saucy minx who troubles me. She has gone."

"Gone!" shouted Rhesus. "Where? By Zeus, but if you have let her come to any harm, you and I are friends no more, old fox!"

"A thousand maledictions rest on me!" cried Sibron, "but, in faith, I had no choice. 'Tis not so long ago, but just after dawn, that the Empress came dashing up in her golden car, and seeming to have forgotten her enmity to our colour, bade me bring the little maid to her. Though suspecting something wrong, I was unable to make excuse, and so, nothing loth, I can tell you, the little one came smiling and spoke a pretty greeting to Theodora. The Empress talked very flatteringly of her beauty and charm, and in the end asked her to become one of her serving girls in the palace. Eutasia drew back from the thought at first, wondering if you would like it, but Theodora painted such a picture of bright scenes and gay company and rich dresses and an amplitude of gold, that the maid would have no nay but she must go; and when asked to go there and then, was in transports of delight. I would have dissuaded her, but she tossed her head impatiently, and, Theodora pressed for a decision; and when a sovereign requests she commands. So she has left us, and it seems to me as though the sun shines not so brightly as it shone yesterday."

"And left she no message for me?" asked Rhesus, growing cold with fear.

"She had no time, so imperious and urgent was her Majesty, but she did slip this into my hand unperceived, and bid me give it to you. And I knew no more."

"This" was a thin ring of gold that Rhesus had beaten out for her from an old coin, and which she had worn ever since, and he placed on his little finger straightway. And how often, in danger and despair, in solitude and sorrow, on distant seas and in a far land, did that tiny memento revive his courage and recall her face.

"You should have kept her from that harpy's clutches at least a day, until I had seen her," said Rhesus. "However, all is not yet lost. Gold will do much amongst the pampered minions of the palace, and I shall snatch my jewel from the Empress and Marcen yet—for this is his doing,

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I'll swear. Do not grieve so, my worthy Sibron; if I can hope, who have lost all if I have lost her, you need not despair. Let us put our heads together, and we will confound the plots of all these renegades and wretches. The gods help those who help themselves, and Rhesus the Roman, as the urchins of the gutters call me, is on his mettle! We have frustrated one sedition already; we will prove that strong arms and resolute wills can do yet more!"

The old man, steeped in the cunning of the time, smiled grimly at the younger's determination—and Proclus made a cynical grimace, but as the first promised secrecy and advice and the latter declared that he would help with all his heart and soul, Rhesus went away more buoyant than the position warranted.

The city was already seething with the ferment of the approaching holiday; the drivers of the chariots practised daily in the circus, and more than one met his death at the hands of the roving assassins who hourly grew more insolent; the arrogance and oppressions of the blues grew steadily more intense; and so Rhesus had need of care in his nightly efforts to get speech with his stolen love. He bribed several of the sentinels to let him into the palace gardens after dusk, and once got right to the casement of Theodora's gilded chamber and peered in; but the one he sought he saw not. Sometimes Proclus went with him, sometimes Pelak the charioteer, and sometimes—though seldom—grey-haired Sibron himself, whose rough nature his fair charge had softened wonderfully; but as the days went by and they were still successless, Rhesus began to despair.

At last, on the eve of the fête-day, he encountered Pelak in the gate of the arena, and saw good tidings written on his face. They passed along the palace front without a word, looking to their weapons as they went; and not until they stood in the shadow of the battlemented walls of St. Sophia, did Rhesus ask what news. Pelak answered; "The best." He had bribed his way judiciously with the money Rhesus had given him, to the inner parts of the imperial residence, and had discovered there an old friend long lost. He had found that Eutasia usually escaped into the garden an hour before midnight, but only for a short time and always watched; and that Marcen now lived in the palace and was with her every day.

"My friend gave me instructions how to evade the outer guards easily," said Pelak. "So you must take note of what I say. Follow me in silence, now."

They emerged from the shadow and crossed the open space towards the palace again, then skirted the fortress-like wall of the garden until they came to a small gate. On this Pelak knocked thrice, and it was at once opened. They passed in in silence, and in silence a shrouded figure closed it behind them. They stood on the edge of a thick grove of fragrant-smelling sandal trees now, and the two great domes of the palace, as well as some of the statues and pillars of Parian marble about it, stood out dimly vast in the starlight. Pelak then plunged into the grove, the other following, and at the farther side, where grew a bed of brilliant flowers, and beyond which waved a row of artificial trees with foliage of beaten gold and birds of wood with jewelled wings perched in their branches—a luxury bought with the ransom of many humble lives—stopped, and bade Rhesus, in a whisper, go on.

"Cross the open space quickly," he said, "and shelter under the third tree. If the sentry sees you in passing, you will know how to deal with him—and you must not hesitate. If the soldier on this side sees you, I shall be ready. And if we are discovered by Marcen we must climb the wall about a dozen paces below the gate. Hasten."

Rhesus needed no telling, for now was his chance or never. The night was in his favour, and he sped across the well-kept paths with the feet of a deer and gained the shade of the costly trees, and there looked towards the palace that held his love.

Lights multitudinous gleamed from the marble casements and shone on the statuary of the balconies and the garden; the sound of light laughter and the tinkle of wine-cups came from the banquet-room where Theodora—comedian, profligate, and Empress—dispensed her hospitality to her favourites of the hour; and presently, on the spice-laden air, rang the wild, gay notes of a Bacchanal song. And in that nest of intrigue and infamy, of wine and wealth and wickedness, his sweet Eutasia was a prisoner—a willing prisoner, perchance—a victim to the glamour of its gold, the exquisite aroma of its Maronean wine, and the flattery and false tales of Marcen the renegade, his bitterest foe!

As he gazed at that splendid pile and thought these rankling thoughts, a figure moved across the grass towards him with a measured tread. A battle-axe glinted as it swung in his hand, and as he passed within an arm's length of where Rhesus stood, the latter saw that he was a Briton from the far-west isles. A brawny, iron-limbed man with great sinews, a type of the men who had made the Imperial Guard a terror to all rebels, and the pride of their master. Twice he passed Rhesus unsuspectingly, before she for whom that waiting heart yearned came pacing slowly down the path, and entered the little avenue.

In a flutter of excitement, Rhesus stepped forward to fashion out the fair vision more clearly from the dimness,

He placed the wet edge of his keen blade on his throat.

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and for that one moment forgot the sentinel. He had just passed, but heard the rustle of the movement and turned his head. Rhesus had no time, nor choice. He sprang forward suddenly, ere the other could move, placed his foot against the Briton's back, his arms round his neck, and put forth all his strength. The giant staggered for an instant and an inarticulate gurgle came from his throat; he reeled, something in his neck gave way, cracking with a horrible sound, and over they both rolled on the soft turf. When Rhesus freed himself the other lay dead, and Eutasia was at his side, terror in her wide blue eyes. He seized her hand and drew her under the trees.

"I had to do it for my life's sake and yours, Merry-one," said he, between the kisses that, despite her reluctance, he bestowed upon her, "and now—and now—" And now the words of advice and appeal he had thought would be so ready, suddenly failed him.

"What have you done, Rhesus?" she asked, struggling out of his embrace and glancing hurriedly at the silent figure on the grass. "You have neglected me and my messages these nine days, and now you condescend to come you must needs slay Beric—an honest and good-natured soldier, who was only doing his duty. And you gave him no chance of defence, you coward!"

She attitudinised before him like a comedy-queen-of-passion, and but for the danger of the position, Rhesus could have laughed aloud at her youthful gravity, and praised her ruddy beauty at one and the same time. But instead he took her hand and spoke seriously.

"I had to kill him, child, or he would have given the alarm, and we might both have been slain or imprisoned. And I want to get you away from here quietly; if not to-night, to-morrow-eve—this painted palace of revelry is no place for your sweet soul."

"Why, Rhesus?" she asked, drawing away from him again. "You talk strangely to-night. I thought you would have been glad because of my good-luck in getting here, where everything is nice and one is always merry. I thought you loved me; I shall think Marcen is better than you, for he says that I have done well and shall be a great lady some day if he can have his way."

"He is a lying villain!" cried Rhesus impetuously. "He has attempted my life already, and has only lured you here to keep you out of my way. Don't trust him; don't believe him at all. I will tell you why when I have more time. If you love me as you used to do, Eutasia—as I love you—be ready to meet me here to-morrow night while the feast of the games is being eaten in the banquet-room, and I will take you to a place of safety. I shall have riches soon, and we can leave the city and go far away."

Eutasia hesitated a moment, then pouted.

"I don't want to go away from here. It is gay and pleasant, and I have always lived in the city.. And I don't believe Marcen is as bad as you say; you are jealous, that is all. I will not go, Rhesus, and if you like me you will let me have my own way. If you had liked me you would have answered the little letters I sent you. But you know where to find me now, and I must go in before they miss Beric, and come to seek him."

"Eutasia!" he cried, as she turned away, "stay only a moment! let me tell you why! see how I cherish your ring! Ah!"

A warning whistle came from the grove behind, waving lights were approaching from the palace, and voices called to each other. Rhesus had but one glimpse of her pretty face, wreathed with petulance, as she cried: "Hasten, Rhesus, for your life!" and of her light form flitting over the sward; then he turned and ran for the sandal trees and joined Pelak. They gained the wall unseen, and clambered over, grazing their shins and knuckles in their hurry, and fled beside the church, in the deep shadow of its sacred stones.

As they went three men suddenly stepped out from a little recess and stood before them with bows drawn, and discharging their arrows simultaneously, rushed forward with spiked maces in hand. Pelak fell with a shaft in his breast, but as he went down, his battle-axe flew from his hand with true aim, and clove open the head of the foremost assassin. The second Rhesus disabled with his sword at first stroke, and the third, seeing his reckless daring, took to his heels without a blow. Rhesus wasted no time in pursuit, but sank on his knees beside Pelak and strove to restore animation to his still form.

It was useless, and registering a deep vow by all the gods to bring retribution on the slayers, or those who had set them on, he went over to where the wounded man lay groaning, and placed the wet edge of his keen blade on his throat.

"One movement, one cry, and I press down this sword," he said. "Tell me, in a word, who paid you and your comrades to waylay us here?"

The man was silent; defiance was in his eyes.

"Answer, and truly, or I end your wretched life here and now!" cried Rhesus. "If I leave you you will be found, and may recover. Answer, or meet your end. Who paid you?"

"Marcen, the gladiator," he said sullenly.

Not deigning him another word, Rhesus put back his blade in its sheath and left him, and picking up the body of Pelak, bore it to his home. And he knew not which was the heavier weight—the burden upon his shoulders, or the burden of sorrow upon his soul at the words Eutasia had spoken in the garden.

(To be continued.)

TO READERS WHO HAVE FRIENDS ABROAD.

The Number of PEARSON'S WEEKLY dated July 16th will be known as the

GREAT COLONIAL NUMBER.

The Editorial Chair will be temporarily occupied by a well-known Colonial Journalist at present in London, and, with the exception of one or two regular features, all the contents will be contributed by readers scattered throughout our Colonies.

A new Competition for Foreign and Colonial Readers only will be announced, and substantial prizes will be offered.

All the articles have been written by contributors who know exactly what they are talking about, and the facts are all fresh and little known.

If you have friends or relatives abroad who do not get "P.W." regularly, send them a copy of this special number. They will thank you.

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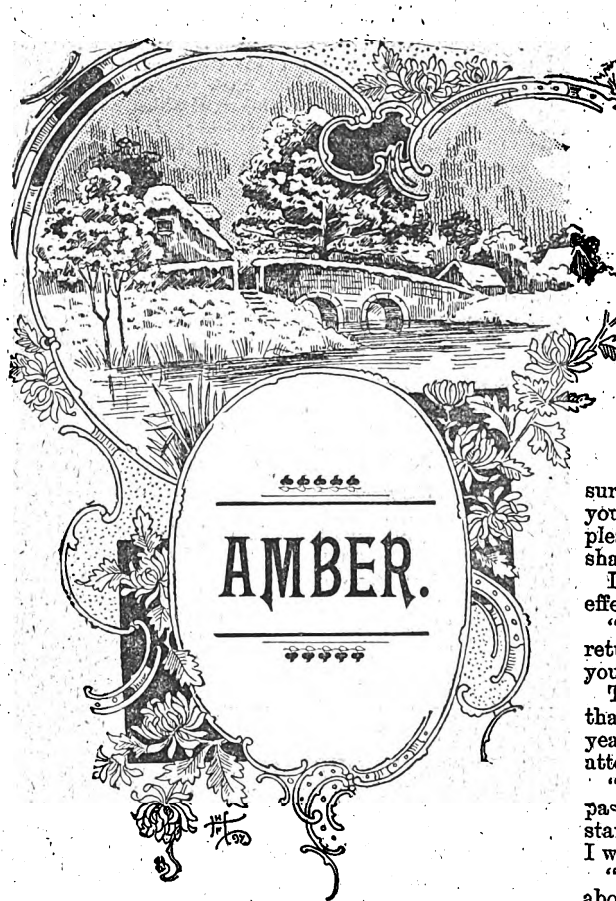

AMBER.

"Another expedition starting out for the North Pole, I see," said I, reading aloud from the evening paper. "Really, these expeditions to the North Pole should be stopped. They do no good, and are a nuisance."

"You don't seem to take much interest in the North Pole," said my companion.

I looked at him. There was a peculiar ring in his voice, a singular scrutiny in his eye. I had not known him long, but circumstances had thrown us together at a friend's house. She had told me that Maurice Connor was a scientific man, a great traveller; that something unpleasant had happened, no one quite knew what, in connection with one of his explorations; but still he was a nice fellow, and very interesting.

"Well, no, I can't say that I do," I responded; "I think, to begin with, that there is no such thing as the North Pole."

"No such thing?" he repeated.

"Of course there is a spot of ice, or snow, or frozen land at that particular point of the earth, but as for there being anything mysterious or wonderful about it, or worth investigating, I simply refuse to believe it."

"And yet the expeditions still continue," he said slowly.

"Why, what's the matter with you? You look so strange in your eyes. Have I said anything I ought not? If you have a pet theory on the subject, kindly forget my remarks."

Though he made no reply, I was fascinated by the peculiar little red flame burning in his eyeball. Suddenly I felt that the man was repressing himself by a violent effort.

I became curious at once, and, unconscious of any reason why I should not, began to question him.

"You have a secret you are afraid you will tell me, haven't you? But I won't tell anyone. What is it about? Not the North Pole, surely? Oh, it is! Why, you haven't been there, have you? Tell me all about it; I should be only too pleased to believe, if I could. Come, be generous; share this secret with me."

It was some time before my importunity had any effect; then, rather unwillingly, he said:

"Well, I will tell you, though you must promise, in return, that you will not repeat what I say until I give you permission."

To this I willingly assented. And then he told me that he had joined an expedition going North some five years before, and, after describing the usual vicissitudes attendant upon these explorations, he continued:

"We were frozen in, as always happens. Weeks passed, and I got tired of inaction. One morning I started off alone, intending to go a short distance. But I went too far and became lost in that awful region.

"I will not describe my sufferings. After wandering about for three days, and when I was nearly done for, I fell in with some Esquimaux.

"They were far from their settlement, and I was glad to go in any direction, for they knew nothing of the ship and could not be induced to help me to find my companions, and I knew that if I did not go with them I should die.

"I was not very strong when first I met with Immu, the Esquimau, his two sons and their sledge with five dogs; but after being with them a few days, a new feeling came into my blood. I was so delighted at my rescue that I gained new strength, and prepared for some interesting experiences.

"I saw that Immu was making his way due North, and came to the conclusion he belonged to the extreme Northern tribes. Of course, I was consumed with curiosity to know everything about our route. At last, one day, when it was fearfully stormy, travelling became very bad, and Immu decided to build a snow hut and remain in its shelter till the worst was over.

"I will not stop to tell you the details of our stay. There came a sudden change and lull in the storm, and we decided to move on. It was strange how different the air was. Immu several times shook his head and, with his sons, examined the ground. Later, I discovered what was the matter; the sudden change in temperature had affected what seemed to be the solid earth beneath our feet.

"There were cracks and fissures dimly outlined on the surface as we proceeded. Immu and his sons held a

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conference; but we could do nothing, it seemed. We could neither push forward or go back. A seal thrust out his head, and that, for the moment, made us forget all else until we had him skinned and packed for provision for the future.

"It is needless to say we found we were on an ice-floe, and with nothing to do but to accept the situation. The weather became warmer, and Immu and his sons shook their heads ominously. I had not mastered their dialect yet, but made out that some misfortune was awaiting us.

"It bothered me very little. If this meant death, I was no worse off than I had been; and if not death, there was adventure before me, which was just suited to my frame of mind. I might be on the verge of a great discovery; anything was possible in these frigid regions.

"Those 'warm currents!' I had heard of them always in fanciful legend and story; were they to be proved?

"Well, we floated due North. I don't know what kind of a current it was. It seemed to me it was like a stream on its first course, not quite decided in its direction; it was very slow, making no haste at all. We had provisions for some days, and so had no immediate fears.

"Then, one day, came an unusual sight: a flock of geese, far overhead, with their familiar cry. That, too, I had heard of. Immu was greatly excited, and talked with his sons, still predicting misfortune. I hardly knew how it was, but the change of weather had affected us all very much, we were oppressed and demoralised. Even the sledge dogs felt the influence and howled incessantly.

"I don't know whether it was the result of fever, but I certainly lost my head for several days. When I came to, I found myself on a pleasant green shore, Immu was standing near, in a dazed state, with two of his dogs, but naught did I see of his sons. A magnificent aurora was playing over the sky in ribbons of the rainbow, so that at first I had a vague idea that we were both dead and that this was the gate leading into Heaven. I remember that I thought it rather strange that the dogs should be there, too.

"Coming towards us, I saw several figures, and was almost confirmed in my idea of the nearness to the regions above, for they certainly were angelic in appearance.

"'If I were on earth, I should be tempted to call them albinos,' I said to myself.

"They were pinkish white as to skin, and had phenomenal hair, snow-white, wavy, and standing out round the head in a sort of halo about two feet in diameter.

"Their garments were loose and simple, made of oddly woven material, unlike anything I had ever seen. As they came nearer I saw that their eyes were not pink, as I had expected, but were of a topaz colour, giving more strength to the countenance than has the ordinary albino.

"Of course we could not reply to their questions, and one of them produced a curious instrument, one end of which he rested on my head, the other on his own. By some power, which I did not comprehend, he conveyed to me his thoughts in questions, and I replied to them by thought. I suppose it was a 'thought-telephone,' if there is such a thing in creation.

"Very kindly they told me I was welcome, and invited us to partake of their hospitality. I presume I was still light-headed, for I asked something about whether this was the land of the dead or the land of the living, which query my questioner immediately repeated to his two companions, and all three seemed much excited.

"He responded through the thought-telephone, 'Come, let us learn of each other, for there is much to know for us both.'

"Now, I cannot stop for details. I have it all written out, in case I need it. But in telling this to you, I shall condense my experience into as few words as possible.

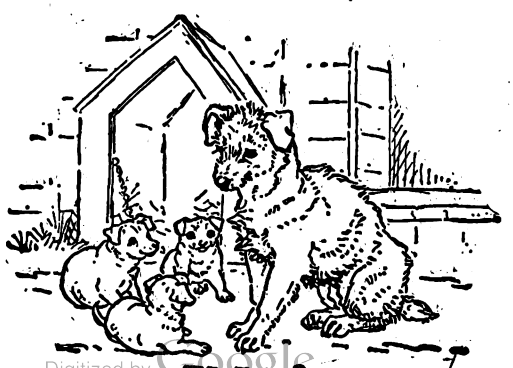
"We had reached a remarkable part of the earth's surface, as I soon found out. As in some better known northern latitude, next to the great glaciers, grew beautiful forms of green vegetation, almost rankly—trees, plants, and ferns. There was one large citadel, or community-house, in which it seemed, these strange people lived. Their form of government was the community idea elaborated and made practical.

"It took me some time to understand, even faintly, what kind of a land I was in, and what kind of people they were. All of our latest inventions were here realised and applied practically—things which, of course, I can no more explain than I can Tesla's discoveries, for instance.

"You have heard of the loadstone of the North Pole? This was used for a building material for their citadel, which loomed up like an immense tower of Babel. From the sea's quantities of jet and amber were washed up, and these materials they had put to a thousand beautifying purposes of which we have never dreamt. The only iron they had was such as was drawn to the shore in old wrecks, many of which I saw cast up on the beach—wrecks from time immemorial. I could go on for hours, telling you of these things in detail; but these are of the least importance, compared with other things which bewildered me, and which were beyond my comprehension then, and are now.

"After being restored to health, Immu and I were taken to a council chamber, and there met what seemed to be a committee, who asked us many questions, and by some kind of a quick process carved the answers on blocks of slate, of which material there was a vast quantity in their land. Naturally I was puzzled by the absence of paper.

"Finally, however, the facts of the case dawned upon me. It was indeed 'a land of the living'—for so seldom did one of these strange people die that everything was contrived and arranged to last a long time. Therefore they had no use for paper. If a thing was too trivial to



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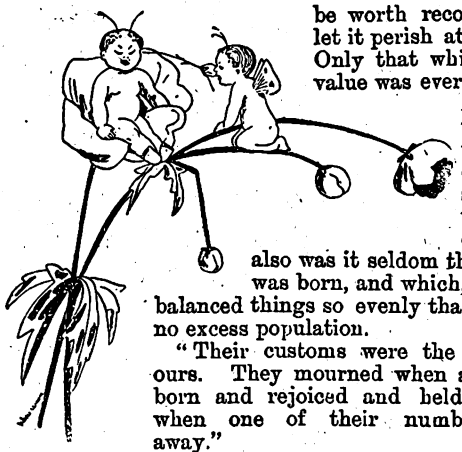

be worth recording they let it perish at inception. Only that which was of value was ever preserved. And if it was seldom that any one of this strange tribe tasted death, so also was it seldom that any one was born, and which, of course, balanced things so evenly that there was no excess population.

"Their customs were the reverse of ours. They mourned when a babe was born and rejoiced and held festivities when one of their number passed away."

As Mr. Connor was telling me this wonderful tale I simply grew more and more fascinated, so that I could not utter a word. But, finally, at this point, I managed to ask a question which it was impossible to withhold longer.

"But, Mr. Connor, did you ever see any of the women? And what were they like?"

"They were just like the men; you could not tell them apart. The men had no beards, and their hair was arranged just the same as that of the women, and they all wore the same sort of garments—a kind of loose princess gown, with clasps of amber and gold down the front. These garments, by the way, were woven of material to serve as non-conductors of electricity; the air there was surcharged with the fluid, and they had learnt how to resist it, as well as how to utilise it. It was the electricity which made their hair stand out so strangely. They used it for a thousand purposes of which we know nothing. Their laboratories were built outside the citadel-house and made a separate city, as it were, they were so numerous.

"One of the first things I noticed in 'the land of the living' was the marvellous colours and designs which they produced upon the skies. It was a constant panorama cast upon no less a canvas than the heavens itself."

"You surely can't mean that these people produce the Aurora Borealis at will?" I asked timidly.

"No, it is merely the result of their interference with the laws of electricity as ordinarily prevailing in that region—it is their joy and delight to bend it to their will and make it their servant. You see, they live so long and waste so little time—one capsule a day, serves them for food. As I said, they waste so little time, that they are masters of the earth."

"Mr. Connor, may I ask a question?"

"Certainly."

"Did you like the women?"

"Very much indeed."

"Were they pretty?"

"Just the same as the men."

"Were they young and charming, then? That's what I meant to ask."

"The youngest was fifty years old, as nearly as I could make out, but that didn't count, for her grandmother looked just as youthful as she did. No one was old there. Everyone was the same age, apparently."

"Was that nice?"

"I thought it delightful."

"Did you admire the fifty-year-old young lady?"

"Yes, I will confess I thought her a wonderful human creation. To wisdom she added unconsciousness of self, which alone is a great charm."

"Did you—did you let her know—know that you liked her?"

"Yes."

"What was her name?"

"I gave her a name I thought suited her better than the one she was known by. I called her 'Amber.'"

"Did she—did she like you, Mr. Connor?"

"Yes."

"Well?"

He looked at me questioningly.

"Did they have marriage laws there? Did they let people marry for love?"

"No, everything was pre-arranged with an idea to longevity, and to the welfare of the community. As soon as they had learnt all they could of the customs which prevailed in my land and that of Immu, they gave me to understand that we were to consider ourselves free to return to the country whence we came.

"I made bold to tell them that I admired their country more than I did my own, and that I was willing to adapt myself to their habits and customs, and, finally, of my love for Amber, whom I wished to marry.

"'Love!' ejaculated the chief councillor of the Albino tribe, 'love, indeed! You cannot talk of such infantile things as that to us! Do you think you can come to us out of the childhood of your race, with all its crudities and pitiful ignorance and darkness of intellect, and with your miserable idea of love, graft on to our splendid race in its full manhood, and help to pull it back to the puny stature of your own?

"'Why, by your own showing, you belong to the ephemera—a race which produces a new generation every thirty-three years. One such specimen as yourself, grafted on to ours, would destroy the race entirely. What compensation have you to offer in return for the destruction of this evolved race?'

"I was dumb. No words came to my aid. And do you wonder? I looked at Amber and saw that her eyes were full of tears. She was in reality about like a girl of twenty of our race.

"The councillor went on: 'There is no knowing how much damage you have already done with these ideas of yours—they are s reading, I see. Oh, my daughter, I am surprised at you, to see you shedding tears for a mere ephemera.'

"'Yes, father,' she said meekly.

"'Bid him good-bye, once and for all time. You will never see him again.'

"In that land they never kiss or touch hands. She simply gave me the thought telephone, one end of which I placed on my head. She thought to

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me and I understood her. 'I will never forget you, beloved, though you may belong to the ephemeral world, it is true. As long as I live—and that will be when you are long turned to clay—still will I dwell in thoughts of you. Often will I, while you live, send you a thought-current, that will tell you that I am thinking of you still with deepest affection. And in the state beyond, perhaps a thousand years from now, we may meet and not be parted.'"

"Was that all?" I asked.

"That night Immu and I and the remaining dog (for one had died in the meantime) were placed on a curious raft with an electrical contrivance for the motive power, and taken away from the strange 'Land of the Living' and the Albino Tribe there dwelling. I presume there was something soporific in the capsules they gave us for food, for both Immu and I were unconscious of ourselves and our whereabouts until we awoke on a shore bleak and sombre.

"Immu seemed to get his bearings in a few hours, however, and we took a line of march which, after several days, led us to familiar ground It was in the direction of the old settlement made by the men of our expedition, whom I had forgotten utterly. But with the remembrance came back looking—I felt I did indeed belong to the ephemera.

"I was pretty well played out with the change of climate, coming back again to the cool so suddenly, and at sight of a shadowy form in the distance, gave out completely.

"It was a party who were making an excursion over the ice. They carried me into a hut, and from there into the ship, the last one taken on board. A roughly-made monument marked the graves of the less fortunate ones who perished in that dismal solitude.

"I had a long illness, in which they said I raved of strange things. Immu, who was brought along with me, nursed me through it faithfully. And when I returned to reason he corroborated the strange experience I had had as well as his limited knowledge of our language would permit. He has since returned to his own land again. The story of the return of the expedition contained nothing remarkable."

"What a strange story," I said meditatively. "I don't wonder expeditions are continuing to go towards the North Pole. But, Mr. Connor, do you really think that love is such a childish thing, and a mark of ignorance? Because, in spite of all that the Albino councillor said, I think that Amber's love for you is its own compensation for everything. Isn't it?"

"Yes."

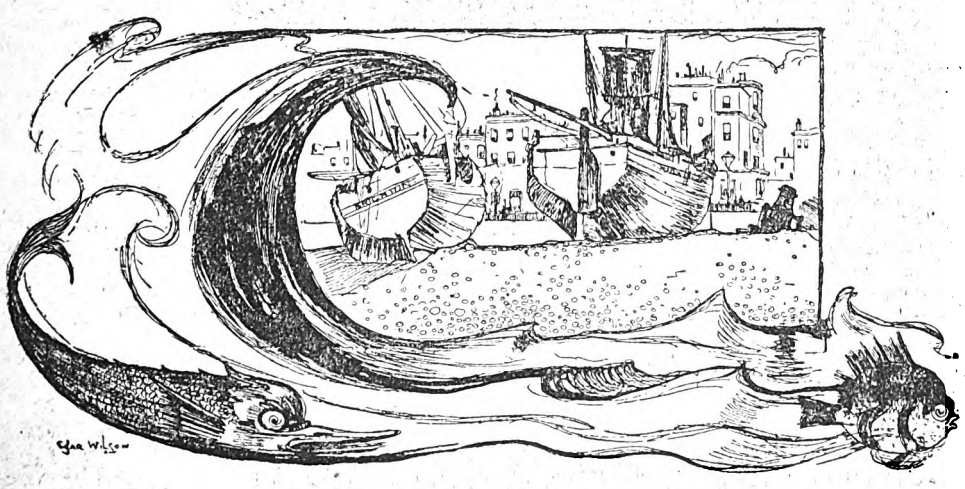
"And shall you wait a thousand years for her?"

"No."

"Oh, Mr. Connor, why not?"

"Because I am, in reality, only an ephemera."

GUY BEAUMONT.



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Told in the Indian Bazaar.

By H. HUNTER.

No. 5.—THE ORIGIN OF RUBIES.

In the seventeenth year of the Emperor Shalivahna, the Royal City of Ilapur was plunged suddenly into mourning. The Princess Vasanti had been carried off by a demon. In three days she was to have been married. The Maharajah of Madanpur, to whom the Princess had been betrothed, had sent swift messengers before him to announce his approach.

On the following day, he was to make his entry into the city. But, alas, for the vanity of human wishes. He found Ilapur clothed in sackcloth and sitting in ashes.

One morning the Princess Vasanti, accompanied by her maidens and attendants, had gone as usual to bathe in the Laughing Light—a beautiful tank on the edge of the tree-jungle—and had vanished in a manner most mysterious and alarming.

Few facts were forthcoming, but such as there were pointed unmistakably to the darkest agency. In what other way indeed, could the disappearance of the Princess be accounted for.

The tank, which the giant Mahisha had excavated in a single night at the bidding of Indra, Lord of the Lower Firmament, was a favourite bathing place with the ladies of the Palace.

It was the Princess Vasanti herself who had named it the Laughing Light; because, as she explained it, the water always thrilled with pleasure under the warm kisses of the ardent sun, while it tried with poor success to hide its smiling features beneath the balmy branches and graceful Llianas which overhung it.

On the fateful morning, the birds sang their sweetest, the monkeys in the tamala trees swung themselves sportively from the lowest limbs to the topmost twigs, and rained down green leaf and purple blossom upon the passers below; black bramra bees buzzed and soft breezes blew, filling the air with pleasant sounds and delicious fragrance.

Everything in nature rejoiced; and the young Princess, whose heart was brimming over with happiness at the thought of her fast approaching marriage with the Maharajah, laughed and chattered with the gaiety of youth as the procession of palanquins wound itself along.

Never had she seemed so full of life and health and spirits as at this time; when the bow was bent and the shaft was drawn.

Learn from this, O ye blind, to expect nothing from Fortune, who ever smiles her sweetest when she is meditating the foulest treachery. Be wise, tempt not the future, and put no trust in the promises of the morning. The man who reckons the blessings of the day before the sun has gone down, is likely to repent of his folly at night.

After they tired of pelting each other with the lovely blossoms of the lotus and the rich crimson flowers of the asokas, the girls descended the steps of the tank and entered the water.

They flung the purifying element over each other in merry sport, they shook it in glittering showers from their shining locks, they made a scoop of their hollowed hands and solemnly poured it over one anothers' pretty heads.

For awhile the Princess watched her companions splashing about in the clear cool depths of the silvery stream; then bidding her maidens remain behind, Vasanti herself went to a mango grove hard by to perform the rites of purification and prayer.

It had been the custom of the Princess whenever she came to bathe in the tank, always to retire to the grove for meditation and worship before returning to the city.

So there was nothing to remark in the request she made to her maidens.

As she did not appear, however, at the usual time, her attendants, who thought it might be merely a test of their fidelity, went in search of her.

Up and down they wandered, looking everywhere for traces of their royal mistress, but finding none.

They scoured every green alley, peeped behind every bush, stared into every fig-tree—not a sign of the Princess was anywhere to be seen. What could it mean?

Something too dreadful for utterance. Speech was arrested on their lips.

They wove flower-spells of the jasmine and the lotus; they called upon Krishna of the woods and forests. It was to no purpose. They looked into each other's faces, and saw only terror and dismay reflected from every countenance.

The Princess had vanished. Nothing was certain but that—and that, alas! was too certain to admit room for the smallest doubt.

The maidens returned to the city weeping and throwing dust upon their heads.

The Emperor listened in profound silence while the

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Grand Chamberlain told the story. Then everyone waited, scarce daring even to breathe.

"Clearly," said the Emperor at last, after taking time to consider, "it is the work of some malevolent Being, jealous of human happiness."

The jungle swarmed with unclean creatures, Nagas and Bhutas, servants of the Servant of Darkness. Yet the day was so bright and fair, the mango grove so far from the jungle and so close to the tank where the Laughing Light was always running—and everybody knows that there is virtue enough in running water to scare away the boldest imp that ever came out of Naglok*—that the Emperor was sorely puzzled to decide whether Vasanti had been taken to the realms below, or carried to the meads above.

The Chamberlain made a grab at the ring-tailed favourite.

To satisfy his scruples and set the matter at rest, he referred the question to the Nine Gems of Science, who were the ornament of the Court.

They laboured on it till noon, and were allowed only half the usual time for bathing, eating, sleeping, and worship, so anxious was the Emperor to hear their opinion. At 2 p.m. they resumed their labours, which lasted till twilight; and after a short interval for rest they returned to them again till midnight, when the result of their deliberations was communicated to the Emperor on a double sheet of flower-scented rice paper.

After applying to the question the whole force of their united intelligence, the Gems discovered that the Princess Vasanti had been carried off by the demon Ravana, who, to effect his purpose, had disguised himself as a beggar.

She was lovely beyond any woman who lives in kings' houses—were I to begin to describe her, I should never be able to finish—and he was jealous that such a peerless pearl should become the wife of any earthly monarch, though he were a son of Indra himself.

It was Vasanti's exceeding great beauty, said the Gems, which tempted the demon. Alas! excess is always fatal, therefore, be wise, O mortal! who hears this story, and seek no more than is sufficient.

To console the Emperor, the Nine Gems of Science were able to add that Vasanti had been made chief Maid of Honour to Indrani, Queen of Heaven, and slept on a bed of gold and precious stones more glorious than the meridian sun; and that when the Maharajah should ask for her saying:

"Give me my wife;" he was to give him a green mango which a blind beggar would bring from the grove by the water tank, called the Laughing Light, and say:

"Great King, the gods would not permit so much beauty and virtue to be wasted on a mortal. They have taken her for themselves; but to you she has sent this mango. Cherish it as a gift more precious than the half of thy kingdom."

Now it happened that in the cool of the day there came to the water tank by the mango grove, three brothers, Shridat, Bhowat and Vidhat; and of these Shridat was blind, Bhowat was deaf and Vidhat was unable to speak a word. They were the victims of Lakshichara,* who is ever dogging the feet of the children of men; and for daily sustenance depended on the alms of the charitable.

Had they been suffering by the Will of Heaven,† of course it would have been impious to relieve them; but the poor fellows had been overtaken by ill-luck upon "the road," and the wealthy and benevolent saw in them only so many steps to a seat under the Celestial tree in Indra's Paradise, where the wish of every virtuous soul is gratified sooner than it can be expressed; so there was always honey and butter and rice for to-day; and as Shridat would often observe, who knows what may happen to-morrow.

He had just delivered himself for the thousand-and-first time of this excellent observation, and was sitting down with Bhowat and Vidhat to the frugal repast which formed their evening meal; when, a stranger, approaching, asked permisson to put his hand in the dish.

* The Infernal Regions.

* Bad luck. † Afflicted from birth.

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"Draw near, friend," said Shridat, who was the eldest, "by the blessing of God, what was prepared for three will suffice for four. The sun shines on rich and poor alike, and shall he who hath food refuse a share to him who hath none? Nay, eat thy fill, friend, and be satisfied."

Thus adjured, the stranger sat down and fell to. But while all ate heartily the mess in the dish seemed never to grow any the less for all that was taken out of it.

At last, having appeased his hunger, the stranger inquired whither they were travelling; and Shridat replied, to the royal city of Ilapur, where the Princess Vasanti was to be married in three days to the Maharajah of Madanpur.

"We have heard of nothing else," said he, "all the way from Shumshushabad. It is the talk of every well-side—the gossip of every village street. The charity and magnificence of the Emperor is in every man's mouth. Surely, then, we may hope to come in for a share when so many good things are going."

The stranger pondered a while.

"It would be a thousand pities," said he at length, "if such worthy persons should suffer disappointment. Take this mango, my friend, demand of the doorkeeper an audience of the Emperor. Make thy obeisance before him, and he will grant thee permission to speak. Then shalt thou say these words:

"'O Pearl of Equity, and Protector of the Poor, I bring thee the fruit which the learned Pundits wot of, from the grove by the Laughing Light. Baksheesh! my lord Emperor, baksheesh!'"

With this the stranger thrust into Shridat's palm a large green mango, and rising quickly was soon lost to sight.

Now, as we all know, the gods have power to grant or withhold as seemeth unto them good; and by favour of Kartikaya,* whose votaries they were, the disabilities under which the brothers laboured in public were removed in private. At these times Shridat regained the use of his eyes, Bhowat recovered his hearing, and Vidhat was able to use his tongue. Only the dispensation they enjoyed by the goodwill of Kartikaya they kept to themselves.

"Brothers," said Shridat, as soon as they were alone, "who knows what may happen to-morrow?" And, Bhowat, smiling, answered:

"To-morrow?"

And Vidhat, who was unaccustomed to speaking, repeated:

"To-morrow!"

Then Shridat put the mango in his turban and they lay down to sleep.

At the hour appointed for giving audience next day, Shridat, standing before the Emperor, made his obeisance, and in all things did as the stranger had commanded. Then withdrawing the mango from his turban he laid it at the Emperor's feet.

"Stretch forth thy hands," said the Emperor.

Whereupon Shridat held out his palms.

"You brought them here empty," said his Majesty, "take them away filled," and he poured into them so many gold pieces that numbers fell to the floor.

At this moment, the shouting of the people outside announced the arrival of the Maharajah. He was received by the Emperor in person and conducted to a chair of State in the Hall of Private Audience. Here the Emperor explained to him exactly how the matter stood, ending his recital by presenting his Highness with the mango.

The Maharajah was cut to the heart, but concealing his grief he accepted the mango with "dignified humility," said the Court Chronicler. However that may be, we know that he accepted it; but no sooner was it in his hands than Ratipati, the Emperor's favourite monkey, tore it from his grasp and ran off with it.

"A gift more precious than the half of my kingdom!" cried the Maharajah. The Chamberlain made a grab at the ring-tailed favourite: alas! he was too late to save the mango. The monkey's teeth had pierced the skin, whereupon there dropped to the ground a jewel of such size, water and colour that none had ever seen the like before.

Loud were the expressions of wonder. All the jewellers in the city were sent for to say what might be the name and value of the wonderful red stone, whose colour, quality, and beauty surpassed everything in the way of jewels that the lapidaries had ever handled.

"To put a value upon such an inestimable gem was to ask them to attempt the impossible. The whole earth did not contain its like"—and then, from a shabby old crow which had flown into the chamber unperceived, came a hoarse cackle.

"Go, look in the mango grove by the Laughing Light," said he. "Find the tree which stands in the middle of the ninth row. Every mango which hangs on its branches contains a drop of the blood, which, in her earthly life, animated the body of the Princess Vasanti—an elixir so pure and precious, that Sarvitri, the Giver of Life, would not permit of its being contaminated by the common fluid found in the veins of Rajahs, Ameers, and others of the baser sort. And to preserve it for ever in all its pristine purity, Kama Deva* was commanded to form of each separate drop a flaming jewel; and these he imprisoned in the fruit of the tree, beneath which Vasanti was met by the messenger who bore her to Indra's Paradise.

"The stone in the mango, Great King! is a ruby! which the Princess has sent to the Maharajah as a consolation for the loss of herself."

Then he spread his wings and flew away.

Next morning, the Emperor, accompanied by the Maharajah, went to the mango grove by the Laughing Light to see if the crow had spoken the truth. But a great wind had risen in the night and behold all the trees were bare.

Since then rubies have only been found at those places where the wind carried the mangoes.

* The Patron of Rascals.

* The Hindoo Cupid.

Mr. HEADON HILL,

Author of "*The Zone of Fire*," "*Guilty Gold*," etc., has written a Short Serial Story for *PEARSON'S WEEKLY*, entitled:

The Strange Case of "The Tintern Abbey."

It commences in *P. W.* published on Saturday, July 9th, and it will last only till the August Bank Holiday Number, in which a Grand New serial, entitled:

"LOST—A MILLIONAIRE!"

by a new writer, will commence.

The Strange Case of "The Tintern Abbey" is, therefore, quite short, and those who are not in the habit of reading *P. W.* regularly will be able to enjoy this story without the necessity of buying the paper every week for any great length of time.

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A Shattered Idol.

A RUSH of footsteps, gay snatches of song, an impetuous throwing open of the door, and she swept in, radiant with health, glowing from exercise and bringing with her a breeze as of frosty violets.

A man sitting by the window turned with a smile to greet her. His eyes were very bright, there was a brilliant flush high on the cheek bones, and his face wore that hectic beauty which, as if for a slight compensation, consumption stamps on its victims.

His eyes swept lovingly over her, resting caressingly on her face, on the muff that hid her hands, the dark cloth gown with its hidden silken *frou-frou*, the high-arched, slender foot just showing beneath—lovingly, lingeringly, yet with a trace of sadness as if loath to give up so much beauty. He stretched out his hand to her and she kissed him tenderly.

"Did I stay too long? Have you been lonely, Herbert, dear? The air was so cold and crisp, and the day so beautiful, I am afraid I almost forgot you were shut in here alone. What a shame the first touch of winter should make you one of the 'shut in!' And I—I am so strong, so happy! Why can I not share my health with you, my husband—my dear, dear husband?"

She sank to her knees beside him and rested her soft, cool cheek on his, and he kissed her dark hair and was happy.

* * * * *

Only twenty-four hours had passed and all the world was changed! He had sat again by the window watching for the carriage, wondering at his wife's delay, when there came a loud shouting, the clatter of horses' hoofs on the asphalt, and an eager, morbid, ever-growing throng surged on the scene. The ambulance clattered by, the crowd went on, and the noises grew faint in the distance.

Presently he saw the ambulance coming up the street.

Why did his heart grow cold and his hands tremble? Why did the hateful thing come slowly nearer and nearer? Why—why do they stop at this door?

Staggering, with pallid face, between two burly, tender-faced men came the coachman. Only the coachman! Oh, thank Heaven! And the relief was so great he laughed.

But the coachman only came to the foot of the steps, and shivering and sobbing, hid his face in his bleeding hands. Then he saw a form stretched on the ambulance. The watching man at the window stood paralysed, his face growing greyer and greyer as the ambulance was borne past, the weeping coachman and up the steps of his own house.

After that everything was a dream. There were reporters and a misty figure of a lugubrious-faced undertaker. There was his wife's maid, who had to be taken away because of her incessant noisy weeping, and the kindly-meaning, but intrusive neighbours.

Then her mother came—her mother with the same tender eyes—and took him in her arms. He rested his head upon her sorrowing breast, but he could not weep.

After a while she left him, for no one but herself might touch that beautiful, idolised form.

In a few hours she came for him and led him to her room, and bade him look on the dear face now so white and inscrutable in death. He knelt beside the bed, staring dumbly, and she left him there with his dead.

The next day came cards and notes which he would not look at, and hundreds of flowers which made the air sickening sweet.

The hours passed, and then someone came for him. He looked again on the still face beneath the violet-laden cover. He kissed her brow with lips which were as icy-cold as were the dear dead lips, but did not quiver; and his burning, strained eyes felt no welcome moisture, for his was that awful grief which is too great for tears.

They took her away, and kind friends sat and talked to him, and he wished they would go away.

At last he was alone, and he paced the floor and moaned and beat his breast, and tried in vain to weep. When his tearless grief had spent itself he went to her little sitting room. Her mother came, and they sat alone in the early winter twilight. A little fire burnt merrily in the grate, and her favourite perfume still floated in the air. The mother had sobbed her heart out, and now they both sat quietly before the fire and talked in low, sad tones of the dear dead one.

"She was so beautiful," the mother sighed. "When she was a little, chubby baby, clinging round my neck, her limbs were just as perfect as they are now, and her eyes as black and deeply fringed. And as she grew her mind grew, too, and expanded. Ah, Herbert, even you never knew the beautiful thoughts she had! And then you came and took her away. Oh, how grudgingly I gave her to you! But she loved you so much that I was silenced. I could deny her nothing. At any rate there was the consolation that you were her first love. My little Emily, she went to you so sweet, so pure——"

"And," he said, "she was sweet and good to her last day. These last few months I have not been able to

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share in her gaieties, but she always had a thought and a tender word for me. No man's name, I know, except my own, has ever crossed her lips lovingly."

There was a knock at the door, the postman's knock, and in a moment the maid entered, bringing a silver tray with three letters.

He looked at them and groaned.

"All for her! There are some friends still who do not know. Ah, what a little time for such a change!"

He turned the letters over but seemed unable to open them.

"Will you open them, mother? I cannot."

She seated herself beneath the rose-shaded lamp, and, taking the letters, slit the envelopes.

The first was an invitation and, after glancing over it, she dropped it in her lap. The next was a sweetly-written note from an invalid friend with thanks for flowers. She opened the third. It read:

My Darling Emily.—Why did you not come? I have been sitting here in my room for hours since the time agreed upon—hours—*days* they seem to me, my sweet—and now I have given you up. What has happened? Is he worse? I had almost said I hope so, but that would shock you, my sensitive, beautiful darling. Ah, how I envy him! I could wish myself dying, as he surely is, to have you all my own.

I shall have to leave to-night for a day or two. I cannot see you or hear from you for at least three whole days—an eternity, my own. Are you not sorry now you did not come?

You have told me I must not write you, but I think you overrate the danger. I will not do it again, but to-night I so long to see you I cannot help it.

Good-night, my only love, good-night.—Your Ned.

She read it through, then through again, with staring eyes, her face growing rigid and ghastly. She crushed the paper in her hand and held it tight, staring at him with furtive, hunted eyes. He aroused himself from a deep reverie and met her glance, then sprang quickly to her side.

"What is it, mother? Are you ill? You are so frightfully pale! Was it something in the letters?"

She collected herself with an effort. Her eyes were dull, but her voice was low and even.

"Nothing, Herbert, nothing. I didn't feel quite well; the strain of the day—the sorrow! The letters, did you say, the letters? Oh, yes, only these two short notes."

As he read them she walked to the fire and, standing with her back to him, dropped a crumpled ball of paper into it. She watched it till it was consumed, then turning to the window, raised it and stood there breathing deeply.

"Does the room seem warm?" he said. "I thought it rather chilly."

"No, it was only a momentary faintness. I am quite well now."

She shut the window and resumed her seat, but with her back to the light, and there, in the little room, which was Emily's, they sat far into the night, the broken-hearted husband talking tenderly of her, and the broken-hearted mother listening.

Julian King.

Years and years ago, in a certain country, a certain queen reigned supreme; she was a cold, haughty, imperious woman, ruling absolutely.

The country prospered during her reign, but although the people acknowledged her power, she was held in great awe. After all, she was but human, and had a heart, which once, at least, was touched.

The man on whom she secretly lavished much affection treated her with all homage due to her rank, but she was uncertain whether he really cared for her for herself alone.

One day this queen heard of a palmist, who had acquired much fame for his accurate telling of the future and people's character from the lines in their palms. She would not lower herself by going to him unknown, but would have him come to her in the midst of her court.

The palmist was notified of the great honour conferred upon him, and an evening was appointed for him to visit her majesty. Punctually to the minute he presented himself at the palace.

He was not much over thirty, pleasing to look at, and carried himself with dignity. In his eyes one might have observed a troubled look. He always told the exact truth of what he saw, and he realised that the queen had been accustomed to flattery all her life.

All the lords and ladies of the court had been bidden to hear the future of their queen. She thought it would

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add one more drop of complacent self-esteem to have all the people hear from the lips of this celebrated palmist how great and virtuous she was.

He was, therefore, conducted to the throne, where he bowed low before her. She thus addressed him:

"We have called you hither, sir, that you may read our palm and tell us of the things you see therein."

The palmist bowed a second time, and replied:

"Your majesty overpowers me with your gracious condescension, but think you it is right that I should presume to predict the future of one so illustrious as yourself? Power and greatness are yours. We all see it and feel it. Is it not enough for you to know?"

The queen's eyes flashed.

"Is it for this you have come—to invent excuses, methinks, to hide your ignorance? Proceed, sir, to look at our hand. We would know what deceits are being practised on our people!"

An answering flash came from the palmist's eyes.

"As you will, so be it, your majesty," he replied, sinking on one knee in front of the throne.

Then he placed a cushion for her to rest her hands upon, and, when all was in readiness, said to her in a low voice: "Is it the queen's wish that all this assembled court shall hear what I have to say, and that will be what I see in these royal palms?"

She smiled slightly at the last words and nodded assent.

"I would 'twere otherwise! But to begin;" and the palmist continued: "You will gain your desires, your majesty, no matter what be the cost. You are selfish and could be cruel on occasions. Your aim is power, and in this life you will gain it to the fullest degree. Men's minds you will control, their hearts never. In fact, through the line of heart a——"

"Enough, sir, we see how paltry is your knowledge, and we are grateful to you for your opinion of us."

The queen snatched her hand away and stood quivering with passion before him.

"Now, sir," she went on, "your reward you shall receive. At noon to-morrow you shall die on the gallows. Have you aught to say, palmist?"

"What you have said is not strange to me, your majesty. I foresaw by my own hand that at this time I was to die by the cruel injustice of one far above me in this world," he replied.

"'Tis well, sir, you are prepared, and, fortunately, in the next world people will be spared your arts." Thus spoke the queen.

During this time the courtiers and ladies had remained motionless, so astonished were they at the scene going on before them. There was a slight remonstrance from a few of the boldest who dared to venture to reason with the queen. She waved them all aside and said:

"The court is dismissed; take the man away and see that my orders are obeyed."

Then she stepped from the throne, and swept from the room, looking at no one.

* * * * *

The palmist was taken to a prison cell. There, that night, a touching scene took place. He had requested one last interview with his wife. They had been married but six months, and she was a beautiful girl. How nobly now she bore her part.

"Is there no hope?" she whispered; "no line to save that awful break in your line of life and of fate?"

"None," he said. "She may repent, but it will be too late to save me."

He took her hands in his, and, looking into her eyes, went on: "My wish is that you continue my work. You know much already, and from my books you will soon know all. You and I are the only ones to keep this great science from falling into the hands of gypsies and mere fortune-tellers. I have given my life for it."

"And I will do no less," said his wife, interrupting him.

The last few words of parting were spoken between them, too sacred for anyone to hear, and then she was led away.

When the Queen reached her private apartment she walked rapidly up and down, trying to calm herself. She spoke half aloud.

"He told me more truth than I cared to hear, and before the courtiers and ladies, for that he shall be punished; but not as he now thinks. Only frightened, but not hanged. I can't condemn the first man who has spoken truly to me for many months. At a quarter of an hour before noon a reprieve shall be sent to him at the market place. He shall then see that some, at least, of his predictions are false. I can be generous when I please."

The morning sun streamed in through a narrow opening into a prison cell, resting gently on the bowed head of a man. It streamed in through a lattice window of a dilapidated house, touching a woman sobbing as if her heart would break. It played about a palace, and, as a shade was drawn, crept into a royal dwelling, but was as quickly excluded. Perchance it heard a voice say: "I would sleep longer, let no light in."

So it scampered away, and danced merrily up and down a gallows erected in the square.

The hours slipped by. At length the shutters in the royal abode were thrown open. When the queen was ready to receive once more, she called for her special messenger. As he entered, he made the customary salutation, but his face was white, and he looked at the queen as no loving subject should look. She handed a paper to him, and said:

"It acks but a quarter to the noon hour. Take this paper to the square where the gallows is erected, and read it to the palmist before the people. It is his rightful reward—a reprieve. Nay, more, give him this purse of gold, and say to him—before all the multitude remember—'Behold a queen's generosity.'"

"Too late, your majesty," the messenger replied; "your clock is twenty minutes slow. I have but just come from the square. The palmist is dead."

VIOLET MILLES.

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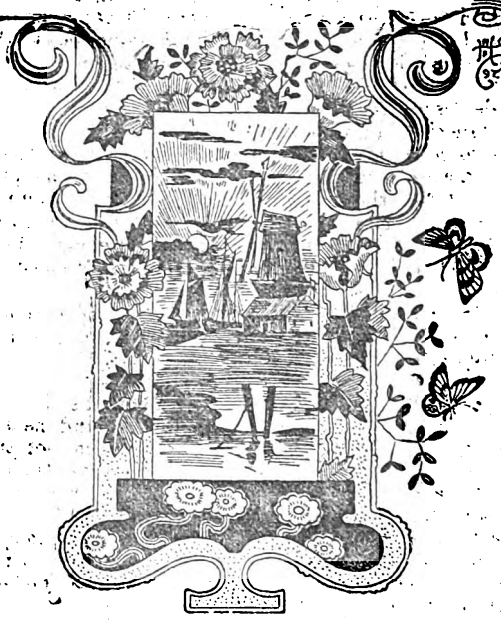
The Mystery of the Missing Liner.



At ten o'clock on the morning of March 14th, 1903, the Anglo-American liner, the *Oklahoma*, left Southampton on her regular trip to New York.

The fact of her departure, ordinarily of merely local interest, was telegraphed all over Europe and America, for there was a significance attached to this particular trip such as had never before marked the sailing of an ocean steamship from these shores.

It was not because the great vessel numbered among her crowd of passengers a well-known duke and his young bride that her sailing was heralded by such a blowing of trumpets, nor because she had also upon her lists the names of the British Ambassador to the United States, returning after a brief leave of absence, and a score of other illustrious personages whose names were household words.

The presence of these notables was merely incidental. What made this trip of the *Oklahoma* an event of international interest was the fact that the *Oklahoma* was taking to the shores of Uncle Sam the largest lump amount of gold ever shipped upon a single vessel within the memory of man.

Not even in the memorable gold exporting year of 1893, ten years previous, had any such sum as this been sent abroad at one time.

It was not the usual paltry quarter or half million sterling that she was carrying away in her great strong room of steel and teak wood, but ten million pounds' worth of shining bars and money, hastily called across the ocean because of the adverse "balance of trade" and the urgent need of money on the part of the American Government, both consequent upon the United States' great scheme of absorbing all the South American Republics and her conflicts and bargains with them and Spain and Portugal during the past five years.

The mere insurance premium on this vast sum was in itself a comfortable fortune. Business men wondered why such a large amount was intrusted to one steamer. Suppose she should collide in the fog and sink, as one great ship had done only five weeks before—what would become of the insurance companies then?

Suppose some daring Napoleon of crime should hatch a startling conspiracy to seize the steamer, intimidate the crew and passengers and possess himself of the huge treasure? It would be a stake well worth running great risks, thought some of the police officials, as they read the headlines in the evening papers.

The *Oklahoma* was a fast steamer. Her five hundred feet of length and her twelve thousand tons of displacement were made light work of by the great, clanking, triple-expansion engines when their combined force of fifteen thousand horse-power was brought to bear upon her twin screws. Under ordinary conditions she ought to have made port on the other side in time to let her passengers eat late dinner on the fifth day. There was nasty weather in mid-ocean, however, and so her failure to reach her destination on the sixth and even the seventh day was not particularly remarked.

The public had been busy with other weighty matters in the interim, and the departure of this modern argosy with her precious freight had almost passed into history. For history in the year 1903 was anything that had happened a week ago—a day—if it was not of overwhelming importance.

If the big ship's arrival had been cabled on the eighth day, or even early on the ninth, it would still have found the public in a comparatively calm state of mind, for the mid-Atlantic storm would naturally account for a multitude of lost hours; but when the ninth changed into the tenth, and the tenth into the eleventh and twelfth, with no tidings whatever of the tardy steamer, surprise grew into anxiety and into an international sensation.

Of course all sorts of plausable theories were advanced by the steamship agents, newspapers, and other oracles, including that of the inevitable broken shaft; and these might have sufficed for a day longer, had it not been for another and much more startling theory that suddenly came to the surface, and threw two continents into a fever of trepidation and suspense.

It was the following announcement in a leading London paper that roused excitement to a white heat:

"A new and most astounding phase has come over the case of the mysteriously missing *Oklahoma*. It has just become known to the police that James Lang, known as 'Gentleman Jim,' the noted criminal and forger, whose ten years' sentence expired only a few weeks ago, was in the city several days previous to the sailing of the *Oklahoma*, and went with her as a

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passenger under an assumed name. Even at that very time detectives were looking for him, as there was reason to believe that he had some great scheme on hand. One of those clever people whom nothing ever escapes had seen him go on board almost at the last minute, and gave an accurate description of his personal appearance which was evidently but slightly disguised.

"Lang is probably the only criminal in the country who ever would conceive and try to execute such a stupendous undertaking, and it is something more than suspicion on the part of the police that he has smuggled on board a couple of dozen well-armed desperadoes, who could easily hold the entire crew and passengers in check and make them do their bidding, for a time at least. The idea is so replete with thrilling possibilities that the entire community stands aghast at it."

It is to be noted that the public always stands aghast in such a case as this; but it is more to the point just now to say that the article went on, through a column or more, to describe in minute detail the circumstances attendant upon the departure of "Gentleman Jim," even to the exact size and shape of the bag he had in his hand.

The famous criminal was very boyish in appearance, and one of the last persons in the world whom a chance acquaintance would think of looking up in the "Rogues' Gallery."

The theory and the news acted upon the British Government much like an electric shock, and nearly threw the Foreign Office into a panic; for was not the British plenipotentiary himself a passenger on the ill-fated *Oklahoma*, and possibly at that very hour being butchered in cold blood by a lot of cut-throats?

The thought was too horrible for a moment's endurance, and the result was that within a few hours after the appearance of the paragraphs, one of the fastest and most powerful of Her Majesty's cruisers, quickly followed by a second and a third, hastily steamed from Portsmouth, the three spreading out north, west, and south, like a great marine fan, as they hurried to the rescue of the *Oklahoma* and the British Ambassador.

Meanwhile, three or four American warships were getting up steam for a similar errand, and a small fleet of ocean-going steamers, specially chartered by newspapers to go in search of the absent leviathan, were already out at sea.

Not for years had there been such world-wide interest in an ocean expedition. The newspapers commanded an unheard-of sale, for everybody was on the tiptoe of expectation concerning the fate of the missing steamer, her six hundred passengers, and her ten million pounds' worth of gold.

While the public were thus feverishly awaiting the news, certain discoveries were being made by the police, which tended to confirm their previous suspicions. Four or five other hardened graduates from prison were found to be absent from their accustomed haunts, although they had been seen just before the *Oklahoma* sailed.

These discoveries had the natural effect upon the public mind, and the friends of those on board the steamer began to despair of hearing that even human life had been respected by the piratical band.

Three days passed by after the departure of the search vessels, during which time all incoming steamers reported that they had not found a single trace of the *Oklahoma*, either in the northern or southern route. Vessels from other parts of the world made the same ominous report.

The tension was terrible. The public by this time was convinced beyond reasonable doubt that the robbers had successfully carried out their fiendish plan. But how, and when, and where?

When they opened their newspapers on the morning of the eighteenth day they found the answer to the question, and the greatest marine mystery of centuries was solved.

In the small hours of the night there flashed across the European Continent, and under the dark waters of the Atlantic, this startling message from the representative of the Press Association:

LISBON, April 1st.—"The missing *Oklahoma* is disabled at Fayal, Azores, where she was discovered by the Press Association special expedition. Many of the half-starved crew and passengers are on the verge of insanity. The officers tell a most astounding story of the steamer's exciting and almost fatal adventures.

"On the third night out, the *Oklahoma* suddenly came under some mysterious but irresistible influence, by which she was carried rapidly out of her course towards the south. Every effort was made by the officers to bring the ship back to her course, but the big liner drifted helplessly at the mercy of some powerful current. The compasses were useless, and the wheel no longer exercised the slightest control over the steamer's movements.

"Naturally the anxiety of the officers was in no way diminished, when, on the morning of the next day, another vessel—a low-lying vessel of shining steel—was discovered off the *Oklahoma's* starboard bow, about a mile ahead, but moving in the same direction.

"By careful observations it was discovered that the course of the two steamers was identical. Both were apparently under the same mysterious influence. Instead of sighting a rescuer, the *Oklahoma* had, so it seemed, only discovered another victim of the irresistible current.

"Again and again the *Oklahoma* attempted to signal the companion ship, but the latter made no reply. Close observation revealed that she was built on the whaleback principle, with nothing above deck save ventilators and signal mast, but failed to reveal any sign of human being.

"By afternoon, their continued failure to bring the liner back to her course had so worked upon the minds of her officers, that their anxiety infected the spirits of the passengers, who were now aroused to the real danger that menaced them.

"When the fifth day dawned, with the *Oklahoma* undoubtedly very far out of the regular transatlantic course, the gravity of the situation could no longer be concealed. Distress signals were kept flying, and all possible steam was put on with the idea of overhauling the companion ship and giving or receiving aid. To the amazement of both officers and passengers, however, in spite of every effort, the *Oklahoma* failed to gain a single inch on the other vessel.

"Before they had time to attempt an explanation of this remarkable fact, amazement gave way to consternation. For just a moment a third vessel had appeared on the horizon like a messenger of hope; but no sooner had she been sighted than, with the swiftness of lightning, the mysterious companion craft turned half round and darted away to the south east, with the *Oklahoma* following as helplessly as though she were in tow.

"In that moment the awful truth was revealed. The steel vessel was nothing more or less than a floating magnet, which, by some mysterious power, was dragging

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the great ocean monster hither and thither as easily as a child's magnet draws a toy ship from one side to another of a mimic pond.

"Who was she and what was her motive? Almost before those on board had asked the question, the answer flashed upon them. The ten million pounds worth of gold! Beyond a doubt, it was the capture of this treasure which she was planning to accomplish, either by luring the *Oklahoma* from the regular path of ocean traffic, and looting her and her passengers at leisure, or by compelling her to run aground upon some remote rock or shoal.

"With this revelation a new horror unveiled itself. Equipped as they were only with the supplies of a short trip across the Atlantic, the overwrought minds of many saw starvation looming before them.

"That night not a soul sought his berth. From time to time consultations were held between the chief officers, and many coloured rockets split and blazed their signals of distress incessantly across the sky.

"At length, soon after dawn of the sixth day, orders were given to bank fires and hoist sails in the hope that the *Oklahoma*, as a sailing vessel, might free herself from the awful influence that chained her.

"But the effort was vain. Wind and sail proved as useless as wheel and compass against the fatal power of that mysterious craft which drew the *Oklahoma* after her as irresistibly as though the two vessels were united by an unseen hawser.

"The steamer had now become a scene of indescribable horror. Meanwhile, all the customary routine was disorganised; and frequent prayer meetings were conducted among the more emotional of the passengers.

"Finally, seven days after she had left port, the officers of the big liner made one last desperate effort to offset the magnetic influence of the mysterious 'pirate.'

"The fires were revived in the engine-room, the steam pressure in all the boilers was run up to the blowing-off point; then suddenly the reversing mechanism was applied, and a shudder ran through the great floating city as the twin screws began to back water.

"For a few minutes there ensued a gigantic tug-of-war such as the beholders had never before witnessed. The water astern was lashed into a lather of foam, for a brief moment the triumph of steam over magnetism seemed assured.

"Only for a moment, however, for the cheer that had ascended from the anxious watchers had scarcely died away when, with a mighty crash, a vital section of the overtaxed engines gave way, and followed by a hoarse yell of consternation from the excited engineers and stokers—and both screws were helpless and still.

"With this failure hope was well nigh extinguished, and the *Oklahoma*, with her precious freight and her hundreds of human souls, abandoned all active effort to escape.

"With not a sail of any kind in sight, she passively rolled and plunged southward for seven days after her strange and terrible pilot, from which, to add to the horror of the situation, no human sign had yet been given.

"The supply of rockets was now exhausted, and food was doled out in minute portions, as to members of a shipwrecked crew, in order to husband supplies.

"On the afternoon of the fourteenth day, when the exhausted passengers had reached the verge of distraction, a gleam of hope appeared on the horizon in the shape of a solitary steamer, bearing down from the south-west. A glance through the telescope proved her to be a fast and formidable British cruiser.

"At this news a mighty shudder, half of hope, half of fear, seized the crowd assembled upon the deck. Would the British cruiser come to their assistance, and if so, would she, too, become a victim of the magnetic craft?

"For a moment their fate hung in the balance, then from the hundreds of throats rang out a hoarse cry of joy as the mysterious craft swerved, turned sharply and shot away over the surface of the Atlantic due north.

"The spell was broken. The big liner with her six hundred human souls and ten millions in gold was freed from the power that had for so long held her captive.

"But, crippled as she was by the accident to her machinery, she was unable to proceed unaided, and was taken in tow by the warship, the *Midlothian*, and a day later brought safely into port at Fayal.

"The Press Association steamer is the first to bring the thrilling news. The first officer of the *Oklahoma* and the saloon passengers, including the British Ambassador, accompanied your correspondent to Lisbon. A relief steamer is urgently needed, as the *Oklahoma's* engines are disabled, and she will not be able to proceed for several weeks.

"The passenger thought to be 'Gentleman Jim' Lang proves to be the Duke of Madfordshire, now on his wedding trip with his young bride."

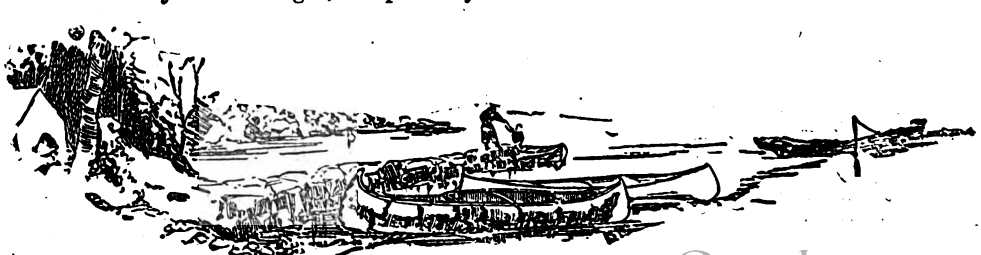
Hardly had the excitement caused by this startling intelligence subsided, when it was once more aroused by the information of the capture, in the act of robbing a jeweller's, of "Gentleman Jim" Lang, and a gang of four other criminals. This was followed by an important telegram from Russia:

St. Petersburg, April 2nd.—The identity of the mysterious craft by which the *Oklahoma* was drawn from her course has been established beyond a doubt.

The vessel is a Hypnotic cruiser, recently completed by a Russian inventor, named Slobodenski, and possessed of an electric apparatus by which any vessel can be brought completely under control.

Whether the Hypnotic cruiser's outrage on the *Oklahoma* was merely a trial of power, or whether plunder was intended, can only be surmised. But experts say that this marvellous new invention will revolutionise naval warfare, and necessitate the passage of stringent laws to cover a crime for which at present no penalty exists.

S. K. M.



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A FIERY ORDEAL.

Tessie and I were friends. We had always been friends since—well, since we wore dresses together. That was when I was five and she was four. We were, from that time, always together.

We were chums. She went everywhere I went and did everything I did, and, as we grew up to boyhood and girlhood, we were inseparable.

She was strong and athletic, but of a slender build; could drive, row and swim as well I could; and had a complexion well browned by a long and intimate acquaintance with the Australian sunlight. A brave girl too.

Then Tess went to a boarding school, and came back at the end of three years somewhat different in appearance, but at heart the same dear old Tess as ever.

Now, although my girl friend and I had known each other so long and so intimately, yet we had never fallen in love with each other.

I am positive of this, because when I got soft on Jennie Bingham, and lavished all my money on flowers for her, Tess only laughed.

But now I was twenty and Tessie nineteen, and somehow, as I took the shapely little hand she offered me to welcome her back, after those three years at school, somehow it came to me suddenly that Tess was a beautiful girl, and that her eyes were bewitching. And there came into my heart a strange, uncomfortable feeling.

Suppose someone should take it into his head to fall in love with Tessie and marry her?

The summer I wish particularly to tell you of, the one following Tessie's return from school, my people and her people decided to spend the hot season at a little mountain hamlet with an unpronounceable name—a lot of "ongs" and "wongs" about it.

It was a little place in the bush, with about one hundred inhabitants. It was ten miles from the nearest railway—and that only a branch line, and about seven miles out of the ten was through the bush. A rough road had been cleared for traffic.

Our people went early in the season; I was to follow as soon as I could, which was more than a month later.

I expected the man to meet me at the station, but as I saw no one, I went on by myself. The season had been very hot, and everything seemed parched up. When I reached the road which ran through the bush I could not help thinking how easily it could be set on fire.

"Ugh!" I shuddered. "I hope that won't happen till I get out of this. I should be roasted."

But just then I spied the antedeluvian vehicle coming towards me about half a mile up, and I quickly dismissed from my mind all thoughts of fire.

Tess was driving the conveyance and she was alone. I was delighted with the prospect of a two hours' *tête-à-tête* with her, but thought it strange that old Joe had not come for me. Tess explained that the man was away on an errand, and she had come instead.

Then the thought of fire came to me again, and I could not help mentioning it to Tess. She laughed.

"No danger of that," she said, as she turned the horse's head back in the direction he had come. "You *are* nervous."

It was a delightful afternoon. The air was now cooling down and the ride along that road was very pleasant. We chatted and laughed until I quite forgot the existence of any such thing as fire or danger.

We had covered about a quarter of the length of that road when, on looking to the south, I suddenly noticed a dense black smoke rising in large, thick masses three or four miles off. It seemed to be rapidly approaching. Again that terrible thought of fire suggested itself.

"We had better get home as quickly as possible! That is the bush on fire!" said Tess suddenly. It was her turn to be nervous, judging by the tremour in her voice.

In a few minutes the whole situation had changed. The bush was on fire, and the flames were rushing towards us at an alarming rate.

Our octogenarian steed would not move any faster, and the road seemed to cross the track of the fire some distance ahead of us. Our situation was becoming serious. The road was not wide enough to afford us an oasis in this approaching simoon, and if the flames got within half a mile of us we could not escape, except by a miracle.

The fire came nearer. There was no mistaking it now. Vegetation of all kinds had become veritable tinder in the continued heat and drought, and before the destroying flames it disappeared as snow before the sun.

We could now distinctly hear the distant crack and roar of the flames. The twilight was coming swiftly on. We began to get thoroughly frightened as the fire came nearer and nearer.

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A great cloud of sparks and smoke, the advance guard of the all-devouring enemy, began to blow in our faces and fire the dry undergrowth near us. A breeze had sprung up and helped our all-destroying enemy.

I applied the whip vigorously to the old horse, and he seemed to put forth his best energies, but the ancient cart was so heavy that he did not get along any faster than a good trot.

The girl beside me was pale, but her lips were firmly set and her eyes shone with a lustrous, determined light. She would not flinch, I saw. She came of stern stuff, this tender young girl, and the fierce, stubborn spirit of her British ancestry was standing her now in good stead. I knew Tess would not faint or scream or do anything foolish or wild, but would be a comrade to me in our danger, with a courage equal, if not superior to my own.

On came the fire. It was now within half a mile of us and roaring like a wild beast in sight of his prey. A great cloud of smoke and sparks preceded the flames and blew right in our faces, making our eyes smart so that we could scarcely see, and griming and peppering our flesh till it felt raw.

I scarcely knew how I managed to see the many minor features in the play which afterwards came so near being a tragedy, but every little thing is indelibly impressed upon my mind, even to this hour.

Our old horse was now fully alive to the danger we were in. He trembled and shook in every limb, and drew the rickety old vehicle along at a rate it had never gone before.

I held the reins and spoke encouraging words to him, and tried to comfort the brave girl at my side.

Tess was trying to keep the sparks off us with a little silk parasol, one of my gifts to her, but soon there were so many holes burnt in that dainty relic of civilisation, that it became a veritable colander, through which poured a red-hot blinding flood.

A great, hissing, cracking cinder lighted on her Tam-o'-Shanter, and that soon was so near a blaze that I pitched it off and threw it away.

Tess looked like an angry goddess. Her longt brown hair had escaped from its fastenings and swept out behind in the wind our passage created.

As she held the reins while I warded off a blazing bough that came hurtling upon us, with her eyes sparkling with excitement, her face pale as ashes, and her lips set, she looked like another Queen Boadicea driving her chariot of wrath over the necks of her proud Roman insulters. Even in those moments of agony I wondered how she kept up so marvellously.

We were now about half way home and almost in the belt of flame. Things might now get better, and if we could hold out for another half hour there was a chance of our getting off with our lives. I tried to speak, but my throat was so parched that I could not utter a sound.

The heat was frightful. Clouds of dense white smoke settled about us in suffocating closeness, while the ever-increasing roar of the flames made a grand and awful diapason. And the fire came closer and closer—and finally, it reached us.

"Tess!" I shouted, as I put my arm about her waist and drew her down below the side of the rickety old vehicle. "Dear girl, our time has come! Good-bye!"

"Dear Ben, good-bye!" I read, rather than heard, from her lips.

It was impossible to hear her words.

And after that, as the novelists say, all was like a dream. I have a confused recollection of a heat so terrible as to almost force my eyes from their sockets and shrivel my skin up to parchment—of the old horse dropping to the ground—of standing over my brave Tess trying to fight off the flames—of agonising burns on my head, face and hands! And then there came a terrible roar, I seemed to see ten thousand stars, and all was darkness.

I never knew just how long I was unconscious, but it must have been for many hours, for when consciousness again mounted her throne in my soul it was broad day. At first I could not open my eyes at all. Then I managed to just separate the lids, but it was the acutest torment to do so. I afterwards found that they had been horribly burnt.

When at length I could see about me, what a desolate scene it was that met my blurred and crippled vision. As far as my poor sight could reach there was nothing but blackness, except overhead—a landscape in jet silhouetted sharply against the soft azure of the clear sky.

A few feet from me lay the figure of a human being! It was Tess!

And was she dead? Merciful Heaven! About half of her clothes were gone and she lay motionless, as though dead.

How I suffered at that sight no one but myself can ever know. But I could not move, and the hot tears of which I was not ashamed oozed from my eyes like drops of liquid fire and ploughed red-hot furrows down my scorched cheeks. And then I again lapsed into unconsciousness.

Whole ages might have passed before I knew anything more. Then suddenly I opened my eyes and saw I was in bed at home. By the bedside sat my small sister Jennie.

"You have been ill just three weeks, Ben," said she, "and 'Tessie'"—everyone of us said "Tessie" and not Miss Mills—"is just able to walk about."

It came out afterwards that Tess had received her worst burn while trying to ward off a blazing branch from my head after I had become unconscious. Of course, she was lionised for her bravery—"when I didn't do anything brave at all," she afterwards said to me, with a bright blush. I didn't say anything, and my action immediately following is scarcely worth recording.

Now, when I take my youngest boy on my knee and pour into his never-tiring ear, again and again, the story of my escape from a fiery death, and then look across the table where sits my sweet-faced wife, I shudder at the recollection of that night of horror, and marvel at the strength of a true woman's love.

Gerald Blake.

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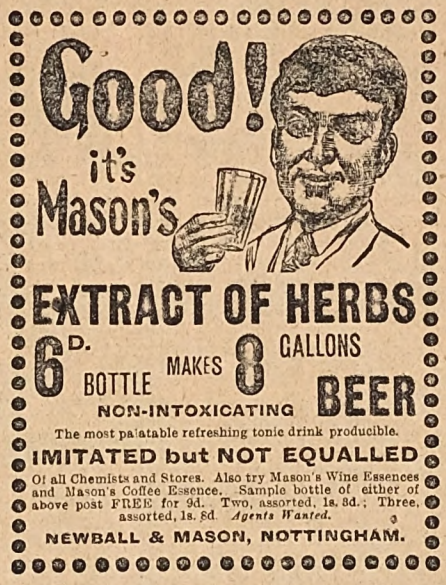

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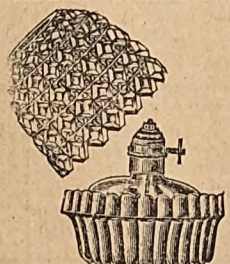

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

A Feminine Reader writes to ask whether we consider it safer to ride on the top or inside a 'bus———There is a widespread superstition that the safest place is inside, but this is quite a mistake. In the event of a collision or of the 'bus being overturned, you stand a much better chance of escaping uninjured if riding outside than you do when cooped up and hampered by a dozen frantic persons, all struggling to reach the door. On top, too, there is less chance of your being crushed by the weight of the overturning vehicle, and in any case your hands and face wouldn't be cut by broken glass.

A. H. D.—Yes, every volunteer recruit has first of all to pass a medical examination.

Native.—Although idolatry still exists in some parts of the Philippines, the natives are not so bad as you imagine. There is one pretty custom, at least, practised in the interior portions of the group. The peasants fill small bamboo baskets with fruit and food, and set them outside their dwellings: any passing traveller is welcome to take what he wants. He pays nothing if he be poor, but if he can afford to pay, he drops something into the receptacle placed near for that purpose. The custom is not abused, or it would have been discontinued; which speaks well for the people generally.

Bustard.—The great bustard was once an ordinary object of chase on Newmarket Heath, and was seen in large numbers in Wiltshire also. The bustard scarcely ever flies, but on foot it is very swift, and tested the capabilities of horses and dogs before it could be captured. Taken all in all, it is the largest of British birds.

T. L. asks for information on a cheerful subject; he wishes to know the favourite method of committing suicide.———Your morbid curiosity may be satisfied by some statistics compiled by Dr. Whitcombe, of Birmingham. His experience shows that shooting and hanging are favourite methods with men, but women prefer drowning. Quite a number of people put an end to their existence by drinking carbolic acid.

D. W. S.—The best clay pipes come from the Devonshire pits. The original colour is grey, which turns to white in the process of baking. From first to last, a good clay passes through about a dozen hands before it is ready for use.

J. S. W.—The expression "red letter day" originated in the old custom of printing the saints' days—which were considered lucky—on the calendar in red ink.

Cyclist asks: "Has the bicycle furthered trade outside the business created by its own manufacture?"———Certainly. Every great industry necessarily has a reflex action on others, so that other trades would benefit by the money spent on and in connection with cycling. But the bicycle is having an effect upon trade in this way: Riders are not slow to complain of the condition of roads and highways, and undoubtedly cause more money to be spent to keep them in better condition; and good roads facilitate transmission of goods, and so increase trade. In Siam the cycle is proving a real blessing; the nobility have taken it up enthusiastically, and are bringing about a complete change in the condition of the highways to the great increase of trade.

E. S.—The dome of St. Paul's Cathedral is about as many feet high as there are days in the year.

Benedict.—After the first five years fowls cease to be profitable so far as the laying of eggs is concerned. According to an authority, the birds average twenty eggs during the first year, 120 in the second, 135 in the third, and 115 in the fourth. After this the number decreases by twenty a year, and in the ninth year only ten are laid.

O. R. writes to ask in which part of London is land most valuable.——— The land in Pall Mall and Piccadilly is valued at £500,000 an acre, and the very smallest shops in that vicinity can easily be let for £1,000 per year, while houses of any size that are situated anywhere near Hyde Park Corner, cannot be obtained for less than £3,000 a year. Land in the City, too, is exceedingly valuable. The ground on which the Mansion House stands is worth at least half a million, and the sites occupied by some of the big Lombard Street banks are of even greater value.

D. A.—The largest sundial in the world is Hayon Horoo, a large promontory rising to a height of 3,000 feet above the Ægean Sea. As the sun runs its course the shadow of the mountain touches, one by one, a circle of islands which act as hour-marks.

Despatch.—Reuter's first office for the transmission of telegrams was opened in Aix-la-Chapelle in 1849, but on the opening of the route from Calais to Dover in 1851, the office was transferred to London. Reuter then conceived the idea of supplying the papers with news, but the proposed arrangement was declined, although the principal morning newspapers were in the habit of running expresses at enormous cost. But at length some of them made a contract with him and the others were glad to follow their example.

K. T. puts this question: "Is it a fact that the tendency of the richer classes is to choose the western portion of a city for their abode—if so, why?"———The tendency is noticeable in almost every capital in Europe. The cause is difficult to ascertain, but one explanation seems reasonable. It is that the prevailing winds come from the west, south-west, and north-west, and blow the impurities of the air eastward; hence the air in the west is purer than in the east, and those who can afford to have the best of things have chosen the west. In time this has become a fashion, and the west is regarded as the rich quarter, and, therefore, the proper place for people with money. The question of purity of atmosphere has little or nothing to do with the selection now.

Red.—It is estimated that among English-speaking people one person in fifty has red hair.

Bobby writes to ask why "Scotland Yard" is so called.———Because on the site of the old building, a house was erected for the accommodation of King Kenneth III. of Scotland, when he came to England to pay homage to the King.

G. K. L.—"Keelhauling" was a form of punishment used in the navies of the last century. It consisted of tying long ropes round a man's head and heels and about each wrist, lowering him over the stem of the ship, and dragging him by means of the leg and wrist with ropes exactly along the keel from stem to stern. Only about one man in three survived this punishment.

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EDITED BY
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On the vote for public education, Sir John Gorst explained in the House of Commons that it was estimated the sum spent upon education in the course of the coming financial year would be £11,690,000. This sum was an earnest of the conviction of the people that education was a national necessity, and that the country depended for its greatness on an intelligent and instructed population, just as much as it did upon fleets and armies. All readers of this paper will, doubtless, endorse this view, and we, the publishers of "HOMELAND," now offer you an opportunity to display your knowledge and receive most generous payment for a little study. The object of this contest is to give an impetus to many dormant minds to awaken and think; also, we expect by this competition of brains to extend the circulation of "HOMELAND" to such a size that we shall be able to charge double the present rate for advertising in our columns. By this plan of increasing the number of subscriptions, and receiving more money from advertisers of soaps, pianos, medicines, books, baking powders, jewellery, etc., we shall add thousands of pounds a year to our income, and with this mathematical deduction before us, we have decided to operate this most remarkable "missing letters" contest.

HERE'S WHAT YOU ARE TO DO.

There are thirty words in this schedule, from each of which letters have been omitted, and their places have been supplied by dashes. To fill in the blank spaces and get the names properly, you must have some knowledge of geography and history. We want you to spell out as many words as you can, then send to us with a Postal Order for 1/6 to pay for a One Year's Subscription to "HOMELAND." For correct lists we shall give £5 in cash. Also, if your list contains twenty or more correct words, we shall send you a beautiful Egeria Diamond Scarf Pin (for lady or gentleman), the regular price of which is 2/6. Therefore, by sending your list you are positively certain of the 2/6 prize, and by being careful to send a complete list, you have an opportunity of the £5 cash award. The distance that you live from London makes no difference. All have equal opportunity for winning. Full particulars of the prize awards will be published in "HOMELAND."

PRIZES WILL BE SENT PROMPTLY.

Prizes will be honestly awarded and promptly sent. We publish the list of words to be studied out. In making your list of answers, be sure to give the number of each word:

1. **-RA-I-** A country of South America.
2. **-A-I-I-** Name of the largest ocean.
3. **M-D--E--A-E--** A sea.
4. **-M--O-** A large river in South America.
5. **T-A--S** Well-known English river.
6. **G-AS-OW** A great Scotch city.
7. **H------X** A Yorkshire town.
8. **N-A-A-A** Noted for display of water.
9. **PO-TL-ND** A place in England.
10. **-A-RI-** A city of Spain.
11. **H-V--A** A city on a well-known island.
12. **D-BL-N** An Irish city.
13. **G--R-L-A-** Greatest fortification in the world.
14. **S-A-LE-** A great explorer.
15. **C-L-F---I-** One of the United States.
16. **B-SM---K** A no'ed ruler.
17. **--CTO-I-** Another noted ruler.
18. **P-R-U-A-** A country of Europe.
19. **A-ST-A-I-** A big island. [American.
20. **M--IN-E-** Name of the most prominent
21. **P-R-SM--TH** A famous English seaport.
22. **Y--KS--RE** An English county.
23. **B--G-T-N** A south-coast holiday resort.
24. **T-NN--ON** A noted poet.
25. **W-ST-IN-T-R** A famous abbey.
26. **J-RS-Y** An island in the English Channel.
27. **H-M-L-N-** A popular family magazine.
28. **B-H-I-G** A sea.
29. **A-L-N-I-** An ocean.
30. **M-D-G-S-A-** An island near Africa.

In sending your list of words, mention whether you want prize money sent by cheque, money order, or registered post; we will send any way that winners require. The Egeria Diamond is a perfect imitation of a Real Diamond. We defy experts to distinguish it from real except by microscopic test. In every respect it serves the purpose of Genuine Diamond of purest quality. It is artistically mounted in a fine gold-cased pin, warranted to wear for years. This piece of jewellery will make a most desirable gift to a friend if you do not need it yourself. At present our supply of these gifts is limited, and if they are all gone when your set of answers comes in, we shall send you 2/6 in money instead of the Scarf or Shawl Pin, so you shall either receive the piece of jewellery or the equivalent in cash, in addition to your chance of winning £5 cash prize. This entire offer is an honest one, made by a responsible publishing house. Now study, and exchange light brainwork for cash. With your list of answers send postal order for 1/6 to pay for twelve months' subscription to our family magazine, "HOMELAND," which is only sold by subscription; also send a stamp for immediate reply. If you have already subscribed, mention that fact in your letter, and we will extend your subscription from the time the present one expires.

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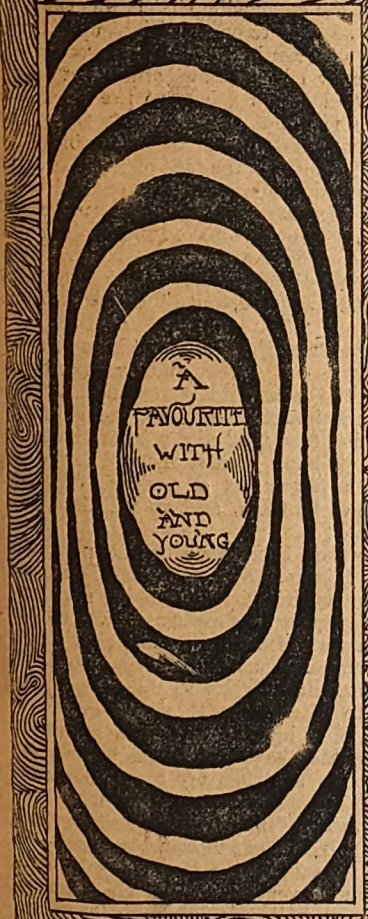

No. 499.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 23rd, 1898.

. . A . .

FOUR-LINKED CHAIN.

"GOOD evening. How are you?"

"Eh! I don't think—I mean I think you've made a mistake."

"You mean you don't know me? Well, do you think you would if I were to ask you for a light for this pipe I'm smoking while it was still in full blast?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing particular. Perhaps I've made a mistake; if so, I must apologise. I don't often forget faces, and I thought yours was familiar to me."

"Well, now you speak, I seem to think I've seen you before. Let me see, where was it?"

"Were you on Putney Bridge about this time one night last May. If you were, you asked me for a light."

"Oh, yes, of course, I remember now. Odd you should have remembered me; it's nearly twelve months ago."

"Oh, I rather pique myself on my memory for faces; besides, when a man asks you for a light, and knocks the ash off a cigar that is still burning, and proceeds to light it over again, you naturally look at him a bit curiously."

"You don't mean to say that my cigar was alight? I certainly thought it was out myself, or I shouldn't

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have asked you for a match. However, that's nothing. What are you having?"

"Thanks; I'll take a whisky and small soda, I think."

"Good! Will your friend join us?"

"Thank you," replied the third of the three men who had thus dropped into conversation in the saloon bar of the Poplars Hotel, West Kensington. The meeting had been quite casual. The man who had spoken first had entered with his friend, and the man he had addressed was standing at the bar leaning on one elbow upon it, and chatting to the young lady who had just served him with a whisky and soda.

All three were well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking men, and the one who had been first spoken to was a peculiarly attractive looking man, at any rate, as far as first impressions went. He had one of those dark, strongly-marked, agreeable faces, which, at first glance, inspire confidence in the majority of men, and would be considered decidedly handsome by most women.

The man who had addressed him was of medium height, rather slender but well-built, and carried himself with a peculiar swing, which, taken in conjunction with his clean-shaven face and well-shaped mobile mouth, would have led anyone very quickly to the correct conclusion that he was an actor. The third man was a quietly-dressed and still more quietly-spoken individual, whose dark hair was somewhat dashed with grey, and whose carefully groomed moustache and side-whiskers gave him somewhat of a military appearance.

The only other occupant of the saloon-bar besides themselves, was a man sitting in a secluded corner with a glass of whisky and water in front of him, and apparently either tipsy or asleep.

The conversation thus casually commenced naturally turned on the faculty of remembering faces. Both the man at the bar and the actor seemed to pride themselves not a little on their powers in this direction, and by the time the third whisky and soda had been exchanged, they had each of them given one or two more or less remarkable instances of their exercise of it.

The man whom the actor had first spoken to, let fall the information that he was a barrister during the course of a story about a criminal case in which he had been engaged, and which had turned upon a remarkable recollection of a face seen once and identified again after five years.

"Yes," said the actor as he finished, "that was decidedly a curious case. It reminds me of a painful experience of my own a few years back, in which the recollection of a face played the principal part, only it was a girl's face, and a very pretty one, too. I'll call it 'A four-linked tragedy,' or 'A skeleton drama in four glimpses,' whichever you like."

"Ah, that sounds interesting," said the military-looking man. "Let us have it; we have half-an-hour to spare yet. I know you tell a story well."

"Well, there's not very much to tell," said the actor, nothing loth, "and not much scope for description. In fact, it's a mere matter of headings, though there's plenty of human interest in it."

He took a sip from his glass and went on:

"The first glimpse of the face I caught one night in the Strand three or four years ago now. I was playing in the second piece at the Globe, and I was hurrying along with my thoughts a long way from the pavement, when I almost collided with a lady who had got out of a brougham at the door of the Adelphi.

"I just pulled up in time, raised my hat, apologised and walked on. It was all over in a minute, but, brief as the glimpse had been, it was long enough to show me as pretty a face as a man need ever wish to look upon.

"It was one of those faces which you always want to turn round and look at again after you have passed; a face that you not only admire in the artistic way, but for emotional reasons as well. It was not merely pretty, too, there was sufficient character in it to stamp it upon one's memory, and distinguish it from the average pretty faces that you can see scores of in London at the beginning of the season.

"Well, she acknowledged my apology with a bow and just the faintest little flash of a smile, and I hurried on. So much for link number one.

"Of course I forgot all about the incident before the next morning, and thought no more of it until about thirteen months later, when I was playing in *The Silver King* at the Olympic. One night I noticed in the third row of the stalls a lady, whose face struck me as familiar. I was puzzled for a few minutes, and then the incident in the Strand came back. You know we mummers have trained memories, and have to be masters of the art of association.

"Well, I came to the conclusion that it was the same face, but what still seemed to cast a doubt upon it was the fact that it was apparently the face of a woman very much older. Presently I had an opportunity of taking a good look at it, and I was driven to the conclusion that it was the same face, but I was utterly shocked to see the difference that a single year had made in it.

"When I saw it first it was the face of a girl, who, to talk shop for a moment, had just come on, and found the performance a pleasant comedy. Now it was the face of a woman, who seemed to have found a good deal more tragedy than comedy in the drama of life. I have seldom seen off the stage such a perfect picture of stony wretchedness and half-resigned, half-rebellious suffering as it exhibited.

"Whatever the events of the year must have been she could have found little but misery and disappointment in them. However, the curtain fell on our mock tragedy in the usual way, and though I confess I thought not a little of the saddened face that night before I went to sleep, and though perhaps it may have haunted me for some time in a vague sort of fashion, still time went on and I forgot it again, and so the second link slipped out of sight.

"Two years after that I and four brother mummers took a week on the Thames, starting from Reading and pulling quietly down as the spirit moved us; sometimes camping out, and sometimes sleeping at a hotel, and altogether having a very comfortable time of it.

"We left Richmond about high-water one lovely moonlight night soon after twelve to pull over the last stage of our trip to Hammersmith, where we were to give the boat up. If it hadn't been such a very fine night we should probably have gone home by train, and in that case the odds are that my four-linked chain would never have had more than two links in it."

"What do you mean?" asked the barrister, with a sudden eagerness. "You don't mean to say you——"

"Saw her again?" said the actor. "Yes, I'm sorry to say I did, and under very miserable circumstances, too. We were about half-way between Barnes and Hammersmith, when our coxswain saw something floating in the water. We were ten or a dozen yards from it, and it was then so dusky on the water, as the moon had got rather low, that we took it for a floating

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basket or a bundle of hay, and we should have passed it without taking further notice of it if the coxswain hadn't just then struck a match to light his pipe.

"He threw the match still burning into the water towards the object, and just as the lighted match fell with a hiss into the stream, our stroke brought us up all standing by exclaiming:

"'Good Heavens! That's not a basket; it's a human body!'

"In a very short time we were alongside of it; it was the body of a woman, dressed neatly but very simply—almost poorly, in fact. She was not drowned, or at any rate she had been stunned first, for we found a bruise behind one of the ears. Added to that there seemed to be sufficient air remaining in the lungs to keep the body from sinking, and this, I believe, would not have been the case in drowning, as the lungs would have filled with water in the struggle to breathe. We took the body in tow to Hammersmith, and a pretty mournful journey it was, I can tell you. We had to tow her because our boat was so light that we should certainly have had a capsize if we had tried to get her in.

"I suppose you know what I'm going to say now, and you're right. As soon as we had hailed a policeman at Hammersmith and got a light, I saw for the third time the face that I had seen in the Strand and in the theatre. That is how the third link passed through my hands."

"Of course, there was an inquest, which I and my friends had to attend. Who, or what she was, there was not a word of evidence to show. All that came to light about her was the bald fact that a waterman at Kew had let a boat the previous day to a man and woman, and that he thought this was the woman, but he could not be sure, as he had scarcely noticed her.

"The man had disappeared, and as the boat had been found the day after we picked up the body down below Vauxhall, bottom upwards, it was concluded that they had capsized and ——"

"Yes, of course," interrupted the barrister. "A case of double suicide, I suppose, covered up by a pretence at an accident. I've heard of several of them."

"So I suppose everybody would have thought if it had not been for the bruise behind the ear, and if the woman had really been drowned. The verdict, I admit, was simply the open one of 'Found drowned,' though some of the jury were for 'Wilful murder against some person or persons unknown,' as the formula runs. If I'd been on the jury I should certainly have stuck out for that verdict."

"Would you? I don't see it," replied the barrister. "The bruise behind the ear was not necessarily a proof of violence, and certainly not of murder; it might have been given in a dozen ways. As for the lungs having air in them—well, the woman might have fainted from sheer fright before she actually drowned. You say the man was never heard of again?"

"No; he vanished completely."

"Ah! Evidently, as I say, it was either an accident or double suicide, or the man may even have killed the woman and then have committed suicide himself. Anyhow, it seems to be a finished chapter, and so what becomes of your fourth link?"

"Oh! that has to be forged yet," said the actor. "I am still of opinion that the woman was murdered, but I admit that I have never had the slightest reason to suspect any living man of the crime until now."

As he spoke the actor fixed his eyes on those of the barrister, and looked at him with such unmistakable meaning that the man took a step backwards and exclaimed angrily:

"Confound you, sir, what do you mean? What are you looking at me like that for?"

"I mean, Mr. Alfred Ferris, Barrister-at-Law, Printer to the Bank of Engraving, and murderer to boot, that you have just helped me to forge my fourth link by admitting that you met me on Putney Bridge a year ago and asked me for a light.

"Stand still now and don't make a fuss, and I will soon satisfy you that the game is up. Don't think of violence, please. My friend here is a detective with a warrant for your arrest as a bank-note forger, and there are two policemen within hail outside."

A wave of pallor passed swiftly over the face of the man addressed as Ferris; but it vanished in a moment, and his old air of assurance came back. He laughed aloud, and not at all unnaturally.

"Rubbish, man, rubbish!" he said, almost jovially. "Your Thespian imagination has led you away this time, and you have made a mistake in faces for once, if you think I'm the man you name. You can arrest me for him, if you like, and I'm quite willing to go with you; but I warn you that the risk will be considerable in the way of damages, for I shall not have the slightest difficulty in proving who I am to-morrow. You'll find it just as hard to prove that I am a bank-note forger as to show that I murdered this woman you were talking about. That is to say, both are impossible tasks."

"Very well, I'll take the risk," replied the actor. "No, sergeant, not yet. I am going to play my tragedy out in my own way," he continued, putting his hand on the arm of the detective, who was making a move forward.

"Now, look here, when you asked me for a light you didn't want a light, because your cigar was not out. The request was a prearranged signal with a man that you mistook me for, and who is now in Wormwood Scrubbs. We've got the story from him, and I needn't tell you who he is. He was caught that very night with the plate on him which he was to have given to you.

"Now it was not in front of the Adelphi, as I told you, but in front of the Haymarket, that I saw the girl for the first time. I changed the names to keep you from suspecting, because you were with her. You were also with her on the second occasion, not in the stalls at the Olympic, but in the dress circle at the Globe, and I recognised you again.

"That man in the corner there is the man who let the boat to you, and he will recognise you as the man who took the girl on the water. You have confessed already that you met me on Putney Bridge a year ago, several months after the girl was drowned, and, therefore, you were not drowned with her. That, Mr. Ferris, is the link that was wanting, and which you have assisted us to forge in this little comedy, or perhaps I should say tragedy, which we have arranged here for your special benefit to-night. Saunders, come out here, please."

The man in the corner got up and came forward to the bar.

"Is this the man you let the boat to the day before the girl's body was found?"

"Well, he's a lot better dressed now than he was then, but that's him, and no mistake."

"Now, sergeant," said the actor, stepping aside, "my part's over. It is time for you to come on, and I'll go and give the supers their call."

George Griffith.

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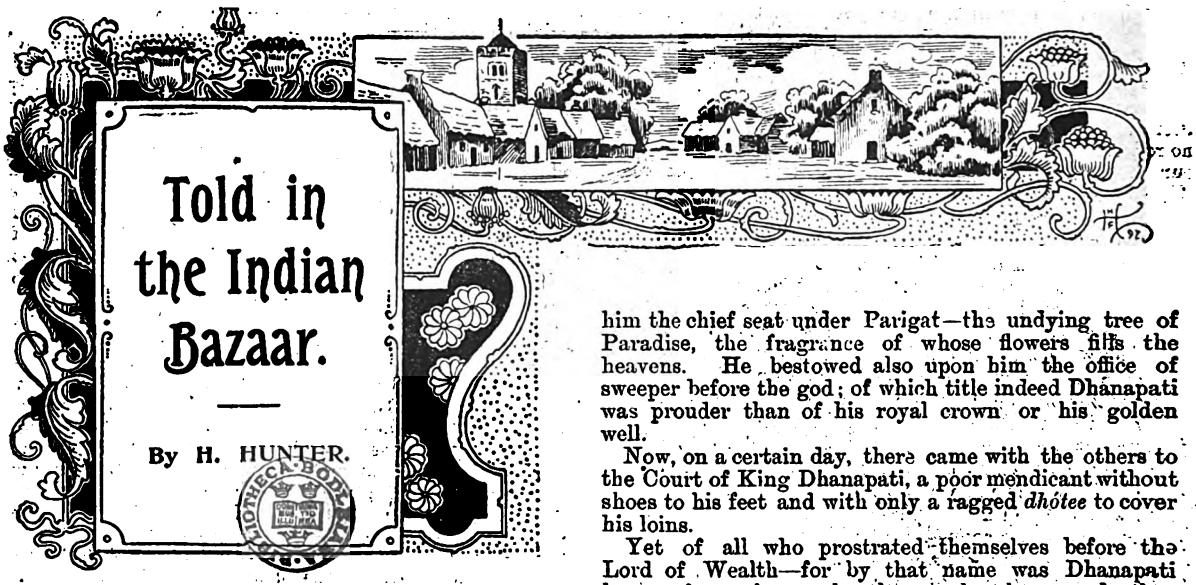

Told in the Indian Bazaar.

By H. HUNTER.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

No. 6.—THE ROSE AND THE RING.

THERE was once in the country beyond Tamluk a king called Dhanapati. He was a mighty man of renown, rich in substance, great in power, and learned in the arts and mysteries; and many came to him seeking service and bringing gifts.

They came from the hills and from the plains, and from the island of Ceylon which lies far to the South. And Dhanapati listened to them all.

"Some day," said he, "mayhap I shall find amongst them an honest man—one who seeks me for my own good, and not for what he hopes to get for himself," for, notwithstanding all their fine talk and their gifts and their offerings, Dhanapati, who could read men's hearts by looking into their eyes, knew that each man's purpose was to learn, if he might discover it, the secret of Dhanapati's great wealth—the source of the inexhaustible treasure which gave him favour in the eyes of the Great God Jagganath over all the Princes of Hind; so that he alone of sovereign Lords was permitted to enter the holy place and stand before the high altar.

In the private garden of the Royal Palace, Dhanapati, by his magical arts, had found a well, which turned to gold everything that was put into it.

The well was guarded by a monster called Rahu, all head and shoulders, with a mouth like a tiger's and furnished with immense canine tusks. He was a servant of Asur the earth-demon, who knows where all the treasure is that is hidden in the dark places of the earth, and reveals the secret only to those who can pronounce the master-word which compels him.

Rahu would allow nobody but Dhanapati himself to approach the well; so, by order of the King, the people brought to Dhanapati all the vessels of brass which they could procure; and the King, having paid for them in good coin of the realm, put them straightway into the well, which in a few hours converted them into gold; and with the gold he built shrines and endowed temples. For all which, the high priest of Jagganath promised him the chief seat under Parigat—the undying tree of Paradise, the fragrance of whose flowers fills the heavens. He bestowed also upon him the office of sweeper before the god; of which title indeed Dhanapati was prouder than of his royal crown or his golden well.

Now, on a certain day, there came with the others to the Court of King Dhanapati, a poor mendicant without shoes to his feet and with only a ragged *dhótee* to cover his loins.

Yet of all who prostrated themselves before the Lord of Wealth—for by that name was Dhanapati known far and near by the people who served other lords—the shoeless mendicant was the only one who asked nothing.

When the King, addressing him, inquired whence he came, what news he brought, and what was the subject of his petition, the mendicant, before answering, stooped and, from the naked ground at his feet, plucked a wax-white rose, which he presented to the King, saying:

"'Tis Indra's flower, my lord, and but even now was growing in the meads of Heaven.

"A fool esteemeth a gift according to the gold which has purchased it. A wise man looketh to the craft which has produced it. But a just man considers neither the gold nor the craft, but values the gift only for the sake of the giver.

"Of gold, O King! you have no lack. Use it for the service of man, and Heaven will reward thee. Of craft, the best may be bought in the market for hire. But a rose from Paradise, no money can buy or craft can fashion.

"Remember then, O King! to cherish the white rose of Indra. Whence I come, matters not, nor whither I go; and suit I have none to make.

"But my lord asks for news; and what news, think you, is a poor wayfarer like to bear that will command attention from a king? Nevertheless, such as I have I will retail; and so be, the King will know if the beggar's speech concerns the 'King's crown.'

"In the kingdom of Kalinga then, through which I passed on my way hither, I chanced to see Rahini, the Lotus-eyed daughter of Srimanta, the great Emperor of the Lunar Race. Fair and good is she to look upon. None fairer, O King! have these eyes beheld in all the regions that lie west of the Sun and east of the Moon. But the Emperor, her father, keeps the maiden close in his *Zenana*, swearing that he will give her only to one who will acknowledge his god—Ganesha—as Lord of lords and Lord of All. That, for sure, is all the news I have to tell—yet, mayhap, it is not told without purpose, neither was the white flower offered without intent. But it is for thee, O King! to determine if aught I have said concerns thee."

Now, as Dhanapati listened, his vanity was piqued,

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his curiosity excited, and all the ambition in his nature aroused. He would fain have questioned the mendicant further.

This man, thought he, is surely the honest fellow I have been looking for; and a messenger from Indra to boot. He has sought me out for no profit to himself, but that he might give me the message from his lord. To how many now, of the followers of Indra hath he given it—or has it been told to my ears alone?

Closing his eyes while he pondered the matter, Dhanapati opened them to find the mendicant departed, and none could say how, or whither he went. He was gone, but no eye had seen him leave.

The White Rose was still in the King's hand, filling the air with fragrance, or His Majesty would have said: "Lo I have dreamed a dream in the daytime and seen a vision as in the night."

So the King took the White Rose and laid it on the altar before Jagganath, and shut himself up in his chamber to consider who the mendicant might be, and all he had told him concerning Rahini, the Lotus-eyed.

Now it happened about this time that Dhanapati was sore vexed and displeased because of Seetani, his favourite wife. She was jealous of Vavaishni, her lord's latest addition to his *Zenana*; and things were all awry in the women's apartments.

Though he was the possessor of the Golden Well and enjoyed the distinction of being the sweeper before Jagganath, Dhanapati's domestic troubles made him level with the lowest.

Thinking over what he had heard from the beggar-man, King Dhanapati determined that Indra desired him to ask Rahini in marriage from the great Emperor of the Lunar Race.

So he collected presents of silver and presents of gold, rare stuffs and rich shaws, diamonds of the first water and pearls of great price; and dispatched them with a large embassy to solicit the Emperor's daughter to wife. He offered to place her at the head of his establishment, giving her precedence over all the ladies of the harem and providing for her a handsome suite of apartments in a new wing. But Srimanta, the Emperor, laughed him to scorn.

Rahu would allow nobody but Dhanapati himself to approach the well.

"What!" said he, "give my daughter to a scavenger—a road sweeper? Tell your master that if he wants my daughter, he must come and take her."

So the ambassadors returned bringing the King's presents with them.

Then Dhanapati rent his royal robes and swore that he would never resume them till he had made the Elephant-worshipping Emperor acknowledge that the sweeper before Jagganath was worthy to mate with any daughter of earth he chose to ask for.

Calling for his fighting gear, he mounted his war-horse, and, putting himself at the head of his army, rode away to avenge the insult to himself and his god.

But in the middle of the battle, panic seized upon his men, and they broke and fled in all directions, leaving the Royal Standard and many prisoners in the hands of the Elephant worshipper.

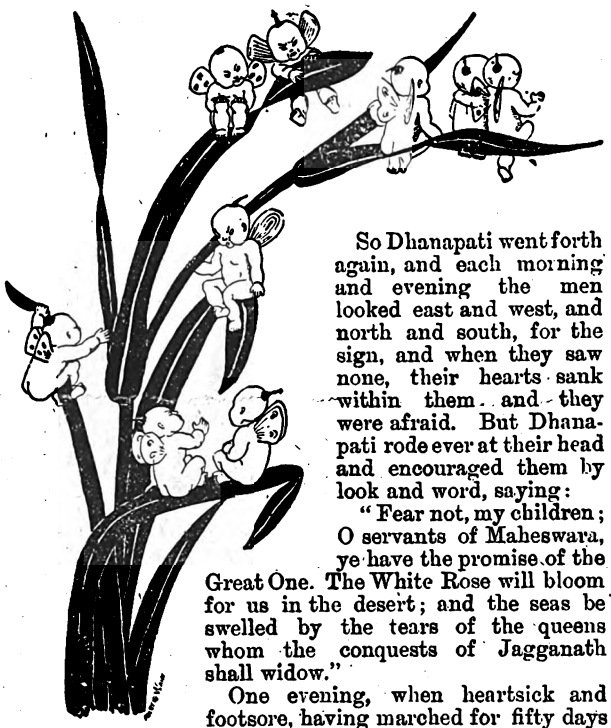
Overwhelmed with dismay, Dhanapati rode back to his capital as fast as a fleet horse could carry him, and throwing himself at the feet of his god, upbraided him with desertion in the hour of danger.

"O King," said a voice which Dhanapati at once knew to be that of the beggar-man, "O King, hear and live. Said I not to thee, 'Cherish the White Rose of Indra?' But, alas! my lord, thou hast surely forgotten it," and at the same moment the King, turning, saw the honest mendicant at his side.

Then Dhanapati remembered that in his haste to avenge himself on Srimanta he had forgotten to tend the white flower before starting, and behold it was faded and withered.

But the beggar-man spake words of comfort to the King, and bade him lead yet another army to the field, and a sure sign would be given him.

"Watch carefully," said he, "for the sign of the God Indra, and mayhap ye will see also the sign of Kama. Then tarry not, nor look back, but strike hard and strike home, for Mahadeva himself will be with you. Remember my words, for if ye ignore them defeat shall surely come upon ye."



So Dhanapati went forth again, and each morning and evening the men looked east and west, and north and south, for the sign, and when they saw none, their hearts sank within them and they were afraid. But Dhanapati rode ever at their head and encouraged them by look and word, saying:

"Fear not, my children; O servants of Maheswara, ye have the promise of the Great One. The White Rose will bloom for us in the desert; and the seas be swelled by the tears of the queens whom the conquests of Jagganath shall widow."

One evening, when heartsick and footsore, having marched for fifty days and being near to the army of the Elephant Emperor, the men were preparing their food at the door of the tents and silence was over all the camp, suddenly there appeared before the King's tent a maiden, holding in one hand a ring and in the other a rose.

The ring was of purest gold from the mountain of Meru, and fashioned by the jinns who live in the caves under the mountain. The rose was white as the marble in the quarries of Aryavatta, which is only used for the tombs of kings and emperors. Both rose and ring possessed magical virtues which time and occasion would disclose.

When King Dhanapati, running out to ascertain the cause of the commotion, beheld the visitor at the door, he would have bowed himself to the ground; but the damsel addressing him said:

"Nay, O King! for I am but a servant of my lord, even as thou. This Rose of Indra is sent thee by the Great God Jagganath, before whom the Elephant Worshipper Srimanta shall humble himself; and this ring is the gift of his good brother. Two horsemen who were riding south, one on a black steed, the other on a white, gave them to me for thee, saying: 'Thy time was come, thy duty plain, thy path straight; as he understands so will it be.'"

Then the maiden, having delivered her message, disappeared as suddenly as she came, and Dhanapati knew that the Great One himself had sent the sign which the beggar-man had promised.

At the battle, next day, Dhanapati drove the soldiers of the Emperor before him, as the wind drives the leaves along the alleys of the jungle; and chasing them to the walls, he laid siege to the city and carried off the Princess captive.

But for all this, Srimanta refused to take back the words he had cast in the teeth of the King, and calling upon Ganesha and his mother to prevent the insulting marriage, he rushed upon Dhanapati single-handed, thinking to slay him; but an asp flew out of the White Rose which Dhanapati was wearing, and bit him in the lip that he died. Then Dhanapati went home, taking the Princess with him, and no man durst ask him anything, for he was wroth in his heart; and, refusing even to look at Rahini, he swore that she should be married to a Bhungee, the elephant-headed god, and live as a slave. So he commanded his minister to wed her to the sweeper of the stables at the royal mews.

Now when the soldiers who had fought for Dhanapati heard what the King had decreed, they forgot their wounds in remembering the maiden's beauty, of which none had ever seen the like in all the countries through which they had travelled.

"Surely," said they "our lord does foolishly. Purity, goodness and beauty are jewels which should adorn a king's diadem. It is an insult to Heaven to give the damsel to a sweeper."

But Mahdoo, the old minister, seeing what a pet the King was in, said never a word, only he took the Princess to his own palace and gave her in charge of the ladies of his household.

Meanwhile King Dhanapati placed the Rose and the Ring on the altar before Jagganath, and went off to the Golden Well. He wanted some things he had left there, before starting to chastise the insolence of the Emperor.

But when he got them out, behold! they were every one and every whit as brassy as when he put them in. So he put them back and went again in a week's time; but finding them still in their original condition, without sign or symptom of gold about a single one; he began to get uneasy and asked Rahu who had been to the well. "No one," said Rahu, "but an old beggar-man who came yesterday and asked for water, and when I bade him begone, threw a handful of garden mould down the well. I would have chased him out of the garden, but when I went to look for him, he had vanished."

Then King Dhanapati went to the temple, secretly hoping that there he might meet the poor medicant; but though the King waited long the beggar came not; while the Rose on the altar faded, day by day, though tended never so carefully by the anxious monarch; and the Ring lost its brilliancy and grew dull like lead.

And all this time Mahdoo the minister spake not a word of the Princess, while Dhanapati, believing it had been done as he ordered, was afraid to venture a question.

At last the time of the Holy Festival came round, and the people were assembled in thousands and tens of thousands to see the image of the great god brought forth.

And the King, taking the sweeper's broom in his hand, walked before the car and humbly swept the dust off the road in front of the god, while the people shouted in praise of the King and in honour of the Image.

Then Mahdoo, the aged minister, brought out the maiden Rahini, attired as a bride for the bridal, and placing her side by side with the King in the face of all the people, spake and said:

"Take, O, my King, the bride whom the good lord Jagganath has sent thee. My lord swore in his wrath that I should marry the maiden to a sweeper of the street, and behold, my lord, I give her to thee."

Now when Dhanapati heard these words his heart leapt within him, and when he looked at Rahini and saw that she was beautiful as the morning and fairer than the stars, he was ready to fall upon the neck of Mahdoo to find how very wisely his ancient minister had acted. In his heart the King knew that he had behaved very badly to the Princess, who surely ought not to suffer for her father's fault; moreover he had failed in his duty to the god whose servant he professed to be, and only the wisdom of Mahdoo had prevented him from filling up the measure by committing an offence against High Heaven itself.*

The Golden Well had stopped, the White Rose had turned brown, the Ring had lost its lustre and the mendicant came no more—it needed no magic to explain the matter. So Dhanapati took the maiden by the hand before all the people, and commanded that the wedding should proceed.

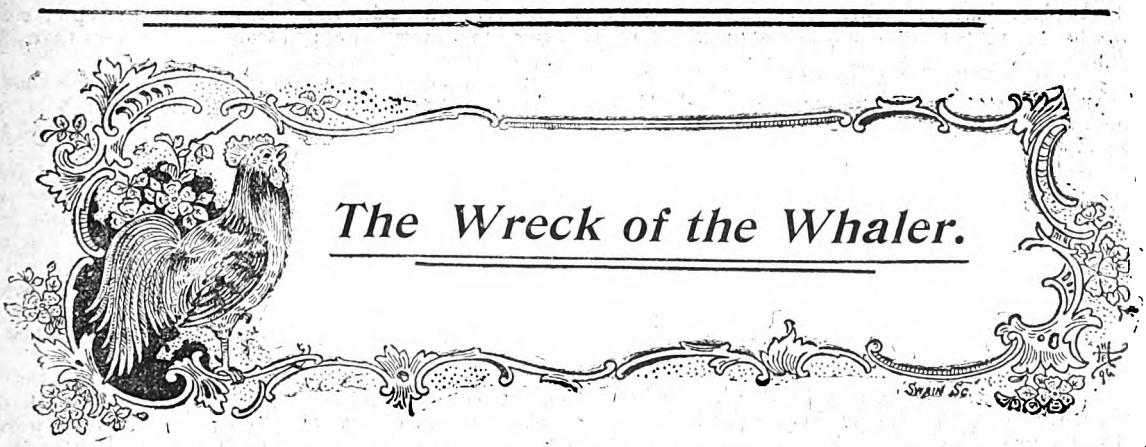
Then from the crowd there arose a cry: "Room for the holy man, room!" and the mendicant made his way to the King.

"Send, my lord," said he, "for the Ring and the Rose, and go thyself to the well, and what thou findest there let it be for a marriage portion for Rahini the lotus-eyed."

So Rahini was wedded with Kama's Ring, which fitted her delicate finger exactly, and shone there with a brightness which dazzled the beholders, almost as much as the beauty of Dhanapati's new bride. And lo! the White Rose was found to have put forth fresh blossoms and was become a bouquet fit for an empress—every flower without fleck or flaw, perfect in form and pure in colour; and their fragrance reached to the uttermost edge of the vast crowd.

Only the mendicant was seen no more. But when the King went to the well he found there far more than he had ever put into it. It took him a week to get all the things out—that handful of mould which the beggar-man had thrown in must have developed magical properties—and when he had got them, he gave them all to Rahini as the holy man directed; and he and she lived in the light of each other's countenance till Indra summoned them both to a seat in Paradise under the shade of Parigat.

* By marrying the Princess to a sweeper, she would have lost caste and thereby imperilled her salvation.



The Wreck of the Whaler.

WHEN Captain Dawson came back to Aberdeen in the winter of 1879, the strongest desire of his life was to find out what had become of his ship, the *Polly Ann*, which had run away from him in the North Atlantic somewhere about lat. 55, long. 53, a year and a half previously, having two people on board at the time of its disappearance.

Almost the first thing he did was to seek the assistance of Mr. Kimber, solicitor, by whose advice he had the following advertisement put into half a score of the most likely home and foreign newspapers:

£100 REWARD

For information as to the fate of the whaling brig *Polly Ann*, which sailed from Aberdeen May 16th, 1877.—Address HENRY KIMBER, Solicitor, Aberdeen, Scotland.

A little more than seven months had passed since the publication of this appeal, when one day a short, thick-set, smoothly-shaved, solemn-faced, swarthy man of perhaps thirty-two years of age, dressed in landsman's clothes, but with a sea sway to his body, appeared in Kimber's office.

"Your most obedient," he remarked, with a bow and a backward scrape of the foot, as he turned his hat, like a wheel, in his hands; "I'm from Melbourne—arrived last week, and have come about the *Polly Ann* reward."

Mr. Kimber was professionally glad to see him, and, stirred by an unprofessional curiosity in the ocean mystery, gave him hearty greeting.

"My name's Jack Wootton," said the newcomer, as he slowly seated himself, "and I was the cook on the ship until she ran away with me."

He was going to say more, when a framed portrait of a judge caught his eye. He abruptly left his seat and stood before it in an attitude of meditation.

"Barring wig and nightgown, that would be very like Captain Dawson, eh?" he said, after two or three minutes' thought.

"Quite right," assented the lawyer. "It had never occurred to me before. By the way, it looks as though that hundred pounds would be easily earned."

The man turned his gaze from the picture to Mr. Kimber, and back again.

"Is the cap'n alive?" he asked, paying no attention to the solicitor's remark.

"Oh, yes; I'll send him word that you've turned up."

"I think you'd better not," suggested the sailor, coming close to the other. "I'm sure he'll not want to see me—me above all other men just now."

"Nonsense!" said Kimber. "He's anxious to know what became of his ship."

"But not of the persons left on her, I know. I think he'd rather see anyone but see me. But what's the course to be headed, Mr. Lawyer?"

"You'll have to make your statement, Wootton. My clerk will take it down——"

"Umph! I thought so. No use; I can't talk before a clerk and know he was writing it all down, and so I wrote it out myself, ship-shape, just as if I was talking it."

He pulled a roll of paper from his pocket, and placed it upon the table. "It is true!" holding up his right hand as if taking oath to the document.

"I'll read it over, and you may call in the morning and swear to it. Then we'll begin to look into the matter and——"

"O-h! So we're just going to begin the matter. Is that it?"

Mr. Kimber nodded and smiled his answer.

"Storm's a-coming if that's the heading," said the sailor, putting on his hat with a strong downward pull, as if it were really "blowing great guns" outside. "You may look for me in the morning, then. My compliments to Cap'n Dawson, if he'll listen. But he won't. Good-day."

So great was Mr. Kimber's curiosity in the matter that the door had not fairly closed upon his visitor before he began the reading of the statement.

Wootton's Narrative.

"I've seen a notice in a paper that somebody was wanted who could tell what became of the whaler *Polly Ann*. I can and I'm going to from now on.

"I used to be a country schoolmaster, but when my young wife died I lost rudder, compass-bearings, everything. 'The only thing that will save you, my man,' said the doctor, 'is a long sea voyage!' That is how I came to go to sea.

"I went as cook because I was not a foremast hand, though I had once been to Rio as cabin boy. But I could cook, and that is how the *Polly Ann* had a berth for me.

"We sailed the middle of May, 1877. Two months later we were well up towards Baffin Bay, with over one hundred barrels of oil under the hatches, and not a man hurt or a spar cracked.

"The *Polly Ann* was a good one—368 tons, square rigged fore and aft, three years old, and provisioned for a two years' voyage. Captain Dawson was a long, lean, sanctimonious chap of fifty, who ought to have been a preacher, by his looks and talk when he wasn't angry. The men, eight all told, were as good as the average, excepting Maitland, the carpenter. I'll be coming to him after awhile.

"It was a beautiful afternoon in July when the ship's good luck left her. The weather was cold, though the sun had been shining up to noon, when a grey film crept up far away in the north-west, and the sea was dead calm.

"About three o'clock a whale rose about a mile away. The captain looked aloft, and then along the horizon. Nothing was set except the fore-topsail and flying jib, for we had been cleaning up from a catch of two days before.

"'I don't particularly like that sky,' he said to the mate, as he looked to the north'ard, 'but I'll chance it.'

"With that, he took to the boat in pursuit of the fish, with every man save the carpenter and myself, and rowed away like mad, over water smooth as oil. There didn't seem any risk in all this, so far as I could judge. An hour, at the longest, ought to bring the boat back, and no storm seemed likely at the time.

"Maitland minded the wheel, and I stood at the heel of the bowsprit when the fish was struck. It started straight for the ship, but when within half a mile, swerved to the northeast, and then, after a bit, ran south. It was now astern of the ship instead of ahead. I had gone from the bow, moving as the fish changed its course, and was leaning on the taffrail watching.

"Suddenly I felt a puff of ice-cold air on my cheek. At the same moment Maitland cried out, 'A gale's coming,' and gave the wheel a spin. Forward, about where the whale was struck, was a great grey wall let down from the clouds above, squeezing the air toward us.

"A glance astern showed that the whale had been abandoned, and that the men in the boat were rowing for their lives to reach the ship. Which would get to it first—the boat or the fog? The question was speedily decided, for in less than three minutes we were shivering in the icy mist, and the sea was hidden.

"The *Polly Ann* bobbed up and down like a cork; the masts groaned from peak to keel, and the yards seemed as if they were being tugged at by giants. The air was bitterly cold; a fine snow, as if shaken through a sieve, came over everything, and from stem to stern there fell a dull, grey twilight.

"Far away seemed the cries of the men in the boat as the storm hesitated before striking us. I don't believe they were six hundred feet distant when the roar of the tempest deafened us.

"The waters went into a passion, and pounded away at our starboard bow until the nose of the brig was battered from the course we had been holding, and with topsail and jib swollen with the breath of the storm, the ship shot away like an arrow into the froth and scum of waves and clouds, leaving the captain and his boat's crew to perish. I saw it was all up with them so far as we were concerned, and that if any life-saving were to be done, it must be for our own account.

"Our condition was a hopeless one, for all that I could see. The little brig went tearing through the great waves, her two sails frozen taut as drum heads, her yards touching the sea as she rolled. It seemed as if no race horse could travel as fast as the *Polly Ann* was going on that dismal track.

"'I'm afraid it's all up with us,' said Maitland, as after a dozen attempts I lighted the binnacle lamp. 'I'm nearly done for, as it is. I can't hold on much longer.'

"I saw that it was true, for every lurch and plunge of the ship lifted him off his feet, and loosened his hold on the wheel. My heart was full of pity for the poor fellow, and so I told him to go below and rest if he could. He was utterly useless in that condition, and would be better and safer out of the way.

"And here I want to have my say about this man as I knew him, or supposed I knew him, at that time. He was a passably good-looking, red-headed young fellow, of ordinary height, with a fair complexion and a smooth face. His features were delicate and regular, but the charm of his face lay in his great blue eyes. No matter how you felt towards him, if he turned those sad-looking eyes on you, you became weak at once, they were so mild and pleading. He must have been twenty-two or twenty-three years old, and so slight and delicate that I wondered what drove him to sea life, and especially to that of a whaling

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ship. He wasn't much of a carpenter. He made pretences of hammering and sawing, but was that slow and unskilful that somebody—many a time the captain—had to turn in and do the work.

"The crew would have nothing to do with him when they could avoid it. They disliked him for his weak, whining voice, for one thing, and more than all because the captain coddled him on the ground that he was sickly, going so far as to give him a berth in his cabin, where he stayed most of the time, reading and sleeping.

"Once in a while Maitland would help me in the galley, and from what he did and the way he did it I knew he was better than I at cooking. The captain used to talk with him a great deal, but the men, as I have said, would have nothing to do with him. In short—for I could tell many a story of his queer ways and doings—this was the bundle of uselessness left on my hands by the breaking of the storm, a human life that I felt I must save equally with my own.

"After Maitland had given me the wheel, I looked at the compass. We were flying to the south; before the gale we were heading north. I knew absolutely nothing about navigation, unless it be knowledge to take my turn at the wheel; Maitland could do that, too. Between us we might be able to hold the ship before the wind.

"Where we would bring up in the end we didn't know. When I looked about me it seemed as if we might bring up any second. One minute we were up in the air, the wind yelling like mad women through the ropes and spars; then down we slid, as if going to the bottom, until the roar of the storm seemed miles above us. Nothing was to be seen; the ship was ploughing through a whirling bank of snow. Nothing could be done except to hold on to the wheel and keep her before the wind.

"I can't tell the horrible loneliness of that night, in which I seemed to be the only human being on the face of the earth, with death jogging me at the elbows. I would fall into a doze only to be knocked out of it by a rap on my half-frozen knuckles from the wheel as the bow would begin to swing into the wind. Out of a stupor so heavy that it might have been the beginning of death, I was aroused by being pounded on the back.

"Morning had come, and Maitland, bundled up in the captain's great oilskins, was standing at my side. The wind and the snow still lashed the ship, and thundered through the rigging. I could not see a hundred feet away.

"'I've not closed my eyes since I left you,' he shrieked in my ear. 'Oh, this is terrible! Give me the spokes. I'd rather relieve you than be alone,' and he pushed away my numbed hands.

"'Then I'll go below for a bit of sleep,' I said.

"'No! no! don't! Jack, stay by me! I'm afraid.'

"'But, man, I must sleep or go mad!'

"'Then sleep here, at my feet, where I can see and touch you. There's room enough. Something dreadful will happen if you leave me. I know there will.'

"He was terribly in earnest, so I agreed, and crawled down into the cabin for blankets and more clothing, if the captain had left any. I knew he had a bottle of brandy, and rummaged until I found it hidden in a locker. Down went a full glass of the stuff. Then I gathered an armful of bedclothing and put on an old great coat that had been part of the bedding in his bunk.

Every Lady should Read
"M. A. P."
THE NEW SOCIETY PAPER.
Edited by T. P. O'CONNOR.
Every Thursday.
PRICE
ONE PENNY.

"'One more swig at the bottle,' thought I, and I sat down to drink it. No sooner done than my head went over on the table, and I slept like one dead, leaving the poor lad alone on the deck in the storm. I couldn't help it, and yet I shall never forgive myself for it, for it was as cruel a deed as one man could do to another.

"As he told me later on, his fear and loneliness for hour after hour drove him mad for a time. I believe he never got over it, for often afterwards, in his sleep, he would cry out: 'Jack, Jack Wootton, come! for Heaven's sake, come! I'm afraid!' And I never heard him thus without the tears coming to my eyes.

"Well, as I've said, I went instantly to sleep, used up. The next I heard was a noise like the firing at once of half-a-dozen great cannon, and instantly I lay on my back on the floor, in the midst of a lot of glass from what I knew was the smashed-in skylight.

"Had the vessel blown up? On second thought I knew that was impossible, as she carried nothing that would cause an explosion. It must have been a minute before I realised that the *Polly Ann* was not in motion, save a rocking one from side to side; that there was no sign of a storm, but, instead, a solemn and unnatural stillness.

"Getting my senses together I ran up on deck, coming out from the companion-way upon a scene of destruction, dimly visible under an opal-coloured light, unlike anything which I ever saw. The air was cold and clammy; the skin felt it; the nose breathed it. What I saw made me turn giddy for a second.

"Both masts had gone down within twenty feet of the deck. The spars and top masts lay athwartship after smashing in the bulwarks where they fell. The heel of the bowsprit had been driven back to, and ripped up the cook's galley. Stays, shrouds, all sorts of top hamper was spread like a great net over the deck, pegged down, as it were, by huge pieces of ice from stem to stern. No sky was to be seen, and the only proof of a sea was the swashing of water alongside, and a sound as of distant, muffled thunder.

"Maitland was not in sight. I called without getting a reply.

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"Climbing over the wreckage, I found the poor lad senseless beside the wheel, one hand upon it. He had fallen at his post of duty. Clumsy as he was in his clothing, I carried him down to the cabin, forced down his throat some of the captain's brandy, piled on his body all the bedding I could find, and then returned on deck, anxious to discover what had happened.

"All the light there was came through a wall of jagged ice on the port side, that rose with an inward curving to a height of at least a hundred feet.

"There was solid ice on the other side and at the bow, and ice above, some of it hanging from the top in pendants as big round as a ship's mast. Astern had been an opening a little wider than the ship, and perhaps forty feet high, through which the *Polly Ann* had entered this cathedral of the sea, but the shock of the striking hulk had brought down huge columns of ice, and they lay across this opening, piled up so that but a slit of the sky could be seen through a high-up crevice.

"Putting this and that together, and seeing the lifted-up bow and the sunken stern, I realised that we had sailed with terrific speed into the cavern of a huge iceberg, and were prisoners.

"When I had the facts of this extraordinary situation thoroughly in my head, I was in the depths of despair even while I was full of hope. There seemed no possibility of escape, for even should we be freed from this prison, there was no getting away from the berg, the boats being smashed or lost. We had provisions enough to last two men five years; there was fuel enough, with the oil and the hull of the ship, to last perhaps the same time. After that we could freeze and starve, if we had not died in any other way.

"To think of five years of under-ice existence scared me to my marrow; and yet hope kept saying, 'Something will turn up. Look alive now!'

"I went back to Maitland. He was warm and in a sound sleep. Seeing this, I went on deck again and began to plan. When my mate woke up, hours afterwards, he was in fair condition.

"'Have I talked in my sleep?' was the first question he asked. When I shook my head in answer he simply said, 'I'm glad of that,' and turned his back on me.

"I wondered for a second why he should be curious; then I forgot all about it.

"As soon as he felt strong enough to get about we began to get the wreck into some sort of neatness. Two weeks passed before we had the deck clear, and the ropes and wood cut into shape for fuel. Then came what I had dreaded—days without work.

"Maitland became silent and moped in the cabin; he had plenty of food, but he grew thin, had an unnatural brightness in his eyes, and a short, hacking cough grew upon him. I used to rouse him by getting him to run races on deck, to throw a harpoon at a mark, and sticks at the great icicles; sometimes we would climb up into the caves which ran everywhere into the huge, floating mountain.

"Out of bits of waste paper I made a pack of cards, with which we played hour after hour. I did everything possible to cheer up the poor lad; yet my work seemed useless; he grew weaker and weaker, and his great, sad eyes were seldom dry of tears.

"Weeks passed, as I knew by checking off the daylight, all the time the berg was slowly drifting, as we could tell by the little whirlpools and eddies round the *Polly Ann*. More light appeared to be filtered through the wall of ice on the port side; every day new rivulets trickled down its rough sides; more water flowed through the old channels, and day and night the tumbling down of pieces of the mountain roared in our ears like thunder.

"One day there came a moaning and a wailing—far away, then near, then far away again—lasting for hours. It was the fog-bell and the whistle of a steamship, sure signs of a warm latitude. Maitland heard it, and coming to me, put an arm on my shoulder, and looking at me through his tears, said:

"'Jack, there's the old cries of human life. I shall never see that life again. You may not think so, but it once was very dear to me; it is now, and I should like to live.'

"With that he leant forward and kissed me on the cheek. Then he buried his face in his hands and cried like a child.

"'Hush, lad! Don't take on like that! You'll hear the birds and see the trees and fields again, never fear. Cheer up, mate!'

"'When I die, Jack—as I shall soon—promise not to throw me overboard, but bury me somewhere on the ship. You'll not be afraid of my body, will you?'

"I promised, and when I had spoken, the poor boy tottered away and down into the cabin, catching hold of things to steady himself as he went.

"An hour later I followed him. He was in the captain's berth, buried under a pile of clothes, as if cold. He did not answer when I spoke, and when I pulled away the covering from his face there was blood on his lips and under his cheek a cloth wet with blood.

"He turned his head and smiled up at me with such a look as I've never seen on a human face.

"'It's not the first, but it's the last, I think,' he whispered, touching the red-stained cloth. 'Oh, I'm so cold, Jack! Call mother! M-o-t-h-e-r! Tell the captain I forgive him. Ah, if the good Lord will only pardon me! Bring the lamp nearer, Jack, I'm freezing.'

"I put the light closer, and, scared at seeing the poor fellow all shivering, I ran at the top of my speed up to the galley, where there was always warm water in the copper, stirred up the fire, and when the water grew hot, dipped into it a rag, and with it steaming in my hands hurried back to poor Maitland.

"He lay just as I had left him, face upwards, but with a waxen whiteness in it and a pinched look that made him seem a stranger. He opened his eyes, and a faint smile came upon his mouth as he saw me again. As I caught hold of the covering on his chest to throw it back, that I might lay on the hot cloth, he tried to push away my hands.

"'Not now,' he whispered. 'Oh, not now, when I'm dying.'

"I did not understand. How could I? With rough, coarse fingers I tore at the buttons of the woollen shirt and threw it open. One look told a sad story, and I softly pulled back the garment over the snow-white breast of a woman!

"I glanced at her face. She was staring at me with wide-open eyes—dead!

"What I might have done when I made these two discoveries, had not another misfortune come upon me at the same instant, would be hard to say. As I straightened back from bending over the figure in the berth, I saw that the cabin was glowing with a red light, so strong that even the face of the dead girl took from it a faint, rosy hue. I was on deck in half a minute, only to see what nearly drove me mad. The *Polly Ann* was one great fire amidships, the oil-soaked planks of the deck making a pavement for flames that

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leapt half way to the roof of the cavern. In my haste to warm the water and get back to my dying mate I must have scattered some of the live coals, and here was the result!

"The heat was unbearable, the smoke stifling. Water was flowing in torrents down the sides of the ice, and turning to steam as it came near the hull. Every breath was harder to draw, and foot by foot, like a red wind, came the fire.

"My promise to the dead girl to bury her in the ship was as good as kept, for her body would go with the hull, as mine was likely to go.

"From afar came a long, booming note. The iceberg shook deep under the sea, and the crash of falling weights on the roof and starboard wall followed. There was no time for thinking over the cause. The heat was as stifling as if I were inside a huge oven with the fires going under it.

"Catching up a piece of rope I jumped overboard, and swimming to the stern, lashed myself to the rudder post, holding my head under water as often and as long as possible, preferring to boil rather than roast to death.

"The end was not long in coming. A mighty puff of air, a pushing of my head under the sea, a quaking of the hulk, a parting of the waters beneath, a crash like falling walls, showed that the heated air in the chamber had blown out the partition between prison and liberty, between darkness and sunshine.

"Out of the door thus flung open rolled a cloud of jet-black smoke. With the inletting of fresh air, the flames took fiercer grip on the poor little *Polly Ann*, raced along the water's edge, dived into the hold and cabin, and swished like vultures round under the stern to catch me by the head.

"Not a half mile distant lay a man-of-war, her sails back, her rigging black with men watching an iceberg spout fire and smoke. Evidently I had been seen, for a boat was dropped from its davits, the dip and flicker of its oars began, and a white foam curled away from its bow, pointed to where I lay.

"Then I fell back in a dead faint. When I came to my senses I was on board the French frigate *L'Espérance*. From its deck, through a glass, I saw the brave little *Polly Ann* turn in her cradle, and sink out of sight in clouds of steam and smoke.

"If anything more than this is known about the brig it can only be by the spirit of the dead woman, whose body went down with the ship.

"To all of which I'm ready to make my affidavit.—

"JOHN WOOTTON."

The next morning found Captain Dawson at Mr. Kimber's office, but no John Wootton appeared then, or at any time thereafter. It was not at all necessary, as both had met the day before. But what took place at that meeting is not a matter of history.

ARTHUR GRAVES.

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THE GLADIATOR.

A Tale of the Eastern Empire.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

SUMMARY.

The opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

A few years pass and Eutasia is affianced to Rhesus.

One night Proclus and Rhesus chance to overhear a plot between Hypatius, a claimant to the throne, Marcen, a gladiator of the green faction, and Hermiot of the Blues, to raise the city in revolt, remove Justinian from the throne, and make Hypatius emperor in his place.

Hypatius proceeds to take them singly down to the flooded catacombs under the ground upon which they are standing, where he has vast treasures stored with which he purposes to buy the sympathies of the people. Marcen goes with him first, leaving Hermiot on the watch. Rhesus and Proclus spring out upon Hermiot, bind and gag him. Upon the return of Hypatius and Marcen, Proclus assumes the blue sash of Hermiot, personates Hermiot under the cover of the darkness, and goes down into the catacombs with Hypatius in order to discover the whereabouts of the treasure.

Meanwhile it occurs to Marcen that if he were to cut off the only means of egress from the catacombs, his fellow conspirators will be heard of no more, and he will be the sole possessor of the hidden treasure. He returns to the entrance of the catacombs, followed by Rhesus, who watches him carry out his murderous designs. Marcen discovers the presence of Rhesus and rushes at him. Rhesus eludes him, and a hot chase follows. Rhesus finally gives Marcen the slip, and, together with Pelak, a charioteer of the Greens, returns to the catacombs in order to release his friend Proclus. Upon arriving there, however, they find someone has been before them, and the place is empty.

Rhesus returns home, and is overjoyed to find Proclus awaiting him there. Proclus tells him how that Marcen himself released the prisoners from the catacombs, and how that whilst imprisoned there he, Proclus, had discovered an inscription revealing the hiding-place of the key of a secret door.

Marcen persuades the Empress to take Eutasia into her service, and thus to remove her from the influence of Rhesus. Rhesus hears of it too late to prevent her going to the palace. He pays a clandestine visit to Eutasia in the palace grounds in order to persuade her to fly with him. He is discovered by some spies in the pay of Marcen, and barely escapes with his life.

PART THE SECOND.

"In the Toils of Treachery."

CHAPTER III.

"Nika!"

The day of the games dawned rosy and clear, and from the earliest hour the hum of preparation and excitement hung over the city. Chariots and horsemen dashed hither and thither; the flags and favours of the factions bedecked the houses and palaces, and gates, and churches, and shrines, with masses of mingled blue and green; the gay ladies and lords of the Court rode abroad even in their luxurious cars, making bets on the coming events; the gladiators thronged the arena and practised their several turns for the last time; and the artisans and tradesmen persons, between their drinks at the crowded inns and their endless discussions on the points of the Christian doctrine, could talk of nothing but the games. The city was in a ferment—the ferment of a feverish suspense, of a dim foreknowledge of the days of death so near at hand—and the very slaves went about the streets without fear at the groups of savage-visaged Sythians, who, forgetting their hostility for the day, poured in at the Charsian gate.

As Rhesus and his friend threaded their way towards the busy quarter to which all the crowds tended, Proclus exchanging sundry greetings on the way in his most cynical vein, the thought of what might happen if disorder suddenly broke out and spread, seized our hero, appalling and oppressing him. There were all the elements of riot and anarchy together in the bibulous city, and the two factions needed only very slight provocation to fly at each other's throats and settle their differences once and for all in one wild saturnalia of crime. There had been some talk amongst the greens of appealing to the emperor's mercy, or of rising in open revolt against the weight of injustice under which they laboured, and Rhesus knew that Hypatius had in secret won some over to *his* cause. But as the two friends had not attended the inner councils of the faction for some time, having lost their hot enthusiasm for a mere colour, they put down much they heard as idle rumour, or wishes that were parents to the thought.

"I like not the aspect of things to-day, friend," said Rhesus, as they drew near to the hippodrome. "A little rent in the thin skin of this jollity would let loose a torrent of blood. But for the knowledge of the hidden treasure and the hope of relief in the future it holds out to us—and Eutasia—I would leave the city before nightfall."

"Which you will not do, and which it is therefore folly to discuss," replied Proclus. "As for the treasure, it is safe enough yet, for besides the two spies I have watching the convent, Marcen has three and Hypatius two more. It is scarcely likely, when the three parties of us are so jealous of each other, that one will have the chance of obtaining it without a struggle. I am trusting to to-day's doings to clear our way considerably. If a good opening offers, I am convinced that Hypatius will seize it; and as certainly as he does, Marcen will betray him and his friends to the Emperor. And then will be our chance. When robbers quarrel, good men take the spoil, as the philosophers say. But step back—quick!—the Imperial cariole is coming, and imperial animals are careless of life and limb. What a handsome driver Justinian employs! And what a steady one has Belisarius, behind there. *That* is a man, indeed!"

The jovial throng split in twain, making a broad path for the Imperial party, and in a whirlwind of dust, with a rattle and a flash, the people cheering and applauding frantically, they swept by. Justinian, a red-faced man with a firm-set figure, and Theodora, his unscrupulous, cruel, and beautiful wife, clad in robes of silk emblazoned with dragons of gold and violet, sat in the first chariot—a car of gold with white carpet and side curtains of purple, drawn by snow-white mules; behind them, in less state, but with scarcely less hauteur, came the questor and prefect, Tribonius the legislator, and John, the juggler of finance; and behind these Belisarius, the man who ought to have preceeded all, in a plain chariot drawn by his own war-horses.

As Rhesus, like the rest, gazed at the lofty form and majestic head and noble face of their greatest general, and they greeted him with thunders of acclaim, he felt that he would readily have hailed this soldier as emperor of the seven-hilled city that was so poor an imitation of old Rome. If Belisarius had a fault it was that of unfailing loyalty to his master. A man in ten thousand—ay, in a thousand times ten thousand, truly! as Rhesus said again in an after day.

Following in the wake of the whirling wheels, the friends came soon to the circus, and seeking out old Sibron, entered the sanded course in company with him. This time the

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first event was a race for the honour of a garland of priceless gems, given by Theodora's hand, and each faction had chosen two drivers.

"But one of ours has been foully slain since dawn," cried Sibron, drawing Rhesus towards the cars, "and we can get no redress, nor another volunteer for his place. You are our only hope. You rode well once before; you can win if you try. In with you!"

"But I am not prepared," cried Rhesus, astonished. "I am well known, and hated, and the race will not be fair. Let it go."

An arrow struck the foremost spokesman of the malcontents.

He protested in vain. Friends pressed round and forced the doubtful honour upon him, and ere he well knew where he was, he had taken the reins and was away with the rest; and when he once felt the keen excitement of the race he little cared. As they thundered round the course, to the cries of their partizans, in a close-huddled group of horses and cars, the great sweeping curve of the hippodrome, cut clear against the intense blue of the cloudless sky, the maze of many colours where the mighty throng filled the circling seats, the flushed faces, the hum of the many voices, all faded away, and Rhesus saw only the winning post, heard only the rattle of his rival's wheels.

He kept to the inside edge, gaining fast, and soon had left his comrade in green behind, as well as Hermiot, who rode for the blue, but the other of that colour, a sturdy youth, drove his grey steeds furiously, and for a time kept up the slight advantage he had obtained at the start. Over him, however, Rhesus began to gain after the first round, and hurling his thongs with a hand that had not forgotten its cunning of four years ago, he put such speed into the fast following strokes of his horses' feet, that, sweeping round on the outside, he passed in front amid a roar of excitement that shook the very ground, and tore onward to the goal, flushed, hot, and well-nigh spent, but victorious withal.

After the burst of mingled joy and anger, fell a hush over the assembly, and in the calm, Rhesus rushed on towards success. Scarcely a half-round of the amphitheatre was before him now, and his nearmost foe was a length behind. He had passed the Imperial party with a stern face, which relaxed to a smile as he drew near to the end of the fierce ride, when, glancing at the curving sea of faces at his right, he saw a man rise from his seat and throw something towards him, something that glittered and twisted in the air as it came. He gritted his teeth and held on, but the thing was well aimed, and fell over the horses' backs, and quickly as lightning was twining its sinuous folds round one of them. It was a deadly snake—one of the worst kind—and ere Rhesus could gather his startled senses he was thrown to the ground, one horse had broken loose, and the other was writhing in the death-agony that followed the bite of the venomous thing. And as Rhesus sprang to his feet, indignant, his nearest foe dashed to the front and passed over the winning line, the green driver next, and Hermiot last. The race was to the first chariot that came in, and the race had gone to the blue. So the judges decreed, despite many protests, and as Rhesus walked off, crestfallen, to where Sibron and Proclus awaited him, the masses of brilliant azure round the course rose as one man and cheered the winner and cried contempt on the loser until his blood boiled.

But the unjust decision was not allowed to pass quietly by. It was only the spark that fired the long endured discontent of the greens into open revolt. A roaring cry of rage went up from a thousand throats, a thousand daggers gleamed in the sunlight, a thousand desperate men leapt from their seats and poured into the arena, and stood before the imperial dias. The blue factionaries answered with waving of weapons and yells of derision, and the hippodrome became a scene of chaos. But the leaders of the green faction were determined men, and three forced their way to Justinian's presence and openly demanded redress for injustice, some surcease from unbearable oppression, some promise of impartiality for the future.

Their words were drowned by the howls and hooting of the blues at first, but they persisted, were joined by others, and at last obtaining a hearing, Justinian had no option but to listen. He sat in moody silence for some time, affecting indifference, but at length, weary, and prompted by his advisers, he rose irritably in his place and answered with words that came near to costing him his life.

"You appeal to me in vain," he said, "I will not listen further. The judges of the games have decreed, and I meddle not with their decision. You speak of murder and oppression and public plunder; I ask you what of the 3,000 blues you slew here—of the oppressions of *your* rule, and of the nightly assassinations. It is notorious that my soldiers have orders to sieze and hang all murderers of either party. So away from my presence, Jews, hypocrites, and heretics!"

He turned to his guards and bade them clear him a way out through the rabble, thinking to have done with the matter, but the sharp, stinging words roused the tamest to action, and as one body the crowd of green colour surged forward towards him. At that, the blues rose in exultant

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defence, conscious of their superior numbers, and in another moment the factions would have been locked in a terrible struggle. Rhesus's blade was in his hand already, and he would have rushed forward, but Proclus and Sibron held him back, dragging him towards the gate; and it was well for as he wrenched himself free in his frenzy, an arrow well aimed struck the foremost spokesman of the malcontents, and the greens broke and fled, pursued by the revengeful foe. Some were slain in the tiers of seats, some in the arena, and many more in the passages and outlets; and at every avenue of egress a mad throng surged into the streets, carrying blood and disorder into all the quarters of the city.

The weak truce of law was broken and with the watchword "Nika!" ringing in the streets, all the elements of war and discord were let loose at once. With Proclus and Sibron, Rhesus was borne towards the convent of St. Conan in a fierce rush of the partizans, and they presently found themselves fighting against overpowering odds with their backs to its buttressed wall.

"Strike only in defence!" cried Proclus, "and edge away to the right. If we can but gain the passage unseen, and the secret door of which I alone have the key, we are safe."

"Tis easier said than done!" answered Rhesus, for though he had laid low two murderous villains who beset him at once, three more had taken their places, and his friends were falling fast. A slash scored his left arm, a thrust caught him in the leg, old Sibron went down at his side, under the swinging blow of a mace, like a felled ox. The wielder of it laughed aloud and turned to Rhesus, and as its spiked head hung above him, the Roman thought his end had come.

But the kindly fates had willed it otherwise, and the blow fell not upon him. The crowd of foes surged back, and the uplifted arm shortened its stroke. There was a cry of "Sanctuary! Sanctuary!" and a procession of portly monks came towards the convent gate, bearing the bodies of two half-strangled men to its sacred shelter.

A great concourse of both factions followed them, and cries of "Down with the traitor! down with the unjust minister!" rent the air. The two friends pressed forward, asking questions, forgetting their enemies at the strange sight, and learnt that the soldiers had seized and attempted to hang seven notorious assassins of both factions—had hung five, but failed to prevent the friends of the two last from rescuing them in the final extremity. One of the murderers thus snatched from the jaws of the death they so richly deserved, wore a sash of blue, the other a badge of green, and the factions cast aside their enmity and joined in attacking the soldiers.

There is nothing so fickle as an enraged mob, and in a moment, fired by the fierce harangues of several champions of the green, who dwelt upon the weight of the taxes and the sins of the quæstor and prefect, the opposing colours united as against a common enmity, and the blood-thirsty horde surged tumultuously towards the palace, venting its erst divided rage upon such luckless soldiers and loyalists as came in their way.

Out of all the dark dens and back ways of the city, the dregs of the population poured—the slaves, the assassins, the hunted criminals, the human wolves that spring forth and prey on society at all such times—and in the midst of it all, borne forward as on the crest of a mighty wave, seeing many of the emissaries of Hypatius at their now easy work, Proclus and Rhesus found themselves fighting side by side with men whose knives, but a moment before, had been at their throats.

The city was turned into Hades. Through the riot and carnage, fighting madly, giving and receiving many

The British and Gothic soldiers of the Imperial Guard remained to combat the revolutionaries.

hard blows, the friends found themselves at length near their own house. There, with a last struggle, they got out of the maddened mob, and wounded, and exhausted, but at least secure for a time, sought refuge within doors.

CHAPTER IV.

For Friendship's Sake.

All the rest of that day, and through the night, the slaughter and riot went on, the clash of arms sounded incessantly, the cries of the wounded and dying rang dismally in the ears of the home stayers, the glare and roar of incendiary fires lit up the darker hours. Justinian, growing fearful for his own safety, publicly appealed for some restoration of order, promising to dismiss the obnoxious ministers whose exactions had so roused the popular ire; but the enraged citizens refused to listen to him; and even when—to show his good faith—he officially bade the quæstor and prefect leave their positions, the reign of terror went on unchecked. So widespread was the tumult, so numerous were the bands of armed ruffians who held the city at their mercy, that all the wealthy and respectable citizens who could, conveyed themselves and their goods beyond the wall and camped out in the open beyond the Golden and the Charsian gates, and only a few regiments of mercenaries, the raw Heruli levies, and the British and Gothic soldiers of the Imperial Guard, remained to combat the revolutionaries.

These fought hard and well, sometimes driving back the rioters from the main streets, but they were no match in the end for the mad fury of a city let loose and ravening for blood.

As for Proclus and Rhesus, they kept to the house. It would have been madness to have risked their lives again in that horrible maelstrom of murder, and they were in hopes that by keeping quiet they would escape unmolested until the storm had spent itself. But it was fated differently.

Their slaves were well fed and well paid, and all trusty men, and sending them out at night, one at a time, they kept well acquainted with events. The fourth day passed like the rest, in alternate hope and fear, and as yet neither Hypatius nor Marcen had made any sign, but on the fifth of those days of blood one of the slaves ran in with hair streaming and garments rent, crying excitedly that the people had chosen a new emperor, the nephew of Anastasius, and that all who did not come out and enlist under him would be counted as his enemies. Even as he spoke, the sound of fighting came down the street, and going to the house-top, the friends saw that a group of the foreign soldiery was retreating slowly palacewards, pursued by a pressing crowd of the frantic citizens, led by Pompey, the brother of Hypatius.

A fresh fervour seemed to nerve the rebels. They fought like fiends, and all along the streets the women and children threw out stones and spears and braziers of blazing wood upon the heads of the luckless soldiers, and every time a gap was made in the sullenly retiring ranks, a hundred wild-eyed fanatics would hurl themselves in and fall upon the others with appalling recklessness.

"If these foreigners fought not so stubbornly, and Belisarius was not so obstinate a general, the cause of Hypatius would be at once assured," said Proclus. "As it is, I am afraid it is only a matter of time, unless Hypatius himself spoils all by hesitation. But do you not think, Rhesus, that now is our chance to get to the Hall of Waters, until one or the other wins the day? We are not safe here, now, and there we could be in hiding and be bringing some of the treasure to the bottom of the steps ready for removal. Then, even if Hypatius gains the purple, we can slip away unperceived with a fortune under our cloaks, and seek a new life elsewhere."

"It will be well," said Rhesus, "if we get out of here alive—which I doubt, for they have eyes on us already—but what of Eutasia? I go not without her."

"Leave that until later," returned the cynic shortly. "We must look to ourselves now. As you say, we are noticed—nay, we are beseiged—and we have some hot work on hand. Not so fast, my worthy marksman; not so fast."

He sprang nimbly aside as an arrow from the yelling crowd whizzed past him, and together they went down into the house and bade the slaves guard the doors. It was evident they were now discovered, and as Proclus said, having found the way to the treasure blocked and shrewdly guessing who had to do with it, Hypatius would have scant mercy on them if they fell into his clutches.

"It is fight to the last!" cried Rhesus, as a slave shouted out that the house was attacked on all sides, "no quarter, no truce! Rhesus the Roman and the ancient gods!"

And standing by the open casement near the central portico, that was now barricaded heavily, he called derisively to the savage foes to come on as he plied his arrows thick and fast. This but enraged them the more, and they assaulted furiously, besetting every outlet of the house and even, in one fierce charge, bursting down the barrier.

But as they scrambled over its ruins the defenders spitted them with their spears, and so hacked and hewed at their disorderly array that they gave back defeated. Three times the angry mob thus dashed at the door, and three times the trusty slaves beat them back; three times they broke and recoiled, shattered, spent, as a curling billow breaks upon a crag-embattled shore.

Then they drew off a space, hesitating. The twilight deepened, the reflection of a dozen fires flashed and reddened on the darkening sky from where plunder and iconoclasm were wreaking their devastating will. Then suddenly, whilst the beseiged were waiting the outcome of the delay, a forking tongue of flame shot up from the house below, on the street, another from above, and yet a third from a house in the rear; and ere they could well realise the horror of their position, they were surrounded by a curve of fire impassable by human life. And between the ends of the curve was the mob that hungered for their blood.

These attacked again, and more furiously, and once more forced the door and gained the lower hall, this time driving the defenders to the housetop. There these turned at bay, and since the stairway was but narrow, slew the wretches one by one as they came up until they were weary of the slaughter and ceased the attack.

"We are safe for a little while, at all events," said Proclus." It would needs take a slim man to pass between our weapons here, Rhesus."

"Those who have passed have been slim enough to vanish into the folds of the future," said Rhesus. "But, by the valour of Achilles, 'tis likely that we shall soon follow them there! They are firing the house itself, and we shall end our days like rats smoked out of their holes!"

As he spoke, a wreath of blue smoke curled up the stairway and the smell of burning with it, and as the wreath was followed by others, until they were enveloped in a cloud of smoke through which fiery tendrils now and then

He swung himself over the edge.

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extended, a loud cry of exultation went up from the wolfish crowd.

"I care not to die suffocated;" said Proclus, dashing to the edge of the parapet nearest the street, "better broken bones and a sudden death than that! Over with you all after me—they are crowded thickly here, and either this fuel or their heads will break the fall!"

The round disc of brass caught the fellow edgways under the ear.

In another moment he had thrown down his blade and shield, swung himself over the edge, and vanished. Stumbling as they went, blinded by the dense smoke, Rhesus and the six slaves who were left, followed him, dropping one by one through the grey murk.

Bracing himself for a rebound, so that the fall might be broken, Rhesus felt his feet sink into something soft and yielding, from which he rose unhurt, though shaken, to find Proclus at his side.

"It is fortunate," said the cynic, ruefully glancing at his swordless belt, "that they have made such a confounded puther with their fire. We should not have escaped else, and we have a good chance now. Down among this hay, all of you, and slip out one by one into the crowd. You, slaves, can easily get out of danger. As for you and I, Rhesus, we will keep together."

"Friends once, friends to the end! But let me lead; I have kept my sword!"

Already loud cries of exultation rose from the rioters, and through the thick clouds of smoke that enveloped them, and crept between the wisps of the hay upon which they had fallen, the friends could see their foes gradually drawing off the house. Its neighbourhood was dangerous, and the fanatics thought the fire had done their work. In the confusion the two escaped unnoticed, and by the time they had gained the opposite side of the way, and cautiously mixed with the crowd, they saw the heap of hay catch fire and send up a long roaring sheet above the crashing ruins of the falling house.

The conflagration was spreading rapidly, like the others that were reddening the sky; so the fugitives got off easily, making straight for the convent. As they went they saw that the great baths of Zeuxippus were involved in flames, which stretched out greedy fingers that curled round the sacred walls of St. Sophia; and someone running past cried exultantly that the prefect's palace was destroyed. This news but served to quicken their pace, and at last, unnoticed, they dashed down the narrow passage and sought the sacred door. With wonderful calmness the cynic touched the spring, and they went in.

"Shall we wait here, or go farther?" Rhesus asked. "I have no mind to breathe the foul air of the vault for the gods know how long."

"Nor I," answered Proclus. "It would be safer, but most unpleasant, and if we keep watch here and have our ears open, I think we shall not need."

So they composed themselves to wait until the clamour of the rioting without should subside, then intending to adventure down for as much of the treasure as they could carry and be away before dawn. The sea was not far off, and there were boats and ships in plenty on all the shores of that city of unparalleled laziness and lawlessness, debauchery and drink. The thoughts of Rhesus ran on his Eutasia's pretty face, wilfully obstinate as he had last seen it; and out of the ceaseless droning of the outside noises, and the images his fancy painted on the background of the darkness, he fashioned two visions that were each alive with motion and moved with the passing of time.

One vision was a fair one—of himself and a golden haired girl companion wandering through a lovely garden hand in hand, with never a cloud to mar the sunshine of the day nor a breath of chiller air to pale the cheeks of his health or her pink beauty; the other was a vision of evil—of two outcasts wandering in the desert, blinded by the ceaseless glare of the sun and the scorching sand, nigh unto death with thirst and hunger, and neither knowing where the other was, though in truth they were not far apart. And he thought that the pictures contended with each other, first one and now another prevailing and filling the field of his mental vision, but never to hold it long. And then the shifting scenes that Hope and Fear together wove for him in that precarious hour changed to the dreams of a troubled sleep as the dawnshine melts into the perfect day.

He was awakened by the trample of many feet, the clamour of many voices, and Proclus shouting in his ear: "The enemy have found us out; they are beating at the door! Quick! down the stairs and past the falling door beyond the water!"

Rating himself soundly for his drowsiness at such a time, Rhesus asked, as they ran hurriedly down the moss-covered steps below the stone trap-door, how long he had slept and why he had been allowed.

"You were overwrought," said Proclus simply, "and I

could not fashion to rouse you. And I was awake and could watch. They came silently until they were at the door, or I would have wakened you sooner. But faster! their torches gleam behind!"

"It is Hypatius or some of his followers!" cried Rhesus, as they sprang into the boat and pushed off into the Cimmerian darkness that brooded over the water. "But I think they have run for nothing, after all!"

He turned and laughed at the group of men who came to the foot of the steps and hurled a volley of curses, with several arrows, at them; but the laugh died away on his lips when he saw that the foremost, the leader, was Marcen, that their blue-banded garments were splashed with blood, and that with wildly-reckless exultation they one and all leapt into the black flood and swam after the boat.

The friends pulled hard, but the torch-light was uncertain and the chain that guided them hard to see, and though they gained the footstone of the low arch first, they were scarcely within the sloping passage when the pursuers were upon them. They turned at bay, and Proclus with dagger drawn, Rhesus with sword, awaited the mad onset.

"Something terrible has happened," said Proclus, as they hesitated a moment before the rush, "or they would not set such value upon our worthy selves. The night has not gone so well with the green faction, I fear—And if I fall, Rhesus, and you live, take the key of the treasure and let it be your own, and Eutasia's. It is hung by a silken thread in the cloth of my left sleeve—And now for the final act in the tearful comedy of this indifferent, merry life of ours. You to the right, Rhesus; I to the left; and here a health to the ancient gods and the badge of green—in a drink that is richer and redder than wine!"

The pursuers came on them, pell-mell, all at once, and in the flickering light of the torches, in the narrow width of the slimy passage, the friends fought what they thought would be their last fight, but with the desperate energy of men who are determined to die hard. They had a little advantage owing to the darkness and the scarcity of room, and for a time kept the pursuers off, retiring slowly step by step, towards the great rock door. Marcen, a coward now that his hounds had driven the wolves to bay, kept discreetly to the rear of his gang, urging them on by threats and promises to take the two alive if it could be done, but to be quick over their work, as there was much else waiting.

In the narrow way and the uncertain light of the swaying torches, the contest was not so unequal as it seemed, and though retreating warily, Rhesus kept the assailants the length of his sword away. Few there were who passed it as it made a red-flaming arch from side to side of the tunnel; and the few who did found in the dagger of Proclus a more deadly weapon; and thus as the sword sang, and the sharp knife rose and fell, and the crowding assassins pressed on, the fight went down to where, grim, silent, impassive, the great rock door took shape from the grey gloom and barred their way.

At sight of it there came a lull in the strife, the ruffians thinking their foes in a corner, and as Marcen peered with shaded eyes at the smooth wall at their backs, Rhesus saw a sudden terror blanch his face, and knew that he suspected some secret which he could not fathom. For a moment of suspense he stood as one transfixed; then, his vagrant courage flaring up with the chagrin of his disappointed avarice, he sprang towards the friends with a fierce cry on his lips, and a heavy mace, studded with cruel spikes, uplifted in his right hand, calling upon his men to make an end of them speedily, and bring them out, alive or dead.

But in that brief moment of delay, a friend had offered his life for a friend—in vain, and yet not in vain. For seeing that one might hold the passage while the other raised the swinging stone and passed under to safety, Proclus had resolved to do so while his friend escaped, so that one of them at least might escape. At first Rhesus protested, saying that his should be the honour of keeping the way, but Proclus would have no refusal, and was so masterful, and the time for discussion was so short, that with a very bad grace the other consented.

"But of the two I have the mind least at ease!" he said, as with shaking hand he took the slender key.

"Tush!" answered Proclus, with a cynical smile—sardonic to the last—as he took the red blade in exchange and stepped forward. "Tush! I have no one to whom my life is worthy; no one for whom I care to live; and you have Eutasia and enthusiasm. Stand back, friend, and let me get at these fellows, and quick with your key there and begone! Let down the door as soon as you are past, and mind not me. I am weary of the world and would fain die flaunting a sword in its face! Away with you!"

With that grim smile still curving the corners of his mouth, he pushed Rhesus unceremoniously aside and turned to face the ghastly-visaged crew led by Marcen, who at that moment moved down upon him.

With a choking sensation in his throat that was new to him, half reluctant, yet half glad with a sheer animal love of life, Rhesus staggered down the tunnel a pace and sought the orifice. He found it and was about to place the key therein, when through the echoing passage rang a cry of mocking triumph, the rush of many feet, and the whistle of an arrow that splintered on the rock above his head; and thrusting the key into the folds of his green sash, Rhesus turned with clenched hands to meet his fate.

Proclus was down now, writhing in the death-grip, with his fingers locked on the wrists of a foe who strove to get his dagger free. He was looking towards his friend. Over the fallen twain three great ruffians, followed by Marcen, leapt. Rhesus had little time for thought and less for action, and ere he could use even his bare knuckles in defence, two swords gleamed on either side of him and a third glittered above his head. Marcen sprang forward with a cry to the man to desist and take his foe alive, but the warning came too late and the weapon curved through the swaying lights and shadows to the fatal fall. But Proclus saw the danger also, and his warning came not in vain. He loosed his hold of his foe, and freed himself with a sudden twist, and snatching up a fallen shield, hurled it full, with a last, heroic effort, at the head of the giant whose stroke impended over his friend.

The round disc of brass caught the fellow edge-ways under the ear, and sent him spinning and reeling against the slime-glistened wall. The blow fell short, and as Rhesus swayed, struggling in the grasp of the others, he saw Proclus fall back to the floor and the dagger of his foe flash down.

Marcen made his men search the two carefully, and himself went over them again and again, seeking for some clue to the secret whose existence he suspected; but the precious key must have slipped from Rhesus in the struggle, for it was not found. With black rage making his evil face the more evil in the semi-darkness, Marcen bade his men be going back. Rhesus was bound still more tightly and half carried, half dragged, between two stout villains to the front, feeling more dead than alive. Proclus they pulled to the water, and there with many a grim jest at the size of his mausoleum, two of them cast him in. Something sharp caught between the toes of his right foot and the wood of his sandal, and Rhesus could have cried aloud with the agony as he was hurried away; but in the haste and the darkness he could not distinguish its nature, and presently the pain was numbed. He was pulled out of the boat, and then up the narrow stairs, and so into the upper chamber.

Into this poured a dense volume of blue-grey smoke, through which the torches gleamed dully yellow, and as they dashed up through the blinding reek and out into the open air in the midst of a wild gust of wind and flame that swept round the crumbling walls of the doomed convent—fired by some reckless incendiary—Rhesus' head was swung sharply against a stone and he remembered no more.

(To be continued.)

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The Changed Envelopes.

Carl stood gazing at the pretty head, very well executed in marble.

"Poor Rudolph," he murmured. "He is tired of the struggle for success, and I should like to see him win the competition so that he might marry his Lena. But ——"

He sighed, crossed the room and took up his chisel. The hot sun poured in through the one window which the little room, high up under the roof, contained.

Carl, and Rudolph, his friend, shared the room as a common studio. They had been friends now for six years, drawn closer together by the struggle, the disappointments, the poverty, which were the lot of both.

The door was thrown open and Rudolph entered.

"What luck, *mein Freund?*" asked Carl.

Rudolph tossed his cap upon the bare floor and sank wearily into a chair.

"Luck? None," he replied bitterly. "The dealer claims that he has not had even one offer for my dancing girl. The price is so high; he urges that one unknown, like myself, should not set so high a price, upon their work. He calls twenty-five too high a price, when once I would have laughed at the very idea of selling such a piece of work for less than two hundred marks. Oh, Carl, I am weary of the struggle! I had better go back to the old house and the work in the fields."

Carl crossed the room and laid his hand gently upon Rudolph's shoulder.

The two young men were strikingly dissimilar in appearance. Carl had the shoulders of a Hercules, with a face as fair as a woman's, clear blue eyes, soft and gentle in expression, and fair hair, curly and silken as a little child's. Rudolph was sinewy in build, dark and swarthy, with very black hair, and restless, passionate eyes.

"Cheer up, Rudolph," said Carl, "luck will come after awhile. Perhaps it is here even now; listen! Herr Frankinstein, our good Meister, has been here during your absence. The Count von Wardenburg invites all sculptors to submit at the end of three months the model of a statue of the Virgin. The sculptor submitting the model adjudged to be the best will receive the commission to make a life-sized statue for the Liebfrauen Kirche, for which he will be paid 20,000 marks."

"'Tis a fortune! I could then marry my dear Lena; and it would mean fame also, and fame means riches. I shall commence at once," cried Rudolph.

He rose to his feet and moved impetuously across the room. Carl smiled a pleased, gentle smile, and returned to his work.

* * * * *

Three months went by.

Rudolph was standing in the attic studio before a small plaster of Paris model of the Virgin. His arms were folded across his breast, his dark brows met in a moody frown.

"It is perfect!" he muttered. "Perfect!"

The door opened and a thin little man, with long, rough hair and twinkling black eyes, came into the room. As he caught sight of the model he tossed both hands above his head with a rapturous exclamation.

"Himmel! it is good, it is sublime!" he cried. "Rudolph, you have surpassed yourself. You will surely get the commission."

Rudolph started and his lips quivered.

"You—you are pleased with it?" he stammered.

"Pleased? I am enchanted, enraptured!" replied little Herr Frankinstein, his small body quivering with excitement.

"It is perfect! The whole figure breathes purity; you have a white soul, Rudolph, or you could never have designed that."

Rudolph turned abruptly away, crossed the room and returned with another model, which he placed beside the first.

"What do you think of this?" he asked hoarsely, while his eyes, full of passionate questioning, sought Herr Frankinstein's face.

The latter, with his head on one side, looked critically at the model.

"Ah! 'tis Carl's, I suppose," he said. "It is good, much like yours in some respects, but falling far short indeed. It has no chance to win the commission."

A swift pallor swept over Rudolph's face. His eyes rested gloomily upon the two models.

"I stepped in to tell you," continued Herr Frankinstein, "that the models must be sent to the committee not later than to-morrow. A sealed envelope must accompany each model, containing the name of the sculptor. These will not be opened till the decision is made, so you see the name or fame of the sculptor will bear no weight. You understand, my boy?"

"Yes, I understand," replied Rudolph dully.

Herr Frankinstein grasped his hand and shook it vigorously. There were tears in the little man's eyes.

"I am proud of you my dear Rudolph," he said. "Proud that you were my pupil!"

A little while later Carl returned, to find Rudolph pacing up and down the room, his face pale and drawn.

"You have come at last, Carl," he said. "I have news for you that will make you very glad. Herr Frankinstein has been here, and he went wild with delight over your model. He says it will win the commission, and he is not likely to err in his judgment."

Carl's eyes rested quietly upon Rudolph's face. His own showed no delight, no exultation.

"Really?" he said gravely. "Well, we shall see."

"I must leave you early to-morrow morning, Rudolph," said Carl, when his friend returned from a walk that evening. "I am summoned home. An uncle has died and left me a small competence. I go to see about it."

"Accept my congratulations, Carl," said Rudolph, wearily. "The Goddess of Fortune smiles upon you at last. But you will return to make the statue?"

"You seem very sure that I shall win, Rudolph," he said. "I am not so positive. If such should be the case, however, I will return to Berlin. You will let me know the result."

Early the next morning Carl took his departure. In the evening he stopped for the night in a small village. He was sitting in his room at the inn, when the door was thrown open and Rudolph entered. Carl sprang in surprise to his feet. Rudolph's face was white and his eyes were haggard. He sprang forward and caught Carl's arm. His hands were trembling with excitement and fatigue.

"Carl," he panted, "thank Heaven that I have found you!"

"What do you wish of me, Rudolph?" asked Carl gently, and that was the last time Rudolph ever heard the gentleness in Carl's voice, or saw the look of tenderness in Carl's soft blue eyes.

"Carl," he cried, "I have a confession to make to you. Listen! I—I so longed to win that commission. You know all that it meant to me, riches, fame, and Lena. I had set my heart, my soul, my very life upon it. When I realised that your model was superior to mine, I felt that I should go mad with despair. And in the night, Carl, a temptation came to me. As you know, the models were packed and ready to send in the morning. With each was a sealed envelope containing your name and mine. The tempter whispered in my ear, 'Change those envelopes.' You were going away, you would return only in case your model was the accepted one.

"I had permitted Herr Frankinstein to believe that your model was the one carved by myself. It was all very easy. Whereas I could not have conceived your model, I could accurately copy it in marble. And the tempter dulled my conscience by whispering that I stood so much more in need of the fame and the money than yourself, who were now independent.

"Carl! Carl! You were my friend, and I loved you, but both love and friendship, and honour, too, went down before that temptation, and—and I crept into the studio and changed the envelopes."

He paused, and buried his face in his hands. Carl looked at him more sorrowfully than angrily.

"And you have followed me to confess this to me—why?" he asked.

Rudolph lifted his face, its pallor stained with a red flush of excitement.

"Because," he replied, "it appears that after all Herr Frankinstein and myself were wrong in our judgment, or the committee failed to see the merit that we did, for, Carl, it was my model that was chosen! Do you understand, Carl—my model, to which I had attached your name? A messenger came to the studio for you. I told him you had gone away, and I set out to follow you. I have been half mad; but, oh, Carl, something must be done to give me back my own!"

"You will return with me—you will tell them that the model was mine—that there was a mistake."

"There was no mistake," Carl's voice, clear, cold and stern, interrupted him. "Listen to me," he continued, as Rudolph stared bewilderingly up into his face—that fair face which he had never seen so forbidding and stern before. Rudolph shrank from the look in the blue eyes bent upon him. "While you were planning treachery against me," said Carl, "I was pondering how I could turn matters for your interest and welfare. I knew that my model was superior to yours and I was sorry, for I wanted you to win the commission. I loved you better than myself. I could not sleep for thinking of it, and about daylight it occurred to me to change the envelopes. I first wrote you a letter entreating you to accept the commission should my model win—that for you to acquire fame and fortune would afford me more happiness than to have both myself. This letter I placed so that you would receive it as soon as the result of the competition was made known. After I had written the letter I went into the studio and changed the envelopes."

A low moan broke from Rudolph's lips. He sank down into a chair and hid his face in his hands.

"I have loved you well, Rudolph," continued Carl, "loved you better even than myself, and I would have forgiven anything save treachery. Even had you come and made this confession to me through remorse and repentance I might still have forgiven. But no, you confessed your treachery only that you might escape its consequences, and still reap the harvest which you imagined your guilty hand had put from you."

Rudolph lifted his face and looked helplessly up into Carl's.

"What—what will you do?" he asked.

"I shall return to Berlin," replied Carl. "I shall claim my rights. The explanation of the mistake I leave to you. I shall contradict whatever explanation you may see fit to offer. The 20,000 marks received for the statue shall be yours, the fame shall be mine."

"And then?" murmured Rudolph, and into his eyes flashed the old tenderness, wistful, infinitely sad.

But there came no softness into Carl's blue eyes.

"And then," he replied, "you and I will be strangers for ever."

And Rudolph bowed his dark head, for at that moment neither fame nor riches seemed as sweet as the friendship he had forfeited.

HAROLD BROOK.

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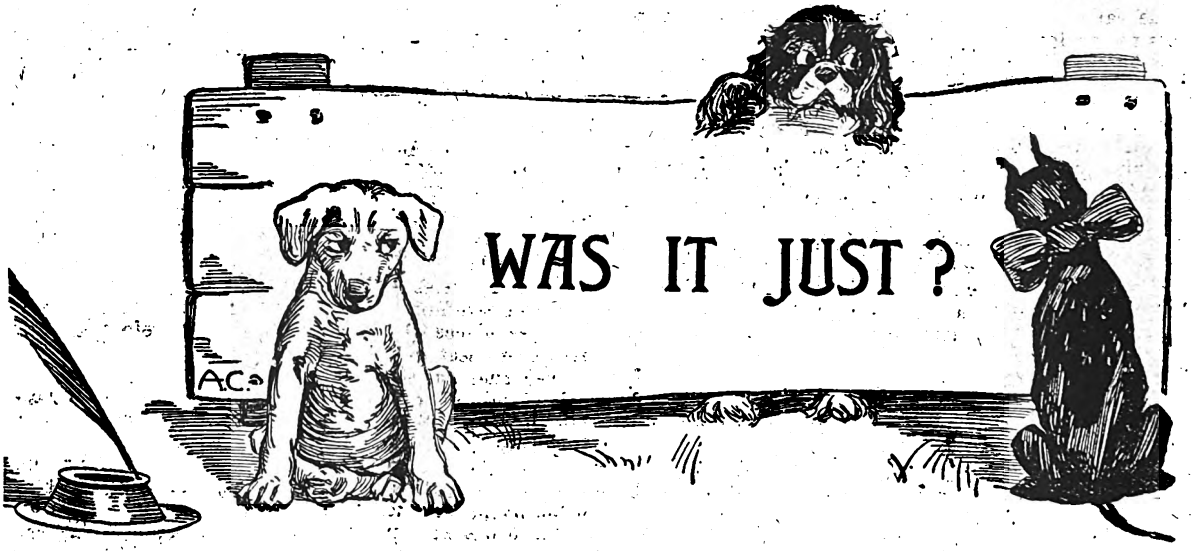

"Well, Nelly," said my uncle, meeting me at the porch, "do you see any changes?"

It was the morning after my arrival. I had been looking at the hills, and breathing the most delightful air, and saying over and over to my happy self:

"I'm so glad to be in the dear old place one more."

"I have noticed but one change," I made answer to Uncle Allen, "and that is in the occupants of the cottage by the spring. The Trents used to be there. Baby Mary was a great pet of mine."

"Mary's father prospered while here, and has bought a little place of his own down by the river."

"And who lives in the cottage now? I saw two young men come out of there before breakfast."

"Yes; they're working on my farm this year. They lodge there with an elderly woman, a weaver of considerable skill——"

"And a big talker," said Aunt Mary, from the doorway. "You're such a girl for stories, Nelly, you must get Mrs. Earle to tell you some. She can serve you with any kind, from a ghost story to an incident of the American Civil War—she was out there at the time."

"That woman has seen hard times, stirring times, exciting times," said Uncle Allen. "She is said to have been in many parts of the world."

"She has been the heroine of many an adventure," said my aunt. "You will enjoy her talks, Nelly."

Impetuosity had ever been one of my characteristics.

"I should like to go at once and see her weave and hear her talk!" I cried. "But how can I get her into a reminiscent train of thought?"

Aunt Mary laughed.

"No matter what you say, child, you will remind her of some interesting chapter of personal history."

So I donned my hat and ran down the hill to call upon this woman of such varied life memories.

I heard the noise of the loom long before I reached the open door. So busy was the weaver that I had to knock before she saw me. At the sound she started and gave such impetus to the fling of her shuttle, that it fell at my feet.

I hastened to restore it, at the same time begging her not to rise.

"You are Mrs. Earle?" I asked doubtfully, for I had pictured a bent and care-worn woman, bearing the marks of her changeful life. I saw instead a figure as straight as a plumb-line; an expressive face; a pair of dark eyes as bright as a baby's, and heavy black hair twisted high on a well shaped head.

"That's who I am," she answered cordially, "and I know who you are without asking. Your uncle's been expectin' you for more than a week. You look enough like him to be his daughter. Sit down in that chair and take off your hat."

"Don't let me interrupt you," I said. "I never saw anybody weave, and came down to watch you."

Having thus stated half the truth, I drew my chair beside the loom.

The weaver smiled like one humouring a child, and bent to her task without a word.

When the work had increased about two inches in length, Mrs Earle gave a sudden short laugh.

"It didn't look very friendly of me to fling the shuttle at you," she said.

"That was my fault. I knocked so abruptly that it startled you."

"I've been a weaver off and on ever since I was a girl of eighteen. That is the second time in all these years that I tossed my shuttle so hard that it went out of the door. I thought of that other time the minute it flew out of the door."

She stopped the weaving and looked past me through the open door with so thoughful an air that I scented my story.

"Tell me about it, please," I said, inwardly smiling at the remembrance of Aunt Mary's parting assurance.

"It was in December and dreadfully cold," she began. "Father was in the war, the American Civil War, I mean. He was an Englishman, but he was drawn into it. Mother was weakly, and I had to take care of her and the children. I was older than the rest by a good deal.

"The four years of the war seemed forty years to me. All the men for miles round were gone, and all the boys that were big enough to shoulder muskets.

"But at the time I was speaking of, one of our neighbours, a young man, was home on furlough; he'd been wounded in the arm. Him an' me had always known each other and liked each other the way boy and

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girl will, you know. For I went out there when I was a child.

"Well, one day his mother came over to our house and she says to me:

"'Rose, where's Louis gone to?'

"'I don't know I'm sure,' says I, and blushed, for I was bashful, and it worried me to have her make out that I knew more about Louis' comings and goings than she did. I'd been wondering why he hadn't come round the day before, for he'd been in the habit of dropping in every day.

"Louis was a great hunter. I've known him to go off in the mountains by himself and stay a week or two, hunting and trapping. But I knew that wasn't where he'd gone now, for his arm wasn't strong enough yet to carry a gun.

"A few days after his mother was at our house the door opened and Louis walked in. Mother had taken all the children and gone to see a neighbour a little way off, so I was alone. I was weavin' a carpet.

"Louis came over to the loom. He had a buckskin pouch in his hand. Without saying a word he took out a gold piece and laid it on the carpet right under my eyes. Then he took out another and laid it by the side of that one, and then another and another, till they stretched the full width of the carpet and part way back. There was fifty of them. Then Louis says:

"'Rose, will you share these shiners with me?'

"A little streak of sunshine came through the window and made the gold glitter till it hurt my eyes. I looked up at Louis. His face shone yellow like the gold. I don't know why, but as I looked at him I didn't like him as well as I did before he went away and came back with all his money. I was troubled in my mind.

"'How did you come by all this, Louis?'

"'I earned it.'

"'How?'

"'By saving an army.'

"'What army? And how?'

"He began to brush the gold into a pile with his hand.

"'It ain't fair for me to answer a dozen questions for you before you answer one for me,' says he, laughing strangely; 'but a girl must always have her curiosity satisfied.

"'Well, this army that I saved from being cut to pieces had got into a very awkward position. The enemy had heard it was goin' to cross the mountain, and they throwed up fortifications on top and fixed a regular trap for it. At a certain place that they'd have to pass, trees were nearly cut down so that a few picks would finish them. Men were hid waitin' for the army to go by, and then they were to topple these trees across road and shut off retreat.

"'Things were planned very well, but the army got wind of it somehow. They couldn't go back, for they were runnin' from the enemy, an' they couldn't go on, for there was another enemy waitin' for 'em in front. They didn't know how to get out of the trap.

"'Then a feller who knowed about me bein' at home goes up to the General, and says: "There's a man not far from here that knows every inch of ground on these mountains. If anybody can lead us out of here, he's the man."

"'"Fetch him here double quick," says the General.

"'So this feller——'

"'Who was it, Louis?' I asked.

"But he clinked his money against my shuttle and laughed at my curiosity again.

"'This feller and five more, armed to the teeth, came across me and says: "You're to come with us and no questions asked."

"'So they took me to the General. He tells me the fix they're in and asks if there's any escape. I says yes. He waits for no more.

"'"Lead me out and you will be richer by a good deal. Refuse, and you'll be a dead man in five minutes."

"'I thought of you, Rose, and led them down through the valley and well on towards Covington.'

"'Was it our men?' says I.

"I remember how dry my lips were and how choked I felt in the throat.

"'It was life or death to me,' says he, 'so what difference does it make to you which army I saved?'

"'If 'twas our men, it was outrageous for you to take the money. If you helped the enemy and prevented a great victory for our side, you're a traitor! And if you mean to say that thinkin' about me made you a traitor, I'll thank you to stop your thinkin'.'

"He took his hand off the gold and looked at me with a black face.

"'If it had been you, I suppose you would have told them to fire away?' he said, with a sneer. 'You're very brave, but I can tell you it don't feel so nice to be shot.'

"I knew as well as if he had told me that he had opened the trap and let the enemy out.

"I took the buckskin bag and put all the gold back into it.

"'I won't share your money, and I wish you good-bye,' says I.

"He took the bag and turned away without a word, and I began to weave again.

"I was full of temper in those days, and I was all on fire for our side, though I wasn't a born American.

"To think that Louis had helped the enemy made me so mad that I hardly knew what I was doing. I gave my shuttle a tremendous fling, and it hit Louis in the back as it went out of the door. Of course he thought I did it on purpose, but he never looked round.

"Well, all kind feelings between him and me was over. He joined the other side."

"Did you learn who the General was, and do you think that Louis would really have been shot?"

"Yes, I did hear who it was; and a man I know saw the General after the war, and asked him that very question. 'On the spot and like a dog!' says he."

"That wouldn't have saved his army. But, tell me, would *you* have refused to guide him out?"

"Miss Nelly," said she solemnly, "when Louis was tellin' his tale, I had no idea. That was the enthusiasm in me. But many a time since then I've lain awake at night thinkin' about it. Of course, promises nor threats wouldn't have moved me; but if I'd stood there lookin' over hundreds of men, and knowed that I could be the means of savin' 'em or destroyin' 'em, I'm not going to say I wouldn't have led 'em out. I'm a woman, and God's put soft hearts in us women."

I was strangely moved by the fire of her glance and the rugged picturesqueness of her words.

She leant over her neglected work, and tossed the shuttle through the wrap backwards and forwards a dozen times. Then she gave me a side look, and asked curiously:

"What would you have done, Miss Nelly?"

And I, too, have asked this question of myself in those rare night hours, when sleep has refused to "weigh mine eyelids down."

FRANK WIMBLEDON.

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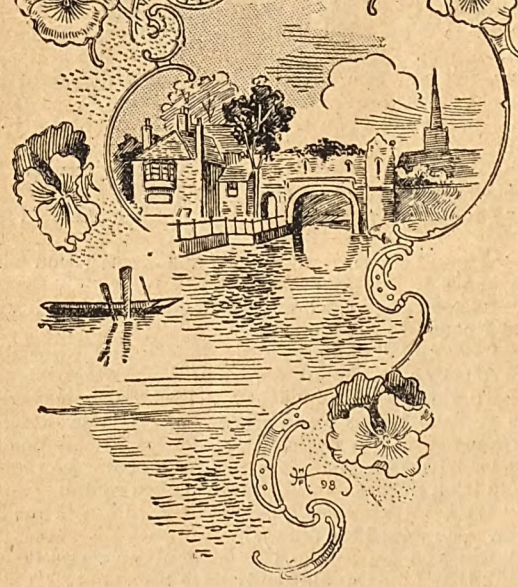
An Artistic Revenge.



"At last, Scott, we're on Homeric ground. I suppose Clytemnestra superintended the family washing for the lordly house of Agamemnon down by that brook."

Thus spoke one of the two stalwart and sun-browned young men who were seated beneath an olive tree on the hillside just north of the site of ancient Mycenæ, in the Pelopponesus. They were English gentlemen who were making a pedestrian tour through Greece, and had arrived, on a hot September afternoon, at this famous place.

Their elevated position gave them an extended view of the beautiful Argolic Gulf, with a big man-of-war riding at anchor in the offing, from the mast of which the British flag floated, brilliant in the slanting sunshine. At the foot of the hill on which they were seated, across the little fields and orchards where the peasants were busy with the harvest, they saw a group of women at the brook in the valley below.

The young man who had spoken put his field-glass to his eyes.

"By Jove, Scott!" he exclaimed, "I tell you these Greek women are the handsomest in the world. Well might one of their great-great-grandmothers have kept two nations in commotion for ten years. Do you see the tallest girl in that group? Look at her! A form like a goddess! An ideal Helen of Troy!"

Scott slowly took his pipe from his mouth.

"Come now, Lyle, you're raving again," he replied. "Your newly-discovered Helen is doubtless a goat-herd from that miserable village down there, with a soul as ignorant of sentiment as her garments are of soap."

"Well, Scott," replied Lyle, with severity, "I am thankful for one thing at least, and that is that my soul isn't yet quite dried up within me, till it has lost all power to see the beautiful, as yours has. Come, let's go down to the village and get something to eat."

There is a good hotel in the village of Kharvati, where visitors to the neighbouring ruins are entertained. Here the young Englishmen made a hearty supper on rye bread, mutton and tea.

The harvest moon rose early and flooded the country with her beams. The two men sat a long time before the open window of their room, which overlooked the whole village. They had smoked in silence for an hour, when suddenly Lyle pointed down the road, and exclaimed in an excited whisper to the dozing Scott:

"There she is again, as I live! Now look at her and take back your vile insinuation about soap."

A young man and woman were strolling up the street. He was a swarthy, dark-eyed fellow, in the uniform of a Greek soldier. The young girl at his side chanced to raise her face to the searching moonlight, and both the young fellows were struck with her remarkable beauty. Her head was uncovered, and her luxuriant hair was combed low over her brow, and fastened in a simple coil at the back of her shapely head. Her face was purely classic in outline; such a face as the old sculptors loved to cut in marble—full of intellect and of passion.

The couple walked leisurely up the street, evidently uttering, in the melodious Greek tongue, those light nothings that youth and moonlight inspire in all languages. They paused before the door of the inn, and the two strangers heard and understood their parting "Good-night, Stephano," and "Farewell, Hellene."

"There, Scott, what do you think of her now? See what a superb creature you would fain have maligned!" exclaimed Lyle.

"Well, I must say," replied Scott, "either the moonlight played us a trick, or she is a rather pretty girl."

Next morning the two tourists commenced their explorations among the famous ruins. The region is replete with interest, and as their daily intercourse with the people afforded opportunity for the study of the

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modern Greek—one of the chief objects of their tour—they decided to spend some time in the place.

They did not see Hellene again for some days, but Lyle did not scruple to find out what he could about her from the peasants.

He learnt that she was the grand-daughter of the rich old landlord with whom they lodged. Her parents were dead, and her education had been intrusted to an old tutor, famous for his learning, who died the year before. And soon, they said, she was to marry Stephano, the young soldier, the son of a wealthy neighbour.

One afternoon the two young men were resting in the shadow of the massive walls which form the entrance to those celebrated ruins called the "Tomb of Agamemnon." They were discussing a fragment of pottery which they had just discovered, when Lyle, looking up, saw Hellene coming slowly towards them, picking here and there the late flowers and grasses, evidently quite unconscious of their presence.

The ground over which she was advancing was strewn with blocks of brecca from the ancient walls, which made her progress difficult, and the two friends watched with admiration the ease and grace of her movements, which brought out the fine lines of her agile figure.

At length she raised her head and saw the two men with surprise and embarrassment, for she seemed on the point of flight.

Lyle stepped forward, hat in hand.

"Pardon us," he said, in her own tongue, "for startling you. We ought to have made our presence known sooner. But we have found a curious piece of pottery here, and were trying to determine its origin. Will you look at it?" He held out the fragment in his hand.

Her first fright had vanished, but the girl stood regarding them with a look of indecision, which threatened to end the interview abruptly. But gradually a more confident expression took its place, and she asked:

"Do you know Homer? You speak my tongue well."

"No," replied Lyle, "I can't say we know him very well, but we read him and have learnt to love him. You Greeks have a great advantage over the rest of the world in reading Homer in your own tongue."

"Indeed we have," replied the young girl, her embarrassment rapidly disappearing; "but very few of our countrymen appreciate it. Yet some do, for all Greeks are not like those who go abroad to get rich. There are still many who enjoy the glorious language and traditions of our people. Oh, yes," she continued, daintily taking the fragment from Lyle's outstretched hand, "there are many such specimens here; I have collected a lot of them myself."

A beginning thus made, they passed easily to other topics of common interest. The Englishmen found that this young girl was thoroughly educated in the literature of her country, as well as its history, and loved both fervently.

An hour passed in pleasant converse. At the earnest request of the two young fellows, Hellene finally consented to recite to them some of her favourite passages from the Iliad.

She seated herself on a rock which had fallen from the gigantic ruin behind her, and with the setting sun shining full on her beautiful face, glowing with the immortal words she spoke, she formed a picture against the background of those massive walls which would have won the admiration of a far less appreciative audience than the two listeners. When she had finished, the three walked back to the village together.

For a few days thereafter the Englishmen saw much of Hellene. They examined the fine collection of antiquities which she herself had made, and found her of invaluable assistance in several branches of study in which they were engaged.

But no woman could long fail to see in Lyle's every glance and tone that wondrous something which women long for and yet fear to look upon. A shyness and diffidence, quite contrary to her former frank and easy manner, gradually interposed a barrier to their intercourse, till at last the tourists rarely saw her. Scott grumbled and blamed Lyle for it all.

"It's only another case of your confounded enthusiasm spoiling everything. Here I was nearly through with my to-be celebrated thesis on 'Ancient and Modern Greek,' and you knew that the girl was my main assistance for the work, and yet, like a fool, you must go and fall in love with her, and put her to flight. Why can't you study a thing from a purely scientific standpoint?"

But Lyle's dejection at Hellene's avoidance of him at last became so great that even Scott was moved to pity. The disconsolate lover tried all in vain to have a word with the girl. She deftly thwarted his clumsy masculine plans until he became well nigh desperate.

One evening, when this condition of things had gone on for several weeks, the two men were smoking in the little front room of the inn. The village had been quiet for some time when they heard a light footstep, and caught a glimpse of Hellene as she slipped quickly out of a side door into the moonlit street.

Lyle rose with a look of grim determination on his face and followed her. In a moment he was at her side.

"Hellene," he said, "can't I walk with you? I have wanted to speak with you about something for a long time."

She made him no answer, and they walked on in silence together.

The road lead past the last scattering houses of the village, along the bank of the stream. It was bordered by gnarled old olive trees through whose branches a mosaic of light and shade flittered from the moon to the ground. A sleepy gurgle came now and then from the stream close by.

Lyle stopped, took Hellene's hand in his own, and said:

"Hellene, you must know what I want to tell you. You know that I love you better than life. Don't you see you've been killing me by inches of late? Why do you shun and avoid me so?"

The girl's eyes were downcast for a moment, and he saw her bosom heave in quick sobs. Then she raised her face to his, and there were tears of a great joy in her glorious eyes.

The lovers did not see the crouching figure of a man which glided away from the wall near by off into the placid night.

Scott was hard at work all the next day on his notes. In the early afternoon Lyle went alone to visit a distant part of the ruins, where he was to obtain certain measurements which had been forgotten. Hellene saw him pass from the inn, and an expression of suppressed anxiety took the place of the radiance in her eyes.

Lyle proceeded to a lonely spot some two miles from the village, and was bending over to examine a broken fragment of rock, when he was suddenly seized from behind by a powerful hand, and hurled backwards on the ground with such force as to render him for the moment

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unconscious. When he opened his eyes, his feet were tied, and his hands securely pinioned behind him. Stephano was seated on a rock near by.

The two men looked at each other for a moment in silence. Stephano was calmly rolling a cigarette in his tawny fingers, and a mocking smile played about his mouth. Lyle could not long control his wrath.

"You sneaking coward!" he cried. "Is this the way a soldier fights?"

Stephano regarded him a moment, then replied, and his voice was low and melodious:

"You English have a saying I believe, that 'all is fair in love and war.' You came and stole the heart of my Hellene, the fairest girl in Greece. Did you think you could carry her off so easily? All Greece, you know, fought ten years for one woman. You should have been wiser!

"Now I'm going to cut the artery in your arm with my dagger point here, and then I shall sit still and see you slowly bleed to death!"

Lyle's anger burnt within him as he realised his own helplessness.

"What! you infernal villain, do you mean to murder me without a chance to strike a blow? If you have a grain of manhood in you, set me free and I will fight you in any way you choose."

"Control yourself, stranger," answered Stephano with maddening deliberation. "There is no need of such excitement. You have brought this on yourself—you risked it and lost. Now take the consequence like a man."

With careful precision Stephano felt for the artery in the bared arm of his victim. A quick stroke and Lyle felt the blood trickling down over his tied hands. Stephano seated himself opposite and spoke as follows:

"Yes, this is an artistic way of dealing with an enemy—not the bungling work of a common assassin, This is the very luxury and refinement of revenge. Ah! My fine Paris, think of the Helen you are losing! Think of those eyes! How they look at one! Think of the kisses of those lips—nectar for the gods!"

At first Lyle's soul was filled with a mighty surge of passion, together with a desperate resolve not to gratify the villain by any sign of fear or suffering. As his strength failed, he gradually became calmer.

He heard distinctly the long drawn shrill of a locust in the grass near by. He imagined curious shapes in the clouds that floated high up in the blue vault. His truant thoughts recalled a particular novel which he had borrowed when a boy and hidden till he had read it through. He even smiled as he thought of the swaggering hero, bound and tortured by the Indians, yet making his escape by miraculous feats of strength and daring. He almost laughed aloud as he made a whimsic comparison of the story with his own condition.

But his strength was going fast. Great blurs of darkness came and went before his eyes. He had almost lost consciousness, when he seemed to see Hellene suddenly appear, with Scott dimly visible in the background.

The girl paused a moment, then with a bound like a tigress she sprang upon Stephano, bore him to the ground, and something in her hand flashed in the sunlight. Then Lyle felt his head raised and a handkerchief bound tightly round his arm.

Several hours later Lyle was roused from his torpor by the fresh sea breeze and the motion of the little steam launch which was rapidly making way from the harbour to the great man-of-war in the bay. He found himself bolstered up on the cushions beneath the stern awnings of the little craft, with Hellene seated at his side.

The light of a deathless love shone in her lustrous eyes. Scott stood by the hatchway, looking back toward the fast retreating shores of Greece. Lyle caught the words he was muttering to himself.

"Yes—had to do it. Girl wouldn't be left behind. Lucky thing I knew the captain—big row if they'd found him before we got off. All on account of the fool's confounded enthusiasm. Never can investigate anything like a genuine scholar; always puts his foot in it somehow."

M. Barnard.

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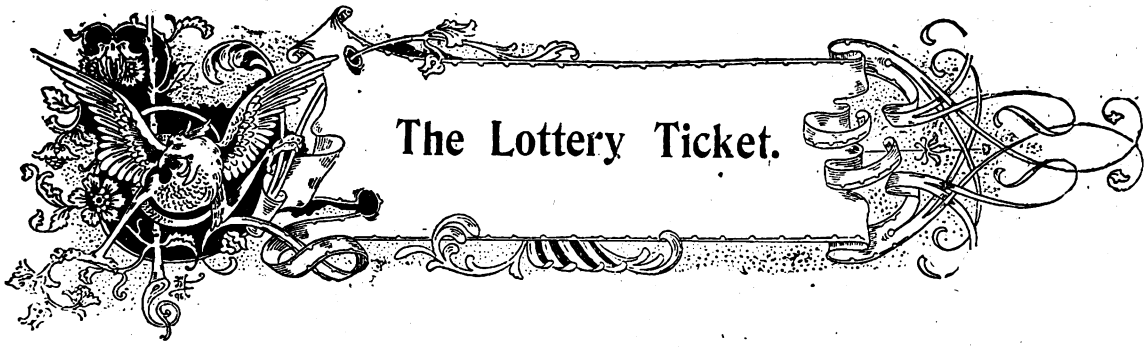

The Lottery Ticket.

All Naples was amusing itself. The tide of gaiety rising throughout the holiday week had reached high-water mark; and to-night, four hundred thousand Neapolitans and many foreigners, including a little party of five English people, were abroad bent on the pursuit of pleasure.

Professor Roger Poppleton was one of the five; the other four were the Hon. Thomas Whipple, substantial and sedate; Mrs. Whipple, portly and self-possessed; Miss Whipple, newly "out" and impartially enthusiastic; and Miss Alice Feltham, aged twenty-three, with a record of social successes and a secret ambition to study art in the atmosphere of foreign capitals.

Professor Poppleton, usually very dignified—as became his position—seemed to have forgotten everything except that he was abroad on a holiday, that he was a bachelor of barely middle-age, and that an uncommonly attractive and companionable girl was clinging to his left arm.

And why remember anything else? The Neapolitans were having a good time, and seemed disposed to share their fun.

Crowds of laughing, chattering, gaily-dressed people of all classes and conditions surged through the streets, spread out over the open places, and choked the narrow thoroughfares. Everywhere the "bang-bang" of the tricchi tracche punctuated with exclamation points the hum of happy peasants, and above the snap of fireworks and the buzz of voices rose the strident tones of bagpipes, played by perambulating Calabrian musicians before the street shrines of the Madonna.

So contagious was the spirit of merriment that the whole party caught the infection, making it merely a subject of jest when, from time to time, the meeting of two opposing streams of humanity resulted in a temporary deadlock. And it was with much good-humoured comment on demoralised headgear and neckties that in one of these blockades they escaped into a shop whose open doors offered a convenient haven.

As it happened, it was a curio shop, and after a cursory round of the usual photographs, rosaries, and lava ornaments, the sight of certain quaint prints suddenly awakened the professor's scholarly instincts.

"Exquisite!" he murmured, bending over a quaint presentiment of a Pompeian feast. "Absolutely unique! Ah—h, Miss Feltham," impressively, "I know you will appreciate—" and turning, the professor stopped short with that embarrassment that always follows an address to empty space.

For Miss Feltham was at the other end of the shop, listening to the explanation of the sale of State lottery tickets which the shopkeeper was giving to the rest of the party. Her feminine instinct felt the professor's discomfiture and brought her at once to his side.

"You will make me happy by accepting this as a—a little souvenir of our day at Pompeii," said the professor, with that distinguished urbanity that made one forget his forty-five years.

Miss Feltham returned thanks in a charming manner for the holiday gift.

"And I have one for you, too," she said, "only I can't divide it yet, and I can give you only half. No, I won't tell you what it is; wait and see," with a certain tantalising drawing down of her eyelids.

By this time they were in the street again and carried along by the crowd through the Via Nazionale, Naples' most fashionable promenade, towards the Cathedral.

Just how it happened Professor Poppleton never knew, but within a hundred yards of their destination, where the pressure forced them into single file, a counter current in the throng engulfed him as a wave might do, sweeping him away from Miss Feltham and the rest of the party into a black, narrow courtway like a hole in the wall. Before he could catch his breath or look round, another wave seemed to carry him straight through an open doorway into the hall, and thence to a grimy, gaudily decorated little room, where he found himself the centre of a group of chattering, laughing, jubilantly enthusiastic Neapolitans.

"Evidently," the professor thought, "these fun-loving people have singled me out as a target for one of their holiday jokes because I am a foreigner."

It was annoying, but he fell back on his philosophy and determined while in Naples to do as the Neapolitans do. He therefore beamed back at them and awaited developments.

Apparently encouraged by his manner, the jokers—evidently of the peasant class, by their gay jackets and petticoats, and many-coloured silk scarfs, crowded about him, and began jabbering energetically, with frequent gestures towards their guest. Obviously, their remarks concerned his personal appearance, and, taken in connection with the accompanying laughter, they were witty; but as the professor knew no more of the Neapolitan dialect than his hosts did of Greek or Sanscrit, he could only smile in sickly fashion, and wait until their momentary exuberance should subside and he be released.

When the moments grew to ten and twenty with no change in the situation, the professor determined to resort to that dignified diplomacy that had often served to quell excitement among those other irresponsible creatures, the undergraduates, and, still smiling, but with an air of decision, he began to push his way toward the door.

In an instant his way was blocked by a swarthy woman, whose eyes shone like hard lumps of coal beneath her headdress of orange silk, and who shook a key at

him with would-be playfulness, to show that the door was locked. There was evidently more of the joke to come, and with a feeling of annoyance he turned toward his captors. At once their faces lighted up and several pointed significantly to his eyes.

Now, one of the professor's eyes was of glass, and replaced an optic that he had sacrificed on the altar of chemistry. Upon that never-shifting artificial eye many would-be college wits had rung the changes, but always at a safe distance. And here were these Neapolitans laughing in his very face at his affliction! If it was merely one of their festival liberties it was an unkind one, and the professor's face flushed.

Meantime the chattering among his captors had reached that high pitch that means intense feeling, and their gestures showed that they were urging some act on one of their number. As if in answer to their motions, he presently pushed his way toward the professor, and holding his left hand within a few inches of that dignitary's face, with the forefinger of his left hand began slowly and meaningly to count the extended fingers.

A light broke upon the professor's mind; undoubtedly this was a hint that he was to buy his way to freedom.

Thrusting his hand into his pocket, he drew out a handful of coins of different denominations, which he placed triumphantly on the table; and then with a confident air, turned to the door, only to meet with another repulse. For now a second man had been pushed forward and repeated the process of pointing to the professor's eye and counting his own fingers.

By this time it had dawned upon their unwilling guest that this was no ordinary joke; indeed, that it was no joke at all. The people had ceased smiling, and were very much in earnest. Several of the men glared at him with faces that bore "villain" written all over them; and even the women looked capable of wielding the stiletto.

In another second mere annoyance gave way to fear, as it flashed upon him that he had been deliberately kidnapped in the open streets of the city by a set of little better than brigands, and that he was completely in their power.

Yet what could they want? More money? To think it was to pull his purse out and lay it on the table.

With gestures of impatience, his offering was pushed back, and the tiring pantomime repeated, but with greater impressiveness.

And suddenly a frightful thought nearly undermined the professor's self-possession. These people wanted a ransom and meant that if they did not get it they would put out his eyes. The idea seemed incredible, but it was backed up by long-forgotten stories that immediately flooded the unfortunate man's mind—stories of captured tourists subjected to horrible tortures at the hands of Italian brigands.

While the professor was by nature a peaceful, law-abiding citizen, who pooh-poohed the idea of carrying arms in a civilised city in the nineteenth century, he was not lacking in courage. In an instant he assumed an attitude calculated to show that he could not be trifled with.

"I have given you all the money that belongs to me, and I have nothing that belongs to you," he thundered, "and I insist that you release me at once! Otherwise I shall report this outrage to the British Consul."

But words and attitude alike seemed lost on this motley assembly, who simply looked at each other curiously, chattered in lower tones, and finally trooped out, the woman in the orange headdress bringing up the rear with the single candle.

Then the door closed, the key clinked unpleasantly in the lock, and for the first time in his life the professor knew the meaning of absolute, unrelieved, impenetrable darkness.

Now, years of university professorship had convinced Roger Poppleton that he knew himself and could possess himself with patience under any circumstances. He was, moreover, a lecturer on the Stoic virtues, and if confronted with such a case as this in the abstract, would have philosophised over the necessity of self-control under all circumstances.

But here was a situation undreamt of in his philosphy. Rudely separated from his friends in one of the happiest moments of his life, ridiculed, insulted, browbeaten by a crowd of vicious foreigners, he had finally been locked up in this black, stuffy hole to await he knew not what torture on the morrow. The very blackness seemed to threaten all manner of horrors; it robbed him of his self-reliance and instilled into his mind a creeping fear that found outlet in the most childish performances.

Angry, panting, he felt his way to the window and pulled frantically at the solid iron bars. He shouted until he was hoarse, he kicked desperately on the unyielding panels, then leant against the door, listening eagerly for some sign from without. But the silence was as oppressive as the blackness.

Groping carefully about the room, he finally discovered the table, and in a new access of rage and fear hurled it vainly against the door, and when the table was splintered, he used the pieces to smash the glass in the window. But without was only more blackness.

Another even more angry and childish assault on door and window, and even the walls, left him so exhausted that he finally sank limply upon a long chest near the door, and tried to compose himself to sleep, in preparation for the next day's ordeal.

He was a long time going to sleep, and it seemed to him that he had hardly closed his eyes when he was awakened by voices, to find himself once more surrounded by his captors.

At his first movement the woman with the orange headdress was at his side, offering him a glass of Chianti, which he indignantly refused. She was still urging the wine and some bread upon him, when there was a stir at the door, a ripple of excited conversation among the group of Italians, and a man, evidently of the same nationality, but a step higher in the social scale, pushed his way through the crowd to the captive, and in halting English wished him good-morning.

In an instant the professor was on the alert.

"So you speak English, do you?" he said sternly. Then as the other gave a broken affirmative, he continued: "Very well; then tell me in English what this outrage means. As for your friends, to them you may say that they have kept me here one night, they may keep me here three hundred and sixty-five nights, but never from a free-born Briton will they extract one halfpenny of ransom money."

The new-comer, with an altogether unaccountable smile, turned to his countrymen, and with many wavings of the arms, and jerks of the head, and countings of the fingers, apparently translated the Professor's message.

And—still more unaccountable—as he progressed, a buzz of delight began to issue from the group round him—a buzz that swelled with every word, bursting into

a roar of joy mingled with delighted "Bravos!" as the interpreter concluded.

The next moment the crowd surrounded their prisoner, laughing, beaming, fairly dancing in such exuberance of joy and gratitude that some of the women actually attempted to kiss his hands.

But the professor's wrath had passed the point where it could be conciliated by such demonstrations, or by the new-comer's polite invitation to visit his shop and hear all about the affair over some "rich wine."

"I don't want your wine," he said. "I want you to take me to the British Consul."

And to the consul they went, where the ruffled man of learning—his real eye, usually so pacific and benevolent, glaring almost as fiercely as his glass optic—told his story.

When finally he finished his speech with an impressive demand that the brigands who kidnapped him be properly punished, the consul looked mystified, but conciliatory.

"Of course, you know, sir," he said with due deference, "we don't have brigands in Italy in this century, and you admit that you were not robbed. Besides, as you know, last night was a festive occasion, when practical jokes are in order. Still," he added hastily, as he saw an angry flush creeping over his visitor's face, "this certainly was carrying a practical joke too far, and I'll have the matter investigated, and report to you this afternoon. But who is your companion?"

In a moment the interpreter, so far standing silent in the doorway, was explaining and apologising all in a breath.

"It is ver simple," he said, with a bland smile and a shrug of the shoulders. "I tried to explain. He refuse—he refuse my wine. He asked me to take him to consul. I bring him. So.

"Dis a man have de *assistito*—what you call the lucky eye," pointing to the professor's artificial optic. "Da people see dat eye, get him in da house so he can say some numbers for buy de lottery ticket. He no understand, and dey keepa him until I came in da morna. No hurt; no do noddings. Just letta him sleep."

While the man spoke the consul had cast a surreptitious glance at the professor's glass eye, and when the interpreter finished his speech, turned to the professor with a smile of comprehension.

"I see now," he said, "and I don't wonder you found the situation incomprehensible. The fact is you've simply been made the victim of a peculiar Neapolitan superstition."

Then he proceeded to explain the difference between the *jettatura*, or evil eye, and the *assistito*, or lucky eye, and the firm belief of the peasants, strengthened by long inheritance, that any numbers spoken by the possessor of the latter were lucky numbers, and could be used to never-failing advantage in a lottery drawing.

"Your affliction brings you within the *assistito* class," he concluded, "and these people wanted you to give them some lucky numbers for the regular monthly drawings of the State lottery. It's as much a part of their life as their meals are. I suppose they couldn't get an interpreter last night, and so kept you until morning. It's too bad you couldn't have understood what they wanted, and given them the numbers before the interpreter came. Then you would have been released. But, of course, in any case," he added, "it's an outrage, and they must apologise."

"But, confound it, I gave them no numbers," said the professor, struggling hard to maintain his dignity.

"You don't suppose I would encourage such a superstition, do you?"

"How is that?" asked the consul, turning to the interpreter. "Didn't the gentleman give you the numbers?"

"Oh, yes, he do!" said the shopkeeper, with a grin of satisfaction. "He say, one night, three hundred and sixty-five. See?" exhibiting a slip of paper on which the number was written; "you play him, you win."

For a moment the professor looked sheepish, as he realised that he had been led into doing exactly what he had been expected to do. Even the consul could not suppress a smile.

"This may seem like a joke to some people," said the professor coldly, "but I want you to understand that I am going to prosecute these kidnappers of innocent Englishmen."

"I wouldn't, professor," said the consul sauvely. "I'm sorry you suffered this indignity, and I'll bring the matter before our ambassador at once. Meantime, you have the satisfaction of knowing that every one of your supposed brigands will have pawned his bedding and jewellery to back your involuntary tip."

"It's an iniquitous practice, and a disgraceful business for a Government to be in," retorted the other severely.

And though the consul protested that the people were bound to gamble, and that while a private concern would undoubtedly swindle them roundly, the Government managed things with strictest honesty, devoting its small percentage of profit to lightening the burden of taxation; the professor went away only slightly mollified, and with his mind still set on reparation.

To discover on reaching his hotel that, according to previous arrangements, the Whipples and Miss Feltham had gone to Paris, leaving word for him to follow when he had done Naples, added new fuel to the flames. And when at the Consulate that afternoon he learnt that he was offered no reparation beyond profuse apologies, his anger was so inflamed that he departed, rumbling out threats of bringing a suit against the Italian Government.

But as it happened, Professor Poppleton did no such thing. He lost some days in Rome, waiting on the Ambassador, without result. He went to Paris, vowing that he would never set foot on Italian soil again. He found that he had missed his friends, who had just left for England. Two days after he himself had returned he received the following letter:

My dear Professor,

My long-cherished visions of art study and life abroad are at last to become realities, and you are the conjuror. This may sound like nonsense, but you'll see that it's anything but nonsense when I recall to you our visit to the curio shop at Naples, when we exchanged gifts, or, rather, one gift, and the promise of another. It was those few minutes in the shop that made me acquainted with the Italian lottery ticket, half of which was to be my present to you.

The next day I put my money on a number recommended by one of the attendants of the hotel; he said it was sure to draw a prize, as it had been given to a friend of his by a man with a lucky eye—whatever that may be.

At any rate, our Consul at Naples has just informed me that I have won the chief prize; and now I'm hoping for an opportunity to redeem my promise in person.

I write to express my hope that you have returned, and will soon give me that opportunity.

Gratefully,

ALICE FELTHAM.

The professor and his wife now make their home in Rome, and one of their favourite trips is to an unenlightened place called Naples.

OWEN ROTHWELL.

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SAVING THE COMPANY.

MADE any money?

Well, sir, it's a business in which you can either make or lose a lot. I've made two or three small fortunes, and lost about as much as I've made. I've got a moderate provision for the time when I get too old to travel about in this way. I think that's as much as most people can say, and I ought to be satisfied.

But I tell you, time has been when I didn't know where the next meal would come from, and half a dozen players to be provided for as well as myself. I remember one of the worst times I ever had was in the Lake District. I can laugh now, to think of that girl's sharpness, but it was no matter for laughing at that time.

I was starring it through the country with a speciality troupe—musical sketches, ventriloquists, conjurers and minstrels, with a small comedy company thrown in. Mam'selle Susine Allonette was with us (she was Sue Allen off the stage) as leading lady, and she also did some daring tightrope and trapeze business.

She was a sharp little midget, and used to give us the length of her tongue when she got cross.

But she helped me out of a bad fix grandly, the time I speak of, and I felt like giving her a little liberty.

We had been having bad luck. I hadn't been able to pay my company's salaries for three weeks, hadn't a shilling to send home to my wife, and things looked pretty bad I tell you.

When we got to the next town I had hardly money enough to pay the boys who distributed my bills. I had nearly made up my mind to sell my watch (the only thing of value I had left), pay off the men and girls as far as I could and break up the company. We came on at night from the last town, and I resolved to see what the weather was in the morning before I decided what to do.

When I got up I saw the streets were covered with mud and a sharp cold wind was blowing. It would be an awful night, and we should get no house at all. My heart sank like lead, and I wished I hadn't sent the bills out.

We should have to play that night, but it would be the last time.

I thought I would speak to my leading lady, so I went to Sue Allen's room and knocked at the door. She opened the door, and I found her mending the dress she wore in her trapeze performance (we were too poor to have new costumes just then).

"Sue," said I, "I've come to bring bad news."

"Well, what is it?" she said.

"We've got to break up," I said with a sigh.

"Now I don't see that!" returned Sue, fixing her sharp eyes on me. "What is the reason?"

"Why we've made nothing for a month. Sue, I can't pay any of you, and I know you need your money."

"Well this is a fairly large town," said Sue calmly.

"Yes, but look what wretched weather! We shan't have half a house to-night, and I can't even put a puff into the papers to coax people out. It's no use, Sue we shall have to give up!"

"Not if I know it!" says Sue, striking an attitude. "Can't you get up a sensation that will draw?"

"I've tried to think of something, and I can't," I answered. "There isn't a dodge that can be gone through without money, and that I haven't got."

"Well, I've been trying to think, too," says Miss Sue, coolly as before. "And I think we shall have a crowded house to-night."

"Who's going to fill it?" I asked.

"I am," returned Miss Sue demurely.

I gave a low whistle of incredulity.

"Oh, I mean it," said Sue.

There was an air about the girl which struck me.

"Mr. Lane," she said, as I looked silently at her, "I want my salary, and I don't want this company to go down. If you'll let me do as I please, and ask no questions, I'll fill that hall full to-night, and we shall all get our money."

"Then do as you please!" I groaned. "Anything to help me just now!"

"You give me full liberty, and ask no questions?" asked Sue.

"Yes. Go ahead."

"All right. I'm going out for a walk in ten minutes. Make some of the men walk in the direction I do, but order them on no account to come near or interrupt me. Will you?"

"Yes, I will, Sue. Where are you going?"

"Never mind that. Isn't there a wooden railway bridge near here?"

"Yes. We came past it."

"I thought so. Trains run pretty often, don't they?"

I looked at my watch.

"There will be one in half an hour," said I.

"Then I've no time to lose," said Sue. "There, be off, so that I can go."

"Look here, what are you going to do first?" I asked anxiously.

"Nothing that will hurt me, I assure you," answered Sue, laughing. "And you promised to ask no questions. You stay here, and if you hear anything extraordinary, why, then come. Order the men to do as I told you, but they must not try to stop me. I can take care of myself and they shall share the reward."

I began to catch a dim idea of what Sue intended. I said:

"Sue, you shall not run into danger."

"Be off, I tell you," commanded Sue. "I'll be in no danger. Do go, or I shall miss that train."

Well, I submitted to go out, and told two of the men that when Sue walked out they must go too, and keep her in sight, but on no account disturb her. They promised, and I went out as quickly as I could. I knew that whatever Sue meant to do was connected with the railway, and I intended to see what she did, without her knowledge.

I took a look round and posted myself where I could see all that passed, without being seen.

After a while I saw a little figure come tripping down the railway as if for a walk, and I knew it was our Sue even before I could recognise her dress.

She came walking along and deliberately began to cross the bridge by stepping on the ties.

I glanced at my watch—the train was due, and even then I heard the rumble of it. I began to tremble and feel cold, but Sue walked calmly on. If I had not known her skill on the trapeze bar I should have rushed out after her. But if she could trust herself, I could trust her, so I waited.

Presently the engine-driver saw her, and whistled. "Down brakes!"

But Sue walked on as though she heard nothing.

The engine-driver blew a fearful shriek, and did his best to slacken speed, but he couldnot stop in time. And when the train was close to her. She seemed to discover her danger, threw up her arms with a wild cry, and disappeared from view.

By the time the train had passed over the bridge and stopped a crowd had collected. I was there, and my two men, and they were crying like babies as they met me saying:

"Oh, Mr. Lane, Sue's killed! Poor Sue's killed!"

"Perhaps not," I tried to answer, white as death myself.

"Oh, she is! The train went right over her as she fell!" sobbed one of them.

I feared it was indeed true.

But when we rushed down to the bank and along under the bridge, followed by the crowd, there was our plucky little Sue, clinging to the trestle-work under the bridge, a bit pale, but not even a shred of her dress torn.

We got her out quickly, and such a time as there was then, on the bank of that river, I never saw.

As for our company—well, you never saw such antics anywhere.

I didn't know whether to cry over the daring little minx or to scold her roundly.

Of course the story flew like wild-fire, and the streets were crowded with people trying to get a glimpse of the brave little actress before we got back.

In the afternoon we put reserved seats on sale at two or three places where they had not been before, and by dark every seat was sold.

Sue's ruse was a success.

That hall was crowded half an hour before the curtain rose, and when Sue came on the stage the applause was deafening.

After the show was over we had enough to pay our bills, nearly all the back salaries, and make Sue a present of ten pounds for saving us.

Our company did not break up, but was in luck for the rest of the season.

E. B. R.

How Fame Came to Jean Maret.

THERE had not been such a spring morning in Paris for years. Everything was bathed in sunshine, the sky was of the softest blue, the pavements were intensely white, and the river blazed and glistened. The dreary winter had vanished, and it seemed that there could be nothing but happiness for everybody.

Jean Maret and his wife, an elderly couple, sat in a neatly furnished room, looking at each other with vexation plainly visible on their faces. Jean held the morning paper in his left hand, while he thrummed impatiently on the table with his right hand.

"It really is *too* provoking," he said, the vexed expression deepening on his countenance. "Here have I been striving all my life to do something to make myself famous, but have never succeeded in making my name known beyond the circle of my friends and customers; whereas Charpentier and others, who could never hope to achieve fame by their own efforts, have had it thrust upon them."

"It is very provoking," said Elise softly. "But perhaps it is for the best. We must not forget," she added, "that we have been fortunate in business and have saved money enough to allow us to live comfortably in our old age without work, while others have not been so lucky."

"Yes," returned her husband hesitatingly. He was unwilling to acknowledge anything that made him appear in any other character than that of an ill-used man. "Still, it *is* annoying to see such an insignificant person as Heron—who never did anything in his life—become the talk of all France, have his name in all the newspapers, receive visits from high officials, and a message from the Preside t himself! Of course, it will be the same for him as it was for Charpentier. Why can't the Anarchists drop a bomb outside *our* door? They never go off," he added, as his wife shrank back at the thought. "Look at this column; it's all about the bomb found under Heron's window after dusk yesterday."

Jean tossed the paper upon his wife's lap in disgust. Elise put on her glasses and ran through the report. Yes, it was vexing; she knew how much Jean longed for fame, and she was conscious that she, too, would be pleased to receive a message from the President. She half sighed as she laid the sheet on the chair and began to clear away the breakfast things.

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Jean Maret seated himself by the open window and smoked his pipe while the sunshine streamed in upon him. He was very discontented—foolish old man! Why had Fate been so unkind to them? he asked himself in bitterness of spirit. Why could *he* not find a bomb on his doorstep or his window-sill? It was shabby treatment after the exemplary life he had led, and he resented it. Just then he caught the words of some passers-by—they were talking about Heron. Confound Heron! Jean dragged his pipe savagely from his lips and stood up.

"I must go now, Elise," he said to her.

"Must you go out to-day, Jean? I thought that we might have had a run out into the country as it is so fine."

"I promised old Mercier I would help him either to-day or to-morrow, Elise, and I think I had better go to-day. I must have something to occupy my thoughts to-day; I should not enjoy the little trip, I feel so vexed."

She did not reply. He fetched his hat and stick, and a light overcoat to put on in the evening, and kissed her tenderly.

"You will meet me at the café this evening, Elise," he said. "I shall be there at seven o'clock sharp, and we will have our usual little treat."

"I will be there punctually, Jean dear," she returned, looking him up and down with true wifely solicitude and straightening his tie, which was awry. "Take care of yourself. These spring days are very deceiving; the wind is often keen."

He kissed her again, and left the room and the house with a step that was less brisk than usual.

"She is a good wife," murmured Jean Maret as he walked through the streets "and she deserves more than I can give her. I am more annoyed on her account than on my own."

They had spent nearly forty years of their lives together and had been all in all to each other; they had no near relatives and their only child had died in infancy. Elise had cheered and comforted him when in trouble and difficulty, and he had always felt that she had not been sufficiently rewarded; not that *she* had complained—oh, no; she was too good for that.

Jean Maret left his friend later than he had intended, and he hurried along in order to reach the café in time and not keep Elise waiting. This weekly dinner at the café was one of the very few enjoyments that the old couple indulged in; they had kept it up for years and it was unquestionably a treat for them. For it must be remembered that they were of the old school and had not developed the expensive tastes of the present day.

The cafe was not very far from their home, and in order to reach it Jean had to pass within a few yards of the end of his own street. He was hurrying along in the darkness, close to the houses, so as to avoid the cutting east wind, when his foot kicked against something hard. He stopped abruptly, bent down to look at the object, and almost gasped for breath. It was a bomb!

For a moment he stood bewildered; then a wild idea seized him. Here was his opportunity at last. He had found a bomb! But would he gain a full share of credit if he called the police? Would it not be better to ——? Yes, he would do it!

He stooped down and lifted the engine of destruction. It was a live bomb; there was no doubt about it, for he could hear something inside. He must be quick.

Grasping it firmly, he started off at a run for his own dwelling. He was trembling with excitement, mixed with a certain amount of fear; suppose it were to go off in his hands? He ran at full speed and arrived at his door quite out of breath. He placed it on the step, gave a hasty glance round to see that there was no one about to discover it and so rob him of the coveted fame, then he walked rapidly away.

The bomb would explode and damage his house, but what did that matter? He would be the talk of Paris, of France, of the world! He would receive a message of sympathy from the President—perhaps the Chief of the Republic would call upon him or summon him to the——. He could not finish the line of reflection; his brain was in a whirl, he seemed to be walking on air.

What would Elise say? How pleased she would be that Fame had come at last. They could forgive her tardiness now. Good Elise! She would now have the honour she so well deserved!

He had now reached the door of the restaurant. He fancied he heard a dull noise in the direction of home, and he smiled as he entered the establishment. He went straight towards the corner table at which they always sat. He was late; he had kept her waiting—for she was as punctual as the sun itself, but she would not mind when she——

He stood still suddenly, gazing at the little table. Elise was not there; the chairs were unoccupied. How strange that she should have chosen another table when that one was free.

He gazed about him in search of his faithful partner, but he could not see her. Where had she gone? He began to feel uneasy; for the first time in all these years she was late. He went to a waiter who knew them both very well, and inquired for Elise; but the man had not seen her, and was positive that she had not entered the café that evening.

A horrible thought flashed across his mind. Had she—was she——? Oh, Heaven, not that!

He reeled as though struck; then he rushed out of the place like a madman. Away he went! He dropped his stick, the wind blew his hat off and his coat open; but he heeded not these trifles. With wild, staring eyes he glared down the street as soon as he arrived at the top of it. He saw the gaping crowd, and knew that the fell apparatus had done its work. And Elise?

The crowd fell back and made way for him as he approached and was recognised. Words of commiseration became audible to him, but he pushed his way frantically to the door. The police on guard at first thought of stopping him out of pity, but they stood aside and let him enter without a word. Chaos reigned within, but he went instinctively to the bedroom. There, on the bed that had been hurriedly set straight until the ambulance should come to convey her to the hospital, lay Elise, his dear, faithful wife, terribly mutilated.

With a groan he flung himself by the side of the bed and sobbed convulsively. Oh, wretched man that he was! He had murdered his wife!

Her life was fast ebbing away. She could not see him, but she knew that he was there. With a last effort she slid her hand along and touched him. He heard her murmur some words of consolation in a feeble voice.

"Elise, Elise!" he began. He was about to tell her that he, her husband, had brought this upon her, when he heard her voice, so faint that he could only just catch the words.

"You will be famous now, Jean, and I—am not suffering—much."

Then he heard a sigh, and he knew that she was at rest.

Geo. Day.

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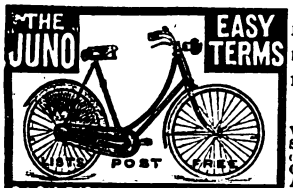

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

N. S. W.—The temperature of the towns of New South Wales in summer is not appreciably different from that of many parts of Europe. Thus, Sydney corresponds with Toulon, and is four degrees warmer than Paris; and the Manaro Plains correspond with the English Midland Counties. But the warm weather in that colony has more "staying" properties than the specimens we get here.

W. wishes to know if I have any idea of the weight of a whale.——— Nilsson, a Norwegian zoologist, says that the weight of the Greenland whale is 100 tons or 224,000lbs. He further states that it is equal to that of eighty-eight elephants or 440 bears. The Greenland whale may be described as the "heavy weight" of the ocean.

B. V. B. writes to say that he thinks he has discovered the reason for the hitherto unaccountable dislike women have for mice. It appears that for centuries, even until quite recently, it was a common belief that the soul of an unbaptised child assumed the form of a mouse, and came back to haunt the home of its relatives. As such, the little creature inspired no little terror. "Probably," writes B. V. B., "this has become an hereditary instinct, and has outlived the cause."

J. G.—Within the last eleven years, the number of railway stations in Germany has been increased by 2,500. There are now nearly 9,000 railway stations in the Fatherland.

T. K. asks: "Where does nickel come from? The consumption of this metal must be increasing considerably."———Nickel is the principal component of the alloy known as German silver, and is now of greater importance than formerly, owing to its employment in the manufacture of nickel steel. The supply of nickel is obtained from two districts only; one is a small region in New Caledonia, the other is the Sudbury district in Ontario. If any miner were lucky enough to "strike nickel" it would be a real Klondyke for him.

K. L.—The question of the proportion of the wall surface of a room to be occupied by windows has been answered differently by various experts. One authority says one-eighth, another considers the proper proportion to be one-sixth. A high authority stated some years ago that there should be one square foot of glass to every hundred cubic feet that a room contained. Windows ought always to be placed in the longest side of the apartment.

As the result of the plebiscite which was made recently to discover the desirability of republishing "The Final War" by Mr. Louis Tracy, in *Short Stories*, I have now to inform readers that this stirring serial will start in the Bank Holiday Number of *Short Stories*. It will be profusely illustrated with stirring sketches, and these will be of additional interest to those who perused the tale while it ran as a serial through the pages of *Pearson's Weekly*. I should be much obliged to readers if they would incidentally mention these facts to those people who do not regularly see *Short Stories*, for I am sure that there are many thousands of people who would gladly read "The Final War" if they had the opportunity of knowing that it was to again appear.

Alter.—The name "agate" is derived from the name of the river Achates, in Sicily, near which these stones were found in abundance by the ancients. They are now found in Scotland, Saxony and Hungary, and are brought from China and the East Indies.

Lover asks a question which is calculated to upset the equanimity of many young people: "Has there ever been a law against kissing, and don't you think it would be a good thing if there were such a law now? I know that a man must not kiss a woman against her will, or a woman kiss a man against his will."———I like the last clause immensely. As to the second half of your question, no, I certainly do not think that it would be a good thing to have such a law in this country. Whatever would our country lanes be like if—— But the idea is too terrible for words! It may interest you to know that, in accordance with a law of the New Haven colony in 1660, Jacobeth Murline and Sarah Tuttle were prosecuted for "setting down on a cheste together, his arms about her waiste, and her arme upon his shoulder or about his neck, and continuing in that sinful posture about half-anhour, in which time he kyssed her and she kyssed him, or they kyssed one another, as ye witnesses testified."

Buz asks: "Is the buzzing of winged insects due to the exertion of flying?" —— The humming noise produced by winged insects is not a vocal sound. It is a result of the undulations imparted to the air by the vibrations of their wings, and ceases when the insects alight—which would not be the case if it were due to exertion. Insects move their wings at an almost incredible rate when flying; for instance, it has been scientifically proved that the gnat's wings vibrate 15,000 times a second.

Nut.—Large quantities of hazel nuts come from Turkey. They are shipped from Trebizond and Kerassund; during 1897 the former port shipped 137,000cwt., valued at £92,260, of which this country took £2,250, while the shipment from Kerassund was larger. The fruit gardens in the districts served by those ports are very extensive. A large trade is done in dried apricots.

C. E.—The strange custom of "whistling for bait" prevails among the fisher class of Ceylon. Some of the natives of Colombo are constantly engaged in fishing on the sea-shore, and this is the way they get their bait: A fisherman runs down some yards to meet an advancing wave, agitating the water, and probably the sand also, with the fingers of one hand; he whistles all the time. When the wave retreats he follows it, and almost invariably finds a long worm at the spot where he agitated the water. Of course the natives believe that the whistling acts as a charm, and makes the worm rise to the surface.

L. A.—The English statute acre was fixed at 4,840 square yards by an Act passed in 1824. At one time the acre was an uncertain quantity and varied in different parts of the country. It is probable that the word originally signified cultivated land, and was applied to the extent of land that could be ploughed by one person in one day. If that be so, what are we to conclude from the fact that the Cheshire acre contained 10,240 square yards and the Leicestershire acre only had 2,308?

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A CHANCE OF A LIFETIME.

GIGANTIC CLEARANCE SALE.

£50,000 worth of Goods Offered at Half Price.

THE ENORMOUS STOCK OF CARPETS, CURTAINS, SHEETS, BLANKETS, QUILTS, &C., MUST BE CLEARED WITHOUT REGARD TO COST, OWING TO THE L.C.C. REQUIRING PRESENT PREMISES FOR STREET IMPROVEMENTS.

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This Offer Will Not be Repeated.

ALL GOODS WARRANTED ABSOLUTELY PERFECT IN EVERY WAY. Money Willingly Returned if not Approved

Lot 1.—4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d. These beautiful Lace Curtains, containing about 6 yards in the pair, 48in. wide, shaded ground, taped edges, with handsome double borders. Undoubtedly the cheapest ever offered. Special Offer: 3 pairs for 5s. 6d. Satisfaction guaranteed. — **4s. Lace Curtains for 1s. 11d.**

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70in. by 90in.	... 8½lb.	... 11s. 6d.	... 33s.
75in. by 96in.	... 9lb.	... 13s. 0s.	... 37s.
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3s. Best Brussels Stair Carpet for 1s. 9d. — Lot 48.—3s. Brussels Carpeting for 1s. 9d. per yard, 22 inches wide. Handsomely bordered, superior quality, light and dark shades, magnificent design and colourings. Satisfaction guaranteed or money returned

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Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No.	ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
1	9 0	by 6 0	5/6	9/0
2	9 0	by 7 6	7/0	11/9
3	9 0	by 9 0	8/6	13/6
4	10 6	by 7 6	8/9	13/9
5	10 6	by 9 0	10/-	15/6
6	12 0	by 9 0	11/6	18/0

Lot 60. SIZES and PRICES. No.	ft. in.	ft. in.	Sale Price.	Former Price.
7	12 0	by 10 6	13/6	20/6
8	13 6	by 10 6	15/3	24/0
9	12 0	by 12 0	15/3	24/0
10	13 6	by 12 0	17/0	27/0
11	15 0	by 12 0	19/0	32/0
12	18 0	by 12 0	22/9	36/0

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 500. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 30TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 500. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending July 30th, 1898.

The Story of the Safe.

ONE morning in the spring of 1894, the attention of persons walking along the Sudbury Street was attracted to a huge iron safe that was being put out from the warehouse of a well-known safe company, which for many years had occupied premises in that street.

The pavement was blocked, while a number of men, with great effort, by the aid of blocks, rollers, and the rest of the usual "tackle," moved the huge mass of iron on to a waggon by which it was to be transported to its destination.

Of course, passers-by wondered and queried as to the purpose and possible use of a safe of such unusual form and dimensions. But the curiosity of the questioners remained unsatisfied. No one standing by knew, and the officials and employés were too busy to answer those who ventured to interrupt with their inquiries.

This much, however, was evident—the safe was not new; indeed, the style and appearance of it indicated that it had been built many years ago for some special purpose, in which it had doubtless seen long service. Altogether, the appearance of this strange object so excited my curiosity that, although I was in a hurry to reach my office, I waited until the thing was finally placed on the waggon and the latter moved slowly up

EDITED BY C. Arthur Pearson

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the street. Then I entered the shop of the safe company, and being well acquainted with the manager, I asked if he could give me the old safe's history.

He replied that there was a strange story connected with it, known now only to himself. For certain reasons it never had been known except to two people, and they had been secretly bound, one by personal interest, and the other by a solemn vow, never to divulge the secret.

"This promise," he said, "has been faithfully kept; but now, all those in any way connected with or affected by it have passed beyond the dark river. The safe, which has stood here for many years like a spectre, reminding me of the dead past, has now, to my great relief, vanished for ever, and I know no good reason why the strange story should not be told.

"While I may withhold or change names in the recital, that which I am about to relate is true, and is capable, to some extent, of verification."

I decided that my hurry could wait for an hour. I wanted to hear that story. After inviting me to take a seat, the manager continued:

"More than fifty years ago a stranger of good appearance entered the shop of one Kershaw, a manufacturer at the corner of Green Street, inquired for the proprietor, and stated that he wanted constructed a strong, fireproof safe, giving the description and dimensions desired.

"By his conversation he appeared familiar with such work, and stated plainly how he wanted this one made and the kind of lock required. In answer to inquiries, he said that he was about to open a jewellery shop in Hanover Street, that he did not intend to do a retail business, but would have a considerable stock for wholesale trade. He added, also, that as he would be absent from his shop travelling on business from time to time, he desired a safe of large dimensions, where his stock could safely be stored during his absence, as well as at night.

"He required no shelves in the safe, and wanted it of unusual depth that he might put directly into it the cases and trunks in which he would keep or carry his stock.

"Being convinced of the stranger's respectability by a large deposit, and by the promise of full payment on completion and delivery, Mr. Kershaw accepted his order, and in due time the safe was completed and delivered.

"Soon after, a sign was put up on the shop: 'J. Williamson, Wholesale Dealer in Watches and Jewellery.' No great display was made in the window. Goods were received and shipped by the rear entrance opening on a narrow court. Apparently but little business was done at the shop, and frequently Mr. Williamson was absent visiting his customers.

"He contracted no indebtedness, paying cash for everything. He expressed a lack of confidence in banks and bankers, saying that he had once lost a large sum by the failure of a bank in which he had had an account, and for the future should be his own banker.

"Shortly after he began business, he took up his residence in a northern suburb, and regularly attended one of the churches in the neighbourhood. No subscription paper or contribution box ever passed him without a fairly liberal donation.

"In disposition he was quiet and retiring, and rarely spoke except in response to some inquiry. His earlier life he never referred to except in reply to one or two persons who ventured the question, when he briefly stated that he was the second son of a well-to-do country gentleman, that as that life was distasteful to him, he had gone to London and begun a commercial career.

"Within a year after he had ordered the safe, Mr. Williamson sought the hand of the eldest daughter of a respectable merchant, who attended the same place of worship. Having satisfied her parents as to his character and so forth, he was accepted, and with little delay married. By his quiet, correct life, liberality, and honest dealing, he secured the confidence and respect of all who knew him.

"About this time a strange epidemic of crime swept over this town. The houses of the wealthy were entered and robbed of their valuable contents. Packages of money were boldly seized within the very inclosures of the bank, the thief escaping through some passage, or by slipping into a house and fastening the door behind him; the satchels of bank messengers, filled with valuable contents, were suddenly snatched and the robber eluded pursuit. At night persons were garroted and robbed in the public thoroughfares.

"The police force was small, and, although they exercised unusual diligence, every few days some new and startling crime, committed with wonderful skill and boldness, was announced. It was thought that a gang of experienced criminals had made a descent upon the town so long exempt from crime, and every stranger was under suspicion, and carefully watched.

"One night, not long after his marriage, Mr. Williamson was found on the bridge in a dazed, exhausted condition, and assisted to his home. When sufficiently recovered, he stated that while crossing the bridge he was suddenly seized from behind, his throat grasped so that he could not cry out, and his pocketbook, containing a large sum of money, taken from him. He struggled to free himself from his unknown assailant until he gasped for breath, and fell exhausted, unconscious.

"On the following day Mr. Williamson offered a liberal reward for the arrest of the highway robber, but as he had not seen him he could give no clue to aid in the detention of the criminal. Some of the persons robbed, however, who had caught a glimpse of the thief, described a dark person with heavy black hair, wearing blue spectacles; and as it was believed that he and the assailant of Williamson were one, search was made for a person answering this description.

"One evening the whole town was startled by the news of a crime just committed, bolder than any that had preceded it. The premises of Davis and Palmer, jewellers, in Market Street, had been entered between the hours of seven and eight p.m., and the most valuable part of their stock taken, the trays containing many valuable watches, diamonds, and jewellery, having all been emptied.

"As was customary, the shop was closed at seven o'clock, and a night watchman came on duty within an hour after. On this evening when the watchman entered he found the cases stripped of their valuable contents, and immediately gave the alarm. The police were sent for, and investigation began.

"It was soon discovered that persons near the shop had seen a trap drive up, a man alight, unlock and enter the shop. Not long afterwards he came out bringing two heavily-laden bags, one after the other, which he placed in the trap and drove away.

"At the time no suspicion had been excited, as there was nothing peculiar about his manner of entering or leaving the premises. From his course of action the thief was evidently well acquainted with the fact that

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there was a brief period between the closing of the shop and the arrival of the watchman; and having at some time, doubtless, obtained an impress of the key, and made a duplicate, the task of entering and robbing the premises at a time when it was least expected, was an easy one.

"In those days the detective force was not what it is now, but we had an experienced man in the town, and when it was known that a large reward had been offered for the discovery and return of the goods, irrespective of the arrest and conviction of the criminal, Capper devoted himself at once to that object.

"As a first step he visited every stable in the town, but with no great result. The owner of the trap was found, but could give no information except that it had been hired in the afternoon by a dark-haired man wearing coloured glasses, and that late in the evening the cart and horse were found without any driver in Northgate Street.

"As weeks passed and the mystery seemed no nearer a solution, the strange robbery became the universal topic of conversation. Every clue and suspicion was followed up. Strangers were arrested and obliged to prove their innocence. Everybody became a detective.

"Some weeks after the robbery a stranger came to the parcel office with a trunk which he wished to send to London. Something in the manner of the man, an unnatural, half-disguised appearance, excited the suspicion of the alert, sharp-eyed clerk, who had been cautioned by Capper, and while he proceeded to make out the receipt he secretly sent a messenger to the officer.

"Upon his arrival, Capper instantly began to question the stranger, demanding to know the contents of the trunk. His inquiries were frankly answered with proper explanation, and the key produced that the officer might verify the same by examination. The innocent frankness of the stranger disarmed Capper, and, half apologising for not accepting his statements as sufficient, he stooped to unlock the trunk, when suddenly the stranger leapt by him and out through the door, barring it after him by thrusting a stout cane through the iron handle.

"Throwing himself against the door, the officer soon broke the improvised bolt and rushed off in pursuit, following the fugitive down through street after street into a narrow court, where the man had disappeared. But though there was no outlet other than that by which he had entered, a thorough search of this place a few moments after failed to discover the fugitive, or the way of his escape.

"After the houses in the court were searched without discovering any trace of the probable thief, the proprietors of the shops facing Hanover Street on each side and having rear entrances in this court were sent for. Among these was Mr. Williamson, but as it was ascertained at his residence that he was absent, travelling, his premises were forcibly opened. Here, however, as in the others, no person or sign of one was found.

"The burglar, for such an examination of the trunk proved to be, was never captured, nor was trace of him discovered, although diligent search of that neighbourhood was made by the whole police force.

"Not long after the town was again startled, this time by the announcement in the morning papers of the mysterious disappearance and probable murder of Mr. Williamson. He was known to carry large sums of money upon his person, and as there was no good explanation of his absence, it was thought most probable that he had been robbed and murdered. In fact, there were some who reported hearing at night cries for help in the vicinity of his shop, and a hat which had been found one morning in the street near his premises proved to be one worn by him on the morning when he last left his home.

"Information was sought by advertisement in the newspapers, with promise of liberal reward, but all investigation proved unavailing.

"After some weeks of inquiry and search, the general suspicion that he had been murdered and his body done away with, became a settled conviction; but his faithful, trusting wife refused to believe him dead, and her father finally proceeded to London, to see what information, if any, could be gained from those with whom his son-in-law had had dealings in the metropolis.

"What he ascertained there I do not know, but immediately on his return he came to my employer for a workman to go to the shop and open in his presence the safe containing the stock stored therein.

"After some drilling the bolt was sprung and the door swung open, disclosing a sight at which I started back affrighted and amazed, and which so horrified the troubled and anxious father that he fell like a dead man on the floor.

"There, within the safe, lay the dead body of Mr. Williamson, the trusted and respected jewellery merchant.

"On recovering consciousness the father, heart-broken, implored me, for his sake and the fair name of his daughter, never to make known the sight then revealed, and to assist him in concealing all evidence which would tend to disclose it. To both these requests I at once acceded, and that night I helped him to carry out the body privately for burial—no matter where.

"An examination of the safe disclosed a hardly discernible aperture drilled through the back near the top, from which, on the inside, hung a flexible tube by which respiration was made possible for a person inclosed, and through which a noise from without could reach the inmate.

"On the inside of the door a hole had been cut so that the key could be inserted and the bolt thrown back. The handle of this key had broken off, leaving the key in the lock. There were indications that food and water had been stored in the safe, but none remained; even the shoes bore marks of the teeth, as if gnawed for sustenance.

"A black wig and a pair of blue spectacles lay on the floor of the safe. Seeing all this, we soon conjectured for what purpose this safe was made and used—a temporary place of quick retreat.

"We wondered if the key was broken by accident in the haste to elude that last pursuit, or in attempting to re-open the door. We thought we knew now, though each was silent, the mystery of the many recent crimes; but one thing was certain, they ceased, and the author of them was never found or arrested."

J. Clarke.

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A Splendid Make-Up.

SIN LOO paused again beneath a lamp-post and again examined the slip of paper held in his hand. On it was written an address.

To that address Sin Loo had been travelling for over an hour; for the contents of the twin baskets hanging from the ends of the pole across his shoulders were being impatiently awaited by the person who had penned the directions. A dozen times had Loo held the paper forth to passers-by and softly asked: "Wha-lat?" And not once had assistance been denied. Some, captivated by Loo's artless and helpless countenance, had even walked to the nearest corner and from there indicated the right direction.

Already, had he but known it, Loo had passed the house that he was seeking a half dozen times, for during the last half-hour he had been breathlessly hurrying round the same circle of streets. And now he studied the paper again with perplexed eyes.

But to him it was only a series of faint black scratches, sadly deficient in symmetry and sense, when judged by his idea of what correct writing should be.

Sin Loo sighed, shook his head despondently, and clutching the bit of paper tightly, looked about him in bewilderment and alarm.

It was very dark; the streets were practically deserted, and the scurrying cabs and carriages with the blazing lights suggested to Sin Loo the passing of so many fiery-orbed dragons of the kind impressed upon his memory by his grandmother's fairy tales, told years before under the twilight of Canton skies. Ah! would that he had never left that city to seek fortune in Australia!

Presently, as he hurried on, his eye caught sight of a figure in the distance, and in a moment he was fleeing along the pavement as though the evil one himself were upon his heels. On he fled, the basket swaying and bobbing about him as though suddenly invested with life. Then he paused and glanced fearfully back, and a long-drawn sigh of relief escaped him; the Man in Authority—the demon, as Loo regarded him—was no longer in sight.

Sin Loo, during his brief residence amongst them, had learnt to look upon policemen as the incarnation of all evil, and to fly from them as he would from the purple ogres of his grandmother's tales.

Out of all reckoning now, Sin Loo held forth his precious slip of paper and looked about for assistance. But no one was to be seen until, presently, his troubled gaze, searching the dim street, encountered a wonderful sight. At a little distance a canopy of striped cloth reached from a residence into the street, and from under it shone a radiant blaze of light. Sin Loo was but eighteen, and curiosity seized upon him. Cautiously he moved forward. A throng of people barred the way, and Sin Loo crept into the shadow of the group.

From there he could see a strip of beautiful crimson carpet running from the street across the pavement, up a flight of high, broad steps, and through a portal luminous with golden light, whence issued the subdued strains of what seemed celestial music. Surely, thought Sin Loo, here lived the blessed gods!

Wondering curiosity got the upper hand of fear, and Sin Loo began to worm his way through the crowd. But the swinging baskets seriously retarded progress, until the onlookers, becoming aware of his presence, opened up a path for him with cries of, "Here's another of 'em! Make way there for Li Hung Chang!" and Sin Loo, smiling timidly upon all, advanced until the beautiful crimson carpet lay at his feet.

He stretched out one little slipper until it rested caressingly upon the edge of the carpet, and then heaved a sigh of ecstasy. The carpet was for all the world like the soft down on the breasts of the white ducks that his grandfather raised on the Choo-Kiang.

Suddenly Loo darted back with a cry of absolute terror. There was a great noise, the people behind pressed forward, a carriage with the fiercest of eyes stopped, with a clanking of chains, before the awning; two resplendent beings in red and blue livery darted forward and swung open the door; and an angel—two angels—in white, stepped out. But it was not the carriage that had frightened Sin Loo. Nay; but there, not two steps away, terrible, demoniac, stood a huge Man in Authority, waving a huge stick toward Sin Loo.

With a yell of agony, Sin Loo strove to retreat. But no, the crowd held him. There was but one way open. His profane feet trod the carpet of the gods, and with three bounds he stood in the portal of Paradise.

Struck with the danger of his predicament, Sin Loo glanced fearfully back, only to meet the eyes of the Demon who barred the way. He was laughing loudly with the rest of the throng, but to Sin Loo he appeared to be gnashing his teeth with disappointment over the escape of his prey. To remain there was to be lost. What should he do?

Sin Loo gazed about him, and for a moment was lost in awe and admiration of his surroundings. Near at hand, lined by flowering shrubs and waving palms, rose a great staircase, winding slowly upward, to be lost in another flood of light from above. About him were blazing lights, banks of brilliant blossoms, graceful festoons; in his nostrils what seemed the scent of a thousand gardens, in his ears such music as they had never heard. A burst of laughter aroused him.

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Down the great staircase, holding their brilliant draperies about them, came a group of goddesses. In desperation Sin Loo darted to a great curtain, whose folds shed a dozen hues under the light. Behind this he would hide. He lifted a corner, when, as though by magic means, the curtain was whisked from his grasp, and before him, dazzling with jewels and radiant apparel, with hand outstretched, stood—ah, yes, it could only be the queen of the goddesses, waiting to rebuke his presumption!

With quaking heart, Sin Loo turned to flee. But lo! the entrance was gone from sight. Behind him stood sentinel two huge ogres in shining armour, and clasping great glittering blades, the sight of which sent thrills of terror coursing through the marrow of Loo's trembling bones. Before him stood, sat, or walked a multitude of gods.

He closed his eyes and waited annihilation. Presently he opened them again and found himself still alive. Then he sought to escape in the throng, flattening himself and his awkward burdens against the nearest flower-screened wall, and hiding behind the great marble pillars and tall palms. But he could not avoid notice; murmured comment greeted his stealthy progress, and the eyes of gods and goddesses followed him.

Then the music began again, and in a moment the great gold and white hall was a wonderful kaleidoscope. for the inhabitants of Paradise, in their gorgeous dresses, with their flashing gems and waving plumes, were dancing together. Sin Loo, forgetting his terror for the moment, peeped from behind a tall and feathery fern, and thought that never had his most magnificent dreams pictured Paradise one thousandth part as wonderful as it was.

Before him two gods, one in a mass of pale blue silk and creamy lace, the other clad in russet leather, slashed here and there to show a lining of crimson satin, were talking together. Sin Loo listened with might and main, but the words were strange, and not to be understood.

"Magnificent sight, isn't it?" the one in blue was saying in languid tones. "Ought to be, though, since they've been over six months in preparing for it. I hear there were over a thousand invitations sent out."

"Yes," replied the other. "By-the-way, have you seen Jack Vernon and his wife?"

"Can't say; probably wouldn't have known them if I had."

"Yes you would, though. Mrs. Jack told me the other day that she had secured the finest rig out of them all. Seems that she went to a Chinese costumier or whatever you call him—dressmaker, tailor, if you like—and ordered costumes for herself and Jack. She's to be a Celestial princess or something, and Jack's to be an emperor, I believe. Can't understand what's keeping them."

"I saw a Chinaman awhile ago carrying a couple of baskets slung over his arm. Fine get-up, but didn't look much like an emperor."

"Yes, saw him myself. Everybody's speaking of him. Never saw a finer Chinaman make-up in my life. Acts his part, too. I say, if you see Jack and his wife, let me know."

Then the pair hurried away, and Sin Loo now noticed that both music and dancing had ceased, and that all Paradise was flocking to the far end of the hall. To be alone was more terrifying than to be amidst the crowd. In Loo's case safety lay in numbers, and with baskets flopping to and fro, he scuttled down the room, a ludicrous little figure, slipping and sliding on the waxed surface of the ball-room floor like a duck on ice.

The queen of the goddesses, assisted by lesser deities, was going and coming amongst the crowd, forming it couple by couple into line of march. Here Richelieu was giggling with a nineteenth-century milkmaid; there one of his Swiss guards was whispering soft nothings into the pink ear of a Highland lass; yonder, a black-garbed and black-masked executioner leant on his axe and joked with a pretty Parisian cyclienne. Soldiers and peasants, kings and queens, lords and ladies, favourites of mythology, and celebrities of nursery rhyme, were all here, waiting for the orchestra, hidden in the balcony above, to strike up the martial air. Already the hostess had raised her fan, when suddenly, her gaze sweeping about the hall, caught sight of a skulking blue-clad figure. She advanced and seized Sin Loo by the sleeve.

"This way, please!" And Loo, his knees knocking together with fright, was led to the rear of the line.

"You will take me in, please," said the hostess. Again she lifted her fan, and again lowered it without making the expected signal, for across the floor from the entrance hurried a lady in simple evening costume, while at the alcoved doorway, his entrance impeded for a moment by the two knights-at-arms, who raised gleaming blades to bar his progress, a man in conventional broadcloth and linen paused with a look of serio-comic helplessness.

"It was our costumes!" exclaimed the lady breathlessly, between her hostess' expressions of pleasure and playful reprimand. "They never came, and we couldn't miss this, so here we are at the eleventh hour, plain nobodies."

"What was the trouble?"

"I don't know. I only know they were incomparable. I ordered them specially, and they were to be delivered this evening. Ko Ha, the Chinese——"

"Gracious, what's that?"

Sin Loo, grovelling on his knees, was begging for mercy in high-pitched, terror-filled vowels. He had heard his master's name, and knew that the time of reckoning had come at last. Mrs. Jack sprang forward.

"I really believe it is Ko Ha's man! Where——"

But there was no need to ask. Sin Loo's baskets lay beside him, and from one of them flowed a dazzling stream of gold-embroidered silks and satins.

"My costume!" cried Mrs. Jack.

"And mine!" cried her husband, as, laughing, he drew the treasures from the other basket.

"You—you wretch," cried Mrs. Jack. "Where have you been? How came you here? Why——"

But Sin Loo was deaf to all questioning. In his shrill treble he was gabbling monotonously all the prayers ever taught him by his beloved grandmother.

Then the orchestra played an extra waltz, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Vernon hurried away to don their costumes, and Sin Loo, still clutching the slip of paper tightly in his hand, was conducted through the great portal, down the beautiful crimson carpet, and so forth from the presence of the outraged gods.

The throng on the pavement was gone. Only the Demon remained. With a startled cry Sin Loo looked once, and then fled into darkness. And, strange to tell, the Demon only grinned!

A. C. K.

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That Fatal Erasure

Miss Amelia Lunt was the only child of two good people who had not married until they reached the years which find most wedded pairs with their children well grown up about them. They had been happy, however, and when they died, left their daughter a little income which, by close pinching, she could manage to live upon.

Amelia was not a pretty girl, but thousands of plainer girls had married and settled, while she remained a spinster. Perhaps the fact that she was by no means a good-natured person had something to do with it.

In her youth she had scornfully rejected advances of well-disposed young men who belonged to the mechanic classes, and had declared that she would only give her hand and heart to a merchant, a physician, or a clergyman. Eligible merchants were rare. The doctors were both married. The clergymen had large families.

Amelia at last awoke to the knowledge that she was getting on in life; and that if she was not careful, people would find it out.

But for that dreadful family Bible in which the record of her birth was written, she would have felt safe in slicing off ten years of her life—a proceeding which she fancied would increase her value in the eyes of a certain Mr. Dumsday, who had recently paid her a few solemn calls. He was really an old man himself, but the older the man, the younger, generally, is his choice of a wife.

Poor Amelia! She eyed the well-thumbed Bible (which her companion and assistant, Cousin Betsy Baker, always would have upon a stand in the parlour) with absolute horror.

She sat over the fire late one night, thinking over the matter.

Who knew her exact age? Cousin Betsy. But Cousin Betsy would not wish to quarrel with her, and was too old a woman to think her anything but young. The clergyman who baptised her, and the family doctor were dead. The dear old gentleman who had lodged with them from her babyhood went to Australia years before, and was probably dead also. Good Mr. Locke! What a nice gentleman he was! But she should never hear of him again. Yes, it was safe. She would do it.

It was night—half-past twelve at least. Amelia arose. She stood before the fire with her back to it, and took the candlestick in her hand.

Anyone who had observed her would certainly have believed that she was going straight to Cousin Betsy's room to end that lady's life by a jab of the sharp little knife blade, but she paused at the candlestick, knelt down, opened the family Bible at the flyleaf, and slowly, cautiously, began to scrape, scrape, scrape at the last two figures of the record of her birth.

Then she crossed the room, took a pen and inkstand, wrote two other figures in the place of those she had erased, blew upon the leaf until it was dry, carefully touched up the rest of the record to match in brightness, and drew back to read the amended lines, which now plainly stated to all beholders that she had entered this world thirty years before instead of forty.

"Amelia!"

It seemed to come from above. She looked up, expecting to see something dreadful. It was repeated.

"Amelia, aren't you coming to bed?"

It was only Cousin Betsy speaking from the upper landing.

All in a cold perspiration, Amelia managed to reply that she would come in a moment, and then, closing the Bible and putting away the writing materials, she crept upstairs, a world of horrible unseen things close after her.

Mr. Dumsday regularly "came a-courting" now. And he was a rich widower, whose married daughter professed herself anxious that he should have someone to take care of him. Amelia had quite made up her mind that lavender should be the colour of her wedding dress.

And the two were sitting together one evening talking confidentially about rheumatism and its best liniment, when the bell rang and a tall, lean gentleman, in a suit of black, was ushered into the parlour.

"Miss Amelia Lunt, I believe," he said.

"Yes, sir," said Amelia.

The gentleman bowed, handed her a card with "C. Dodridge, Solicitor," upon it, and took the seat she offered. Mr. Dumsday didn't offer to retire, and the solicitor began.

"I understand that your respected parents are no more, madam," said the solicitor. "They would remember better than you do, probably, a period of thirty years ago, when one Mr. Locke lodged with them."

"Yes, sir," said Amelia, growing red in the face. "I've heard them speak of him."

"Ah," said the gentleman, "he was a dear friend as well as a client of mine. He died about two months ago

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in Sydney. He was wealthy at the time of his death, and he never forgot the extreme kindness of the friends of thirty years ago, who knew him in his days of comparative poverty. Yes, they are gone also; but the little girl who waited on him so lovingly, still lives. She was eleven years old at that time. I suppose I address her?"

"No, sir," said Miss Lunt, redder than ever, as Mr. Dumsday turned an attentive ear to this dreadful statement—and feeling that one lie begot many, and that having fibbed in the family Bible, she must stick to it or die—"No, sir. I was not born at that date."

"I have my old friend's record," said Mr. Dodridge—"the date of his arrival here—you were one month old then—and the date of his departure. Plainly you were eleven years of age. You attached yourself fondly to my old friend's heart, madam."

"No, I didn't," said Amelia tartly. "I ought to know. I never saw him. I was born just after he left, I've been told. There's the Bible on the table; look at the date."

She opened the volume at the fatal flyleaf; the lawyer perused it slowly.

"I see, I see," he said. "Well, well; and who was this little girl?"

Agony of agonies! Here was another lie needed. Mr. Dumsday's eyes opened widely. He listened more intently. He looked at the lawyer, he looked at the lady. She must fib again, and blackly this time.

"That was a little adopted child who died," said Amelia faintly. "They didn't think they should have any family of their own."

"I see," said the lawyer rising, "I see. My friend hoped she had grown to be a woman. Good-day."

"And I can't see why you should come here to add to a lady's age," said Miss Lunt. "I'm sure it's not polite."

"Madam," said Mr. Dodridge, hat in hand, "I have an excuse; Mr. Locke, good old man, left all his fortune to that little girl. Had she lived she would be an immense heiress. I paved the way—paved the way, that's all."

He departed; Miss Lunt bowed him out. After all, what did it matter? Fortune, in the person of Mr. Dumsday, was at her feet, and she had saved ten years of her age in his eyes.

But, alas! what ailed Mr. Dumsday? He had risen; his face looked pale, his countenance anxious. He shook his head slowly, went to the candlestick, looked at the fly-leaf of the family Bible, and spoke as follows:

"Amelia, from what I see you're just about thirty years of age, aren't you?"

"Yes," said Amelia wonderingly.

"This is a trial to me, Amelia," said Mr. Dumsday. "I know I've been to blame if it come to nothing, but we must part."

"Did you think I was younger?" said Amelia. "Is that it?"

"No, Amelia," said Mr. Dumsday; "but I took a little oath to my daughter never to marry a second wife under forty. People generally think you are about that age, so I picked you out. Good-bye, Amelia. I hope I haven't spoilt your prospects. Some younger man will——"

"Oh!" cried Amelia. "Oh, come back! I'll tell the truth. I am forty!"

"Records can't lie. I saw it in the Bible," said Mr. Dumsday. "Farewell. It's a disappointment, but I must bear it."

ADA NIGHTINGALE.

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The Old Windmill.

Maitre Cormille was an old miller. He had worked his windmill for sixty years, and it was like a piece of himself.

You can imagine what the effect on him was when the steam flour-mills were introduced. For a week he ran about the village, trying to stir up the people and warning them against the folks who were coming to poison Provence with their new and dangerous devices.

"Don't have anything to do with it," he cried. "To use steam for making bread is an invention of the Evil One. I work with the Mistral and the Tramontana winds, which are the breath of the good God."

He was really quite eloquent on the subject, but the people paid no attention whatever, and went on getting their flour at the new mills.

Then the old fellow shut himself up in his mill and lived all alone like a wild animal. He would not even keep with him his grandchild Vivette, a girl of fifteen, who, since the death of her parents, had only her grandfather to look to.

The poor little thing had to go into service at the farms; and yet he seemed fond of her, and would walk a dozen miles to one of the farms where she was working. And when he got there he would sit looking at her for a long time, often with the tears in his eyes.

In the neighbourhood people thought that he had sent her away because he grudged the cost of keeping her, and that it did him no credit to let the poor child go about from one farm to another exposed to the bullying of the masters and all the dangers that beset a girl in her unprotected state.

It was also thought very queer that a respectable man like Maitre Cormille should go about such an object. He looked such a scarecrow, almost in rags as he was, with his battered old hat, that we felt quite ashamed to have him sit with us at church, and I supposed he must have guessed it, for after a bit he took to sitting in the free seats.

There was a mystery in his life. For a long time no one in the village had taken any corn to him to grind, and yet his mill was always going, and in the evening we used to meet the old man coming home, driving before him a donkey laden with great sacks of flour.

"Good evening, Maitre Cormille!" we would say. "How's business with you? I see your mill is always going."

"Yes, children, it is going still," he would answer cheerfully. "Thank God, we don't want for work!"

Then if you asked him where on earth the work came from, he would purse up his lips, and answer:

"Oh, I work for exportation!"

And there was no more to be got out of him.

As to putting one's foot inside his mill, no one ever dreamt of doing that. The door was always shut when one passed, and the great sails always turning, and a wretched-looking, uncanny black cat taking the air on the wall, and looking spitefully at you.

Well, the secret was discovered at last, and this was how it happened.

I had noticed for some time that little Vivette and my eldest boy were getting fond of one another; and I had nothing against it, because after all the name of Cormille had always been held in respect among us, and then it would be rather nice to have a bright little thing like that about the house. Only I thought the thing ought to be done in proper form, so I went up to the mill one day to talk it over with the grandfather.

Ah, the old sorcerer! You should have seen how he received me. I could not get him to open the door. I said my say as well as I could through the keyhole, and all the while there was his miserable skeleton of a black cat yelling like a demon just over my head.

The old man never gave me a chance to explain myself. He called out that I had better take myself off, and that

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if I were in a hurry to have my boy married I could get hold of a girl at the steam mills.

You can imagine how angry I was, but I thought I had better leave the old fellow to himself, and so I went back and told the poor children the result of my visit.

They could hardly believe it, and asked me as a favour to let them go and see what they could do. I had not the courage to refuse them, and off the couple went.

When they arrived, Maître Cormille had just gone out. The door was double-locked, but the old fellow before starting had left his ladder outside, and suddenly it occurred to them that they would get in at the window, which they did.

Strange to say, the large room was empty, not a sack of grain to be seen, nor a speck of flour on the floor or the cobweb-covered walls. Upstairs in the old man's room everything had the same look of poverty and desolation. A wretched bed, a few rags lying about, a piece of bread on the stairs, and then in the corner a sack or two from which some chalk and plaster had dropped.

This was his secret. It was this that he brought home in the evening to save the honour of the mill and to make believe that it still had work. Poor old mill! Poor Cormille? A long while ago the steam mills had taken away his last customer. The sails still went round, but there was nothing to grind.

The two poor young things came back crying, and told me what they had seen. It wrung my heart to hear them. Without losing a moment, I went to the neighbours, and told them the whole tale in half-a-dozen words.

We agreed at once to carry to the mill all the grain we could scrape together. No sooner said than done. All the village turned out, and we set off in procession with a tribe of donkeys laden with flour—real flour this time!

As we drew near we saw the door wide open, and Maître Cormille sitting before it on a sack of plaster, weeping with his face in his hands. He had just learned that his secret had been discovered.

"Now I have only to die; the mill is dishonoured!"

He was sobbing fit to break your heart, and calling the mill by all sorts of pet names, speaking of it as if it were a living thing.

The donkeys pulled up on the green before the mill, and we all called out:

"Hallo, miller! Hallo, Maître Cormille!"

Maître Cormille started, and well he might. He saw the sacks with the beautiful wheat burst out of them. He took some in his hand, and said, laughing and crying at the same time:

"It is wheat! Good heavens! it is really wheat! Let me look at it." Then turning to us: "I knew you would come back to me," he said; "all these steam mills are frauds."

We wanted to carry him through the village in triumph; but he would not have it.

"No, no, children. I must go and give my mill something to eat; it is long enough, poor thing, since she has had anything between her teeth."

It was really touching to see the poor old fellow running here and there, emptying the sacks, working the mill, while the corn was being crushed between the grindstones and the fine flour dust flew up to the ceiling.

Let me do myself and my friends the justice to say that from that time we never let the old man lack work. But when he died the sails of our last windmill ceased to turn, for no one took the place. Ah, well, they have had their day, like the periwigs and stage-coaches; it is the way of the world.

A. D.

Four Letters that Were Never Written.

"GEORGE FERGUSON, what does this mean?"

The voice was that of Mrs. Ferguson—shrill, piercing and ominous.

"What does what mean?" asked George.

"This letter!"

She held it up.

"Laura, have you been——"

"No, I haven't been searching your pockets. You know I haven't. I was moving your coat from this chair, and a letter fell out. This is the letter. It is directed to you, and it's in a woman's hand. You haven't told me of any correspondence you are carrying on with——"

"Open it and read it, Laura," interrupted Mr. Ferguson. "If there was any letter in my pocket I didn't know it. Go ahead and read it. Perhaps it is a millinery bill."

Scorning to reply to this, Mrs. Ferguson took out the letter and ran her eye over it.

"Oh, you didn't know this was in your pocket!" she piped. "You didn't know it! Perhaps it's a millinery bill, is it? Listen! 'My dearest George'—so you're somebody else's dearest George, are you?—'My dearest George: When are you coming to see me again? I am very lonely'—she is very lonely, is she? Oh, you two-faced hypocrite!—'If you can't come, George, dearest, do write!'—she wants you to write if you can't come, does she?—'You can't think, dearest George, how I miss——'"

"What nonsense are you reading, Laura?" demanded George, beginning to be roused. "Do you mean to say——"

"I mean to say I am reading this letter you told me to read, Mr. Ferguson. I am reading this letter I found in your—that dropped out of your pocket. You don't know anything about it, don't you? 'You can't think, dearest George—'"

"Laura, are you silly enough to think that's genuine——"

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"I am a silly, am I, Mr. Ferguson? Well, I'll just show you——"

"Let me see the letter."

"Let you see it? What do you want to see it for? Oh, no, Mr. Ferguson! I am going to keep it and show it to my mother!"

"Well, hold it so that I can look at it. I promise you solemnly I will not attempt to take it away from you."

"I'll see that you don't. Here it is. Now look at it. Stay where you are, George Ferguson! Don't you come a step nearer!"

"How can I see it ten feet away? Lay it down and then come and tie my hands behind me. If you are afraid I'll——"

"Oh, yes! Lay it down and you'll snatch it! I see through you! What's the use of pretending you never saw this before?"

"There doesn't seem to be any use in it—that's a fact. Nevertheless, I assure you, Laura, on my honour as a man——"

"On your honour! H'mph!"

"Yes, on my honour—h'mph! I have never seen that letter before. I never put it in my pocket. I didn't know it was there; I am not anybody else's dearest George, and that letter is a clumsy fake got up by somebody who wants to have a little fun with me——"

"I wish I could believe it! Oh, George! George!" (Sobs.)

* * * * *

"Look here, you chaps," said George Ferguson, the next day when he went into the office where he was employed, "that was a good joke some one of you played on me when you put that letter in my pocket yesterday, but it threatens to break up a happy family, and I ask as a favour that the chap who did it will just write a letter to my wife and tell her it was a bit of fun, and that I am not to blame in the slightest degree. I don't want to know who it was. All I ask is that the thing shall be straightened out."

* * * * *

It was late in the afternoon. There came a ring at the doorbell pertaining to the Ferguson dwelling, and a messenger delivered a letter addressed to Mrs. George Ferguson.

She opened it and read:

"Dear Mrs. Ferguson,—In a spirit of mischief I slipped a letter in your husband's coat pocket yesterday which I fear may have fallen into your hands, and in order to atone for any misunderstanding it may possibly have caused I wish to say that I wrote it myself and that it is purely imaginary.—With great respect I subscribe myself yours truly."

This was signed "Marcellus Hankinson."

Hardly had she finished reading this when another messenger came and left another letter. It read thus:

"My Dear Mrs. Ferguson,—I have a little confession to make. Yesterday in a thoughtless moment I wrote a letter purporting to come from some woman and dropped it into your husband's pocket. For fear you may have seen it I take occasion to assume the responsibility for the clumsy joke and to apologise for it.—With great respect, yours sincerely."

The signature was "Oliver Peduncle."

Then there came another letter—also by special messenger. It was as follows:

"My Dear Madam,—Pardon me for addressing you, but I wish to plead guilty to the perpetration of a foolish joke on your husband yesterday. I wrote a love letter (signed 'Dollie,' if I remember rightly) and slipped it into Mr. Ferguson's coat pocket. Fearing it may have met your eye I wrote this to exonerate your husband and to take upon myself the entire blame for the silly performance.—Respectfully yours."

It was signed "A. Spoonamore."

The bewildered woman had hardly perused this note and laid it on the table with the others when a fourth came. It was to this effect:

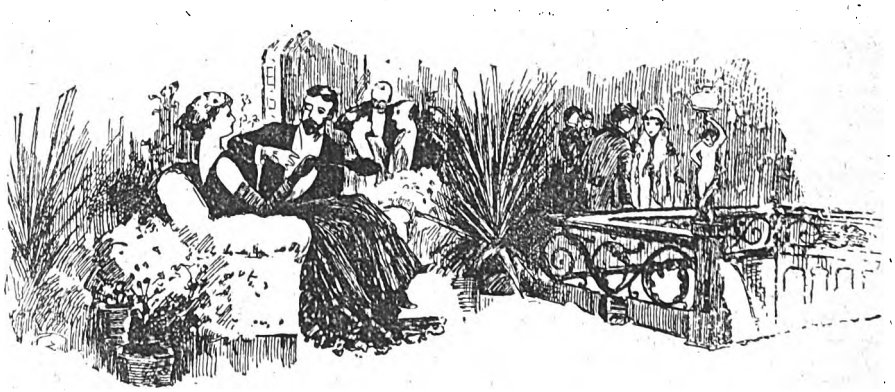
"Permit me, my dear Mrs. Ferguson, to atone for an act of thoughtlessness committed yesterday. Yielding to a hasty impulse, I wrote a letter to your husband purporting to come from some feminine admirer. This I placed in one of the pockets of his coat, unknown to him. As it may possibly have fallen into your hands, I take the liberty of assuring you that I alone am to blame for the stupid joke, and to express my hearty contrition."

The signature to this was "Wesley Higintop."

About two hours later Mr. Ferguson came home. He was whistling, with apparent unconsciousness of any domestic trouble, past, present or to come.

"George," exclaimed Mrs. Ferguson, in a high-pitched voice, as she met him at the door, "where are those other letters?"

Percy Goodman.



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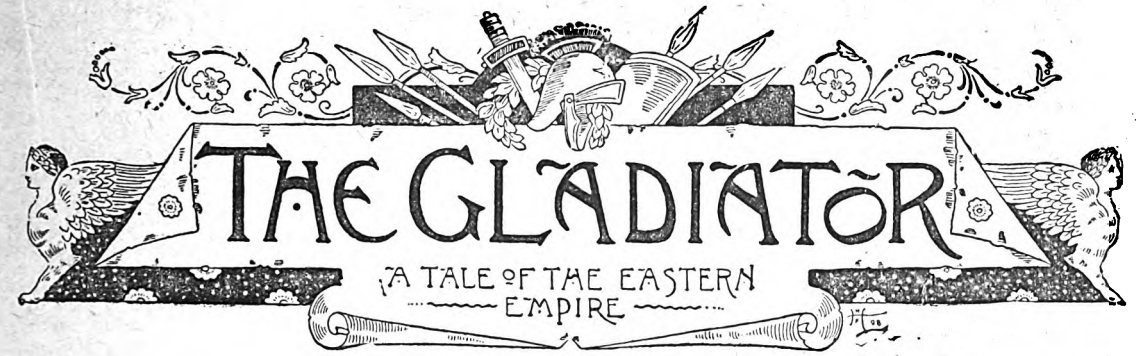

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

SUMMARY.

THE opposing factions in the public games of ancient Constantinople were known as the "Blues and Greens." The Emperor and Empress favoured the Blues, and consequently the enmity that existed between the two factions was so strong that they could not meet in the streets without coming to blows.

Rhesus, a country youth from Sicily, lands at Constantinople with his friend, Proclus, and with a fixed determination to become famous as a gladiator. He adopts the cause of the Greens, and the first contest in which he takes part is a chariot race, which he would have won had it not been for the foul play of Hermiot, his opponent of the Blues.

Rhesus falls in love with Eutasia, a pretty little waif of the circus, of twelve years, who speedily becomes warmly attached to him.

A few years pass and Eutasia is affianced to Rhesus.

One night Proclus and Rhesus chance to overhear a plot between Hypatius, a claimant to the throne, Marcen, a gladiator of the green faction, and Hermiot of the Blues, to raise the city in revolt, remove Justinian from the throne, and make Hypatius emperor in his place.

Hypatius proceeds to take them singly down to the flooded catacombs under the ground upon which they are standing, where he has vast treasures stored with which he purposes to buy the sympathies of the people. Marcen goes with him first, leaving Hermiot on the watch. Rhesus and Proclus spring out upon Hermiot, bind and gag him. Upon the return of Hypatius and Marcen, Proclus assumes the blue sash of Hermiot, personates Hermiot under the cover of the darkness, and goes down into the catacombs with Hypatius in order to discover the whereabouts of the treasure.

Meanwhile it occurs to Marcen that if he were to cut off the only means of egress from the catacombs, his fellow conspirators will be heard of no more, and he will be the sole possessor of the hidden treasure. He returns to the entrance of the catacombs, followed by Rhesus, who watches him carry out his murderous designs. Marcen discovers the presence of Rhesus and rushes at him. Rhesus eludes him, and a hot chase follows. Rhesus finally gives Marcen the slip, and, together with Pelak, a charioteer of the Greens, returns to the catacombs in order to release his friend Proclus. Upon arriving there, however, they find someone has been before them, and the place is empty.

Rhesus returns home, and is overjoyed to find Proclus awaiting him there. Proclus tells him how that Marcen himself released the prisoners from the catacombs, and how that whilst imprisoned there he, Proclus, had discovered an inscription revealing the hiding-place of the key of a secret door.

Marcen persuades the Empress to take Eutasia into her service, and thus to remove her from the influence of Rhesus. Rhesus hears of it too late to prevent her going to the palace. He pays a clandestine visit to Eutasia in the palace grounds in order to persuade her to fly with him. He is discovered by some spies in the pay of Marcen, and barely escapes with his life.

Another great chariot race takes place. The palm of victory is unjustly awarded to the Blues, and the Greens break out in open rebellion. General dissatisfaction is felt against the Emperor Justinian, and Hypatius seizes the opportunity to urge his claims to the throne. He wins the populace over to his side, and fearful riot and slaughter ensues.

Rhesus and Proclus seek refuge in the flooded Catacombs, pursued by Marcen and a band of Hypatius' followers. After a fierce struggle, Proclus is wounded and thrown into the water for dead, and Rhesus is taken prisoner.

PART II.

CHAPTER V.

THE CLAWS OF THE TIGRESS.

THE feline ferocity that fights the more fiercely when driven to bay and bereft of all semblance of hope, is ever the most dangerous sort of valour to arouse. And the Empress Theodora, now her favourite faction had been led astray, and the hated Greens were in the ascendant, and herself and her husband kept close prisoners in the palace by the virulence of the passion-storm that raged in the riotous city, was possessed of just that kind of animal courage.

In vain had the ministers and generals endeavoured to restore or enforce order; in vain had Justinian—whose lordly mandate but a few years before had put down the Platonist schools of Athens and so extinguished the last faint star of Pagan philosophy that had twinkled in the deepening dusk of superstition—striven to allay the bloodthirsty fever of the drunken mobs of his Christian capital; in vain had Theodora's wild appeals and reckless promises been squandered; in vain the questor and prefect deposed and the taxes reduced to put an end to the reign of terror; and now, when the palace itself was surrounded by frantic partisans of Hypatius, and their very lives were in hourly, deadly peril, and ships lay ready laden at the foot of the garden stairs, and all counselled safety in flight, even the studious Justinian himself, the true temper of the Empress flashed out, and she declared with magnificent scorn, that come what might, she would not flee before a howling mob of ignorant slaves and commoners.

The courtiers implored her, reasoned with her, and Belisarius urged the necessity of caution before bravado; but the imperial tigress, all her cunning and cruelty flaming up in one splendid burst of fury, vowed that not only would she refuse to escape, but that the rebels should be brought to their knees and punished so severely that her revenge would be remembered through the ages.

Visions of a holocaust of victims floated—with cruel clearness—before her mental gaze, and, awed by her impetuous invective and really admirable bravery, the Emperor and those around him gave way and became instruments and accomplices in the realising of those horrific visions. And of all those who listened to her finely-pointed satire on men's faintheartedness, none thought her more queenly than did surface-skimming Eutasia; none felt so satisfied that he had chosen the wiser and safer course in staying in the palace instead of joining the rebels, than did Marcen. He fell in at once with Theodora's plans and prepared to carry out his share of the work with more than his customary zest.

It was his duty, with several others, to steal forth into the city unobserved and seek out individually the leaders of the blue faction, and by cajoling and promising, by reprimands and instilling envy of the triumphant Greens, to revive the partisan enmity and so divide the foe. On the evening of the fifth day he crept out and did his work well, leaving loyal Belisarius to complete the red annals of *Nika*; and then, having other and pressing business of his own in hand, summoned a gang of sturdy ruffians whom he had often employed before, and brought them off the rich harvest they were gathering in the hapless city by promises more

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Marcen cast his prisoner into one of the untenanted dens.

extravagant than ever his fertile brain had before conceived, and so made his way to the convent.

As Proclus had shrewdly observed, he guessed that the two friends had some secret knowledge regarding the treasure, but as his spies had reported that neither of them, nor any emissaries of Hypatius, had since visited the Hall of Waters, he had been content to wait a suitable time for action. That time, he now thought, had come. But until he reached the underground chamber and actually discovered that Hypatius had not rifled the hoard, he was in an agony of dread lest the latter should have suspected his duplicity.

How he found his friends; how Proclus was cast into the inky waters of that subterranean flood and Rhesus was brought up, bound; how he was unable to find a key or clue to the secret of the sliding door of stone; and how the convent was blazing when the grumbling assassins emerged therefrom, the reader already knows. How he once more played double traitor and yet came through the ordeal with success and renown, remains to be told.

Boldly marching to the hippodrome, where the bright sunlight of the new morning was breaking throught the pall of fire-streaked smoke that hung over Byzantium, and where Hypatius had established his temporary headquarters, Marcen took his miserable prisoner and cast him into one of the untenanted bear dens. Then he mingled with the throng of flattering courtiers who already surrounded the new Emperor, and later in the day, found chance to speak with him alone.

Hypatius, flushed with success, and yet uneasy for the future, and casting about in his mind whether to attack the palace that day or the next, was at first inclined to grant scant hearing to one whose fidelity he had begun to doubt; but Marcen was so persistent, and reiterated his assurances of friendship so earnestly, that both the pretender and his brother were deceived. They listened eagerly to his account of how helpless was the Royal party, how easy their capture at any time, and how he had caught Rhesus and Proclus in the treasure vault. And whilst he talked, Marcen ever and anon glanced at the sun and at the notches on the water-clock that stood by the starting-place of the races. The wearers of blue, he noticed, were now few and far between, and even these one by one stole away. At the hour agreed upon, if all went well and Hypatius could be kept from the offensive, Belisarius would appear upon the scene and the last act of the grim drama of a foiled revolution would be played out with an unflinching adherence to the historic traditions of such stupendous tragedies.

"Yes, the treasure is ours now, beyond doubt," he said, "and if you need one more thing before you venture to make an end of Justinian it is that. The twentieth part of that hoard, scattered broadcast amongst the armed ruffians who are yet indifferent to either side, would win them to yours, and your position would be assured. Why not come with me—one or both of you—with a picked band of trusty men—if you have any—and secure and bring it away?"

Pompey was of hotter blood and for immediate action, but the glitter of gold and jewels was in the mind's eye of Hypatius, and he hesitated. And if ever a man who wavered was lost, the upstart Emperor of the green faction was lost in that moment of indecision. Life, wealth, power, the throne of an empire, lay in the balance against passing greed; the scale of greed weighed down and all was lost.

Even whilst they talked a commotion had arisen in the circus, and ere Hypatius had decided, some of his officers burst into his presence with the news that many of the blue faction were deserting them and that the foreign soldiers were massing in the neighbourhood of the palace and returning to something of their old discipline. The water in the clock sank slowly towards the level that Marcen's eyes rested on, and he cried, when the officers had finished their disquieting intelligence:

"All the more need, Majesty, for the wealth under the convent yonder, to turn the last pulse of the tide in your favour!"

The irresolute man fell into the trap set for him by a cunning hand, and sending out orders that the attack was to be deferred until his return, committed himself and a choice troop to the guidance of Marcen. Pompey was left behind, protesting.

The journey was shorter than even the most hasty fortune-seeker could have wished; indeed, it was ended before it was well begun. As the troop passed through a frequented doorway into the street, a sea of blue-clad figures surged up close round them, swallowing them as the rising flood of a swollen river submerges the rushes on its brink. After a brief, sharp struggle, Hypatius found himself bound hand and foot, carried to the dark den where Rhesus already lay, thrown therein, and there left to his own thoughts; whilst upon his ears was borne the sound of fighting, the clash of arms, the trample of many feet, the roar of many voices, the fierce shouts of victorious soldiery. The slaughter had begun; the claws of the imperial tigress were already wetted in the blood of her victims.

As the grated door of the den closed upon the ill-fated aspirant to the crown, 3,000 veterans, seasoned in the Persian and Illyrian wars, marched into the hippodrome in two divisions, one led by Belisarius and one by Mundus; and while these fell upon the astonished and densely-packed crowd of rebels within, the wearers of the blue, armed with daggers, maces, and short spears, flocked round the building like vultures to a field of carnage, and wreaked their wild, new-born fury upon all who escaped the swords of the soldiers.

Under the leadership of Pompey and others, the doomed Greens made a desperate effort to escape from the death-trap of those circling walls, but their assailants were tireless and innumerable, thirsting for vengeance, for wrongs long remembered and feuds unforgotten, and those who were saved from that seething maelstrom of murder, were saved in the spirit only, not in the flesh.

The horror of the long days of riot, the incredible fury of the blood-fever that had seized hold of all who were in the wretched city in those awful days, and the quenchless flame of the faction enmity had culminated in a climax of crime, a saturnalia of slaughter, a night of "*Nika!*" such as

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makes the brain reel and the soul sicken to contemplate, and which the pen refuses to dwell upon in many words. Suffice it to say that no fewer than 30,000 of the rebels were slain in the hippodrome and thousands more in the streets as the circle of death spread outwards; that when the next day dawned the green faction was nearly exterminated, the city was half in ruins, Hypatius and Pompey, with Rhesus and many others, were lodged in the dungeons of the palace, Justinian sat Emperor without a rival, and Theodora's face was wreathed in smiles. But enough of these chronicles of crime; we will follow the less discreditable fortunes of Rhesus the Roman, over whose head now hangs the implacable vengeance of a woman clothed in purple and dignified in history by the title of "Great"—a woman whose tender mercies were incredibly cruel and whose heart was the heart of a beast of prey.

CHAPTER VI.

"To the Galleys!"

Order is once more restored in Constantinople, the wealthy have returned to their homes, the shipping has once more crowded the Golden Horn, and Anthenius, the architect, has been commanded to rebuild the Church of St. Sophia. The hippodrome has been closed by an imperial order, the questor and prefect reinstated in their positions, and the pretender and his co-prisoners are brought to trial—or to the mockery called such. Small justice is there in the eyes of Theodora; little equity in the impatience of Justinian—irritated even then at being called away from his self-imposed task of codifying and revising the laws of the Roman world, of compiling those *Institutes* and *Pandects* which alone have rescued his memory from the dull level of his peers.

Some of the prisoners met their judges and the foregone conclusion with a callous indifference; most of them deserved the worst; but to Rhesus, with the blood of honest youth in his veins, and an unbounded enthusiasm, and a loved one to live for and guard from the clutching arms of the worlds' sin, the agony of the impending sentence seemed greater than a man could bear. He was innocent, too, of the treason with which he was charged—though innocence was poor enough plea in that court—and his soul cried out against such an end, a traitor's end, to all his dreams of fortune and renown and years of happy love.

Surely it was more than the gods would allow, this monstrous injustice? His gaze travelled round the crowded room of audience, seeking, and for long in vain, for a single pitying face, a single glance of regret. But at last, all unexpectedly, a face framed itself out of the sea of people—a sweet and merry face with a halo of golden hair—and his heart leapt with a spasm of hope. The Empress was fond of his Eutasia, and she would intercede for him, at least get the sentence mitigated. And if life be granted at all, of a surety he would find some way to come into his own again, to recover what he had lost, to win from the grasp of the flying years some of that happiness that once he thought was his without fail.

So he plucked up some courage and looked the judges in the face. But that gleam of relief was a passing gleam only, and dark and dull as the shadow of heavy-laden storm clouds came the words of fate from the lips of the pronouncer of the sentences. To some few of the prisoners, mistakenly arrested, was granted release; many were condemned to the mines or the galleys; and with Hypatius and his brother Pompey and eighteen of their most noted partisans, Rhesus was condemned to death.

The light went out of the sunny sky for him as the dread words fell upon his ears, the warmth out of the summer air, the pleasure out of even the little span of life that yet remained. He glanced swiftly round the crowded hall, but met no friendly eyes save those he loved. The bishops and priests, clad in their gorgeous robes of ceremonial—in all the pomp and pageantry of Christian fashion—nodded their heads in acquiescence of his doom; the soldiers stared stonily; the people moved with idle interest; Justinian fidgeted in his royal seat; Theodora tossed her shapely head and jested with the nearest man who had nerve to bandy words with her; and over Marcen's face stole a grim, lurking smile of satisfaction as he stood beside Eutasia and strove to allay her frantic despair.

The guards moved forward to lead the doomed away, and as the glittering shields closed round him, he already seemed to hear the earth falling on his hasty grave. But ere the words of command had left the officer's lips a wild, piercing cry—a girl's cry—rang through the startled throng. A lithe, light form came flying across the central space and between the soldiers, and in a moment soft arms were about his neck, and Eutasia's tearful face pressed close to his, and hot words of love, regret and supplication to him

No fewer than 30,000 of the rebels were slain in the hippodrome.

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and defiance to the judges, were poured into his dazed ears.

"They shall not slay you, my Rhesus!" she cried, "they dare not, for the Empress will forbid! And oh, Rhesus my love, my dear one, forgive me now, this instant, for sending you away with anger. Say that you cherish no ill for it, love!"

He essayed to unlock her arms and look the man before the eyes of the curious crowd. He assured her that he had naught to pardon, and bade her not to risk her life in his service. It was in vain; and her fragrant caresses were showered upon him until the guards, recovered from their surprise, advanced and tore them apart. Two brawny Sythians held her, panting with passion, in their iron grasp.

"Take her away!" cried the ushers, pompous in their drunken rotundity, "the Emperor declares the trial over and the matter dismissed. Take her to the Empress and the prisoners to their fate."

But the little fury tore herself free again and broke through the ring of steel once more, calling on Theodora and Marcen to aid her; and when they were parted once again—and more roughly than before—the latter had spoken secretly with Theodora. He then came forward and led the girl away, whispering Rhesus knew not what in her pretty ear, while the doomed man raged as one possessed, and shouted aloud that Marcen was the vilest traitor in the city and false to all saving himself. He saw the two look at him as they conversed with the Empress. He saw a strange wild, agonised glance pass over his darling's face—a shade, a moment of hesitation—and then, averting her head she gave her finger-tips to the traitor and suffered him to lead her away. Yet often she looked back ere she vanished from his sight, tearful, regretful, her girlhood changed to womanhood in that one indescribable gaze.

And Rhesus, seeing the Empress bend and speak to the judge, could but guess how she had sacrificed herself for his sake, had surrendered to Marcen to save his life—worthless to him now, at such a cost. The knell of the reprieve rang through the room; and Rhesus the Roman was sentenced to serve with bare back and manacled feet amongst the vilest criminals who pulled the oars of the galleys.

Two brawny Sythians held her, panting with passion, in their iron grasp.

And as they led him straightway with the rest of the doomed down to the busy wharf, and apportioned them amongst the many ships that lay there ready for sea, and riveted the heavy chains upon his ankles and stripped the green sash and tunic from his back and chained him to an oar in the hold of a grey-painted transport ship, he made a vow by all the gods of his dear pagan heaven. He vowed that come what might, captive or free, when next he cast eyes on Marcen—the consummate villain and traitor whose cunning had stolen his love and slain his friend, and kept his own wretched carcase whole through all the riot and ruin that had brought so many better men to violent ends—he would pay the heavy reckoning in full.

"The gods may spare you, the suspicion of courts and the frenzy of popular rage may pass you by, but *I* will not, Titan of iniquity!" cried Rhesus, in the bitterness of his soul.

And that night of black despair, when the anchor was raised and the vessel began her voyage with a breeze that dispensed with the services of the fifty rowers, there rang in his hearing, high above the oaths and maledictions of his wretched companions in toil as they took such ease as came to them, the passionate cry of Eutasia's entreaty for his life; and before his mental view, in the glare of the silver moonlight that poured in a dazzling ray through the small square of the rowlock-hole and cast dense shadows where the rats squeaked and ran, there floated the last glimpse he had of his love, led away by a traitor's hand.

Awhile the mocking vision floated there before him, until his eyes grew strained, and burned as orbs of fire, and it merged to a mist of blood. Then weariness overcame him. He fell in a heap upon his chains, and slept.

(*To be continued.*)

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MY SHADY VISITOR.

I AM not an imaginative man, let it be known at the outset; I am not a man at all likely to be the prey of hallucinations. I do not tremble at a shadow, nor am I one of those poor spectre-smitten imbeciles who turn a branch into a warning finger.

Strictly speaking, there is nothing horrible about my experience. At the same time, as I write it down, I am conscious of a tingling of the nerves and a tendency to look over my shoulder.

The situation is this: An unimaginative man of thirty, whose time is largely occupied by an untaxing business; a pleasant suburb, the big houses of which were supplied with electric light; a bright, sunshiny country; neighbours on all sides; and no predisposition whatever about the man, the place, or the neighbourhood, to ghosts. To this house and to this man the ghost came. And in this wise:

It was towards the close of summer when the days begin to close in early.

I was sitting, after dinner, trying to get sentimental over my approaching happiness—I was soon to be married—and picturing to myself Venus in the easy chair opposite me. It was a feeble attempt at experiencing the pleasures of imagination, because I could not picture anyone at all.

Then I took a book and opened it, with a yawn. The light was fading, but as my eyes followed the lines mechanically, and my thoughts were elsewhere, that mattered little. Outside, there was extraordinary stillness.

A curious feeling came over me; I suddenly realised the fact that life may go on in invisible, intangible forms. I looked about with a shudder; I expected something—what, I knew not.

All at once the room, without the slightest warning, became distinctly darker. Suddenly the outer door opened with a terrific bang, as if some strong wind had forced it open, instantly causing me to jump from my chair.

Up to this moment, remember, there was no reason whatever for alarm; yet I became unaccountably afraid. The darkness was intense. I struck a match; it went out. I struck another; that also went out. Then I hastily turned on the incandescent light. The glow, instead of being the usual white, was of a peculiar bluish tint.

The door was still open. The air grew chilly. I felt cold perspiration upon my forehead. I tried to close the door, but something held it fast, though the air outside was perfectly still. All at once the door slipped out of my hand and slammed back to its place with a louder noise than that which it made at its opening.

I was frightened. It was all exceedingly uncanny, and I felt nervous. I then happened to look in the direction of my chair. It was fully five feet from where I had left it but a moment before!

Then the incandescent light, still of a bluish tint, began moving, apparently of itself, toward the chair, and in an instant, for the first time, I saw—IT quietly sitting in the chair holding in its bony hands the electric light bulb, still glowing, with the most horrible grin on its face.

It was clearly outlined, a peculiar shadow, in the dusk of the evening; colourless, and yet its draperies were like white grave clothes; shapeless, and yet a form akin to human, but most awfully unlike it. It seemed the gaunt spirit of a skeleton, whose intangible fingers of wavering bones plucked at a wisp of spectral hair that drooped from a ghastly, eyeless skull—which, though eyeless, seemed none the less to behold me!

For a moment I was paralysed with fear, but, as the apparition evinced no signs of evil intention, I gathered courage to gasp:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

He answered by throwing the electric light bulb at me, which whizzed past my ear, and with a pistol-like report broke into a thousand pieces at the other end of the room.

Though we were in absolute darkness, yet, by his now phosphorescent eye sockets, the THING was easily discernible, and simultaneously with the crash of the bulb he burst out in awful, diabolical laughter which lasted for some seconds. Quickly, with that singular movement remarked by all who have had the special privilege, if it be that, to witness such things—a movement in which the shape neither glides nor walks, but merely changes place—the spectre stood chuckling beside me.

"How do you like my fun?" said he, grinning more horribly than before. "Oh, you needn't try to get away"—grasping me by the arm (oh, his touch!) as I hastily stepped back. "I have found you at last, you cannot escape this time! But now that I have found you, what shall I do with you?"

I could only look hopeless.

Suddenly he stretched out one arm and I saw a bony

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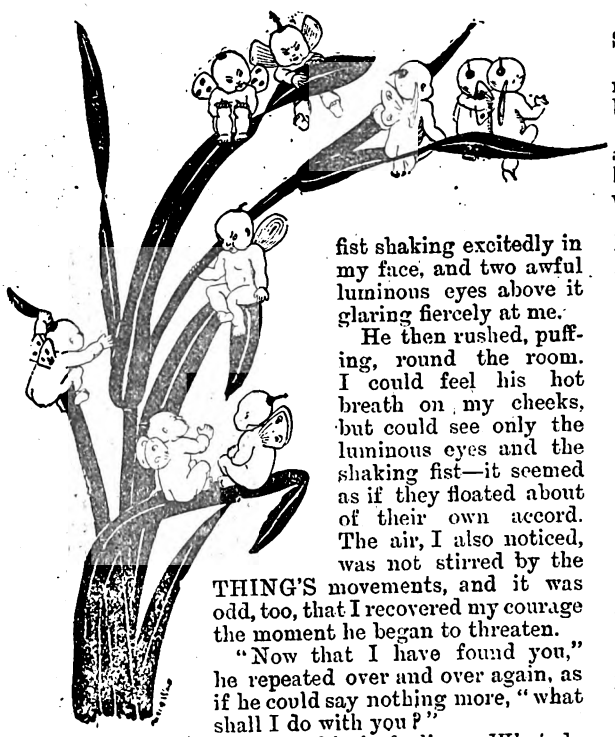

fist shaking excitedly in my face, and two awful luminous eyes above it glaring fiercely at me.

He then rushed, puffing, round the room. I could feel his hot breath on my cheeks, but could see only the luminous eyes and the shaking fist—it seemed as if they floated about of their own accord. The air, I also noticed, was not stirred by the THING'S movements, and it was odd, too, that I recovered my courage the moment he began to threaten.

"Now that I have found you," he repeated over and over again, as if he could say nothing more, "what shall I do with you?"

"Come," I cried at last, "this is fooling. What do you mean by coming to my house like a burglar and carrying on like a madman? Leave off asking what you will do with me. If you are a ghost out of his senses, say so; if not, vary the monotony by saying something else."

"I can't," he answered, groaning. "It's not allowed. I wish I could. Oh, what shall I do with you?"

"You've asked me that a hundred times already. But I say, you may be able to stand this darkness, but I can't."

I struck a match; he did not blow it out, as I presume he did the others. I tried another bulb on the electric light socket, but the current was off. Let me state here that I learnt afterwards that at the central station, some distance away, a strange shock was felt about the time of the arrival of my ghost, half indicating that I was not subject to some hallucination.

Not to be in darkness, I lighted an oil lamp. The THING was still there—a faint, almost invisible shape now.

"You say," I resumed, carelessly drawing a sword from its case hanging on the wall, "that you are restricted in your movements. Well, look here."

I quickly passed the sword through him. I cut him down like a guardsman at Waterloo. I sliced him in two like a soldier at an assault-at-arms. And at each pass of the weapon he ducked, recoiled, and cried aloud.

"See, you cannot resist. I do what I like with you. What can you do in return?"

He struck me in the face. It was as if a cold wind blew upon my cheeks.

"Is that all!" I said. "Do that as often as you like."

"You are not afraid of me, then?"—as if such a thing as a man daring to stand up to a ghost was unheard of.

"Positively not afraid of me?"

"Certainly not; why should I be?"

"Not afraid of me! Man! I am from the grave. See my grave clothes. I am the spirit of a dead man."

I could not repress a shudder; the shiver came across me. He saw it at once, and sprang at my throat, blowing the light out as he did so.

To my surprise, what was before as a breath of cold air became tangible. I felt his cold grasp with his long, bony fingers at my throat. His face, close to mine, was filled with an eager longing for revenge; his lurid eyes glared in mine; his teeth glimmered in the moonlight coming in through the window. It was but for a moment that I was afraid.

I rallied my courage, sprang upright, and looked my spectral enemy unswervingly in the face. As I looked, the tangibility of his fingers weakened, the tightness of his grasp relaxed, and his look changed from one of triumph to that of baffled rage. He fell back sullenly, and threw himself, clearly outlined in the moonlight, into my easy chair, glaring round the room.

"That's mine," I said. "Please take another. I never allow anyone but myself to occupy it."

He immediately obeyed.

"Will this do?"

It was next to mine. I begged him to take one on the other side of the room, which he did at once.

Just then Sarah, my general servant, entered the room, but hardly had she stepped in when she ran away shrieking as I had never heard a woman shriek before, while as for my dog, which came into the room, he ran out with his tail between his legs, and I've never seen him since. They must have seen the ghost.

"Pray tell me what it means," I said, after a momentary silence.

"It means that if you were afraid of me I would throttle you like a dog. It means that I am waiting for the moment when you will realise who and what I am; the injuries you have done me, the wickedness of your life. Ha! ha! I see it coming! Your nerves won't stand me much longer, then I shall seize you by the throat, and squeeze, squeeze, squeeze the life out of you!"

But I was not at all afraid now.

"By the way," I said, "where do you come from—our cemetery?"

"No; you know where. Need I tell you from West Australia?"

"You have come a long way, my friend," I answered, smiling.

"Ah, villain! traitor! murderer!"

"Those are hard names, my friend."

"When," he said at length, "I was in Australia region hunting for gold—there, what's the use of raking up the old story?"

"None," I answered, thinking that he certainly must be a lunatic ghost, and making a mental note of the fact as one likely to throw great light on the spirit world. "None at all, unless you like."

"To think that you—you, of all men in the world—never mind!"

"Certainly not."

"When I saw you last, over there, you were with her."

I smiled.

"No use talking. What's the good of talk? Come to think, I might remind you what went on, you know, at the 'diggings.' Eh? What do you say to that?"

"Nothing whatever."

"What about the Dyer business? Who promised what—tell me that—if some one was robbed of his three

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years' labour, and he was put out of the way because of that and her? Eh?"

Here was a very serious question. I only shook my head.

"Robbed, murdered, you villain! out of jealousy! Why was my drink poisoned? Why was my food poisoned? Why? why? why?"

"Can't say, I'm sure. Shall we say good-night?"

"If you're going to bed, I will go with you. But it isn't bed-time yet."

This was pleasant.

"What had I done to him? How was I to get rid of this lunatic ghost? Why should I be made the victim of a ghost? And I expected Venus every minute!"

She came. But she had not been with me two minutes before she saw IT, and fainted.

"What was it, John?" she asked when she came to. "What was it? I am afraid. Take me home."

I took Venus home. I implored her to keep silent as to what she had seen. I soothed, I pacified her. I assured her that it was fancy—a trick of the imagination—some schoolboy joke—anything to keep her quiet. And thus I left her, and returned, miserable and maddened, to have it out with this demon who had fastened himself upon me.

"I allowed you to go away with the girl," he explained on my return, "because I do not wish to do her any harm. But she shall never marry you, remember that. Wretch!"—he approached me with threatening gestures—"wretch! Was it not enough to interfere between me and her? You try to murder the happiness of another innocent girl! Can you ruthlessly ——"

"Good heavens!" I cried, almost beside myself with rage. "What have I done to you, that you should persecute me in this way?"

"He asks me what he has done! Think of Australia! Think of Logan's gold claim, and think of Maggie Baker. Joe Wiggins, you were always as brazen a liar as ever stepped, but I did not think you would brazen it out to me."

A thought struck me. "You call me Joe Wiggins. I am not Joe Wiggins at all. I have never heard of any Joe Wiggins."

He laughed.

"If you are not Joe Wiggins," he said, "I'll eat my hat. I mean, of course——"

"Come, this is trifling. I say that you mistake me for someone else. What did he look like?"

"The same as you—sanctimonious look, slim as a poker, small head, large sticking-out ears, big mouth—just like yourself."

This was flattering.

"Only Joe didn't wear a beard."

"Had this Joe Wiggins any marks?"

"Yes, tattoo marks on the right arm; I did them. Why?"

I drew up my sleeve and showed him my arms, white and free from any tatoo mark at all.

He was stupefied.

"Well—I'm—no—I'm blowed! And you ain't Joe at all? What a fool you must have taken me for."

"I did."

"And me to go and let out all the little secrets. You hold your tongue, man, about that gold business."

"I never thought much of ghosts," I responded; "now I shall think still less of them."

"Go on, go on," he said; "let me have it."

"Why couldn't you ask before you came blundering into my house with your mysterious self? Why couldn't you have put the question before you began?"

"Why, indeed!" he echoed. "Look here, sir, I'm very sorry for this mistake—I am, indeed. And frightening the young lady, and all! I am an idiot of a ghost! What shall I do to square things?"

"Do? Leave me at once."

"Shall I," he said plaintively, "shall I appear to the young lady to-night after she goes to bed? I can easily do it, and then explain it all."

"Certainly not; on no account. You are not to disturb her at all, understand?"

"Well, then, I suppose I'd better go."

"Indeed you had, and have the goodness never to return."

He began to disappear; I breathed more freely. Then the shape, which had almost disappeared, started into sight again with a suddenness which brought back the horror which first seized me.

"One word, sir," spoke he. "I'm afraid I haven't come well out of this affair. Now s'pose—I only say s'pose—I can put you on to a good thing. It may be a wreck of some kind; it may be buried treasure; it may be only a pot of money; it may be coins, or it may be statues; but if I should hear of it, and was to come and tell you, it might go some way to getting into your good opinion again."

"No," I replied; "I want nothing, except an assurance that I shall never see you again."

He sighed.

"Well, sir, I feel that I can't go against your wishes; I promise. No malice, eh? When we meet again, which we may, there will be no malice, I hope."

He disappeared finally, and I have seen no more of him, but have often wondered who Joe Wiggins is, where he lives, what he has done, how he managed to offend my ghost, and what that gold-mining business was all about.

A. M. Paget.

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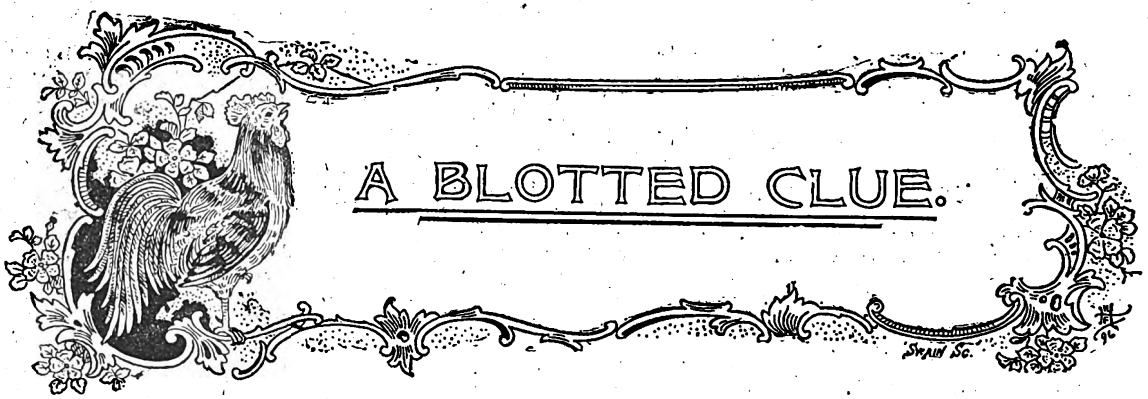

A BLOTTED CLUE.

"WHAT I consider my most interesting case," said Detective Allison, "I took up with no apparent prospect of ever receiving one penny for my services. Now, the thought of this case and a few others in which I became interested out of pure love of justice, a desire to assist one who was being wronged, give me more satisfaction in these rheumatic days of inactivity than all else I ever did.

"What brings it to my mind now, and what often recalls it, is the gold watch you just saw me glance at. Why it does so I will proceed to tell you.

"Some twenty or more years ago the good people of Ashington, a town of twelve thousand inhabitants, were startled by the announcement that Mr. Morton Dean, a man of wealth and good social standing, although somewhat eccentric, had been murdered. He was alone in the house at the time, a sister, his housekeeper, being temporarily away,

"Startling as was this information, it was probably not so much so as the arrest of Robert Clark, also a resident at Ashington.

"I was away at the time, but the newspapers sent to me daily kept me well posted about the affair.

"A few words now about Robert Clark.

"He was twenty-five years of age. Had always lived in Ashington. Was considered an exemplary young man. While known to most of the inhabitants, he had few intimate friends, being rather reserved in his ways. His countenance indicated intelligence, but its paleness and a sad expression gave the impression that he had rather a frail constitution. This, it seems, was the case, and undoubtedly accounted for his always being on the look-out for light work.

"Some called him shiftless, but while that term could have been properly applied to his father, it did not, I believed, suit him.

"When arrested, Clark was acting as hall porter of the local Young Men's Christian Association, and bore an excellent character.

"When the news of his arrest reached me, I instinctively felt he was innocent.

"At the preliminary hearing, P.C. Anderson testified that on the night of the murder a boy told him someone at Dean's was calling for help. He hastened there and seized a man who was getting out of a window. It proved to be young Clark, who made a strenuous effort to escape, but was held and handcuffed.

"In view of the prisoner's violence, the constable had taken him to the police station, without waiting for any investigation; had then returned to the house with another officer, passed in through the window and went to the room where Mr. Dean was found dead; after certain proceedings there, returned to the police station and carefully examined the prisoner. A dozen blood-stains were found upon his clothing, and in his inside coat pocket was a pocket-book, containing fifty pounds in notes and a number of valuable documents, which plainly belonged to Mr. Dean.

"This was the substance of his testimony.

"Clark then told his story substantially as follows:

"At about twelve o'clock that night he was returning home, his duties having kept him later than usual. Strangely enough, he had never been out so late before. When in front of Mr. Dean's house he heard the cry, 'Help! help! murder!' Although of a somewhat timid nature, he admitted, he rushed to the front door, feeling it his duty to render assistance. The door proved to be ajar and a key was in the lock on the outside.

"He went in and, guided by a noise as of someone moving about, passed upstairs and opened a door. Instantly a man rushed past him, nearly knocking him down. Clark caught a glimpse of the man by the light from his dark lantern, but did not see him distinctly enough to recognise or describe him.

"I will now give the prisoner's own words as near as I can remember them, as published in a newspaper sent me at the time.

"'I then,' said he, 'struck a match and went into the room where Mr. Dean lay groaning, lighted the gas and threw some water into his face, which was covered with blood. This seemed to revive him, and opening his eyes he scanned my face and apparently recognised me. Reaching down into the bed he faintly said:

"'"Thank Heaven he did not get this," and handed me the pocket-book which was found upon me. He then said with difficulty: "My time is short; promise me you will give the pocket-book to no one but my brother Phillip, and I shall feel ready to go."

"'There was a spasm of pain, his eyes became fixed and glassy, he gave a gasp, and the end had come.

"'Then, hardly knowing what I was doing, the affair had so shocked me, I put the pocket-book into my coat pocket and entirely forgot about it (until it was discovered). Then I started to tell the neighbours and police of the tragedy.

"'On reaching the front door, to my surprise I found it locked. Then I went to a window, unfastened it, and was getting out when I was roughly seized. Thinking it was the murderer, I struggled to free myself until I found it was a policeman.'

"Clark was up before the magistrate several times and finally committed for trial.

"When I returned home, I found it the prevailing opinion that Clark was guilty.

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"My own view, that he was a victim of circumstances, was strengthened after an interview with him at the county gaol.

"I determined to do everything in my power to prove his innocence. I examined the premises where the murder was committed and interviewed everyone in any way connected with the affair.

"Not a clue did I obtain, except that a worthless fellow known as Dicey, a notorious liar whom no one in the place would believe, came to me and stoutly affirmed that he, at about eleven o'clock on the night of the murder, and in the vicinity where it occurred, met right under the gaslight at the street corner, a rough-looking stranger.

"He especially noticed a scar on his face, and could, he claimed, pick him out in a crowd.

"No one else, however, had seen him, and I felt that the information, coming from the source it did, would prove of little value.

"Well, even after the assizes had begun, a month later, all I had learnt would not have had a feather's weight with the jury.

"There was absolutely nothing in Clark's favour except his previous good character and his own statement.

"The latter of course, unsupported by any corroborative evidence, would have little weight.

"On the morning of the trial, our postmaster handed me a letter addressed to him, which read as follows:

"Postmaster, Ashington.

"Sir,—The man charged with the murder of Mr. Morton Dean is innocent. The guilty man confessed to me while under the influence of liquor. Don't dare write more for fear of my life.

"A WOMAN.

"I took the letter to my office to consider. The more I studied it the more I concluded it was of no value.

"There was apparently nothing by which the writer's identity could be discovered. Had it been from some small place, I should have had some hope, but as it bore the London postmark I had none.

"Only one thing about it was noticeable, and that, at first, seemed hardly worth a thought.

"The word 'postmaster' on the envelope was blotted. Looked as though the point of the pen had caught and spattered ink all over the word. This, however, indicated nothing, and I threw the letter on to my desk in despair, concluding that I would hand it to Clark's solicitor.

"Although I was satisfied the letter contained a true statement, I knew, if read to the jury, they would not so regard it. They would say some friend of the prisoner wrote it and got it posted.

"Picking up the letter again, I examined the blots with a magnifying glass. At the same time I was standing at a high writing-desk, on which, directly in front of me, was a small looking-glass. Lost in thought, I stood with my elbows resting on the desk. The ends of the envelope were between my thumbs and fingers, and I was unconciously twirling it round.

"Happening to glance at the mirror, to my surprise one of the blots developed into what looked like a capital letter H. On a more critical examination I was sure of it, and other letters began to show up out of the apparent ink spots until I made out the following: *Ha;* then there was a little space without any blot: then I made out the letter *r*; then came another blank space; then the letter *w*; then another space; and then the letters *ll*.

"All the letters were indistinct and imperfect.

"On that account, and the letters being wrong side up, as well as mixed with the word 'postmaster,' had failed to observe them. The mirror, however, showed them right side up, and the spots began to give out intelligence.

"My hopes brightened.

"Could that intelligence be the name of some village or town? It was; but I must relate the rest briefly.

"By the aid of a gazetteer, I soon became satisfied that 'Harrowell' was the name intermingled with the 'postmaster' on the envelope in which the anonymous letter came.

"I immediately took the train for that place, on the following theory, which proved a correct one. I concluded the letter was written in Harrowell, put into an envelope and addressed:

"Postmaster, Ashington.

"Then the same person had written and posted another letter to a friend in London inclosing therein the Ashington letter, with a request that the letter be posted in the metropolis. In folding the letter to the friend round the Ashington letter, the name of the village 'Harrowell' at the head of the sheet, covered the word 'postmaster' on the envelope. The ink not being dry made the ink spots which proved of so much importance in the case.

"On arriving at Harrowell, a very small place, I rapidly made my way to the post office, stated the case to the postmaster and showed him the letter.

"On reading it he said: 'I believe I can tell you where to find your man. We have a man in our village who has spent one term in prison. He was away at the time of the murder, but came home soon after. The letter, I believe, was written by his sister-in-law.'

"It was then three. The man, I learnt, would be home at six. That gave me time to make arrangements for his arrest and have an interview with the woman.

"On showing her the letter she admitted writing it and its truth. She had no affection, she stated, for her brother-in-law, but feared him. His actions had caused the death of her sister, and she privately confessed that she would be pleased to see him behind the prison bars.

"An examination of his room was made, and beneath the carpet, behind a chest of drawers, I found five bank notes.

"When the villain came home at six he was arrested, and we were soon speeding towards Ashington. The woman also came as a witness.

"Nothing could be done that night; it was too late. But in the morning I saw solicitor and counsel and told my story. On the opening of the court, the trial was adjourned.

"Well, I needn't prolong the story. The evidence was considered sufficient to secure Clark's acquittal, and in time the real culprit received his reward.

"Clark was very grateful to me, and with tears in his eyes expressed sorrow because he could not recompense me for what I had done.

"He soon left Ashington and I heard nothing from him until five years ago, when at Christmas I received from him this gold watch. With it was a note, saying that if some of his ventures proved successful I should hear from him again.

"I never have, but from his case I learnt to be a little shy of circumstantial evidence."

H. FITZGERALD.

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Trans-Saharan Station 15—M.

"CLINK-CLANK! clink-clank!"

Three men crouched in the shelter of a hut made of sheets of corrugated iron. They did not stir. They scarcely breathed. The thermometer indicated a temperature of one hundred and thirty-five degrees.

Before the door of the hut rose a skeleton tower of iron beams.

Over a wheel at the top of the structure ran a wire rope which, descending perpendicularly, disappeared within a well-like cavity some twenty inches in diameter. The other end was coiled round a drum operated by an electric motor which automatically started—stopped—reversed—stopped—started, and so on. Up and down, up and down, moved the rope with monotonous regularity.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

It was the only sound that disturbed the intense, suffocating stillness.

Outside, the horizon line receded to the utmost limit of vision in all directions. A level waste of sand met the eye wherever it turned, reflecting the almost vertical rays of the sun with an indescribable fierceness. The atmosphere swam in shimmering streaks.

The enormous palpitating disc of the desert was bisected by a single line of rails which dwindled to vanishing points to the north and to the south. The rails rested on the broad basis of metal like huge, inverted soup plates, which enabled the road to lie firmly upon the treacherous sand. Between the rails was placed the insulated cable which brought the electric current to the motor.

A semaphore signal, planted upright in the sand like a contorted skeleton, a few scattered tools, some bits of piping and abandoned pieces of machinery, completed the catalogue of objects of definite outline. The motor buzzed drowsily.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

This particularly undesirable spot upon the world's surface was marked on the map of the new Trans-Saharan Railway as Station 15—M. The railway was the latest audacious engineering exploit of the French. It connected Algiers in a mathematically straight line with Timbuctoo, and was expected to bring the riches of the eastern Soudan to the Mediterranean shores. Station 15—M was full four hundred miles north of the southern terminus, in the hottest part of the great Sahara, just under the line of the tropic.

The three men in the hut were drilling an artesian well, that, when pierced, would create an artificial oasis. The drilling apparatus was perfectly made and almost human in its intelligence. It would work for hours without Belleau, the chief, touching a lever.

Belleau was an old man, wedded to one idea, the success of the Trans-Saharan. Littlefield, his assistant, was an Englishman, young and enthusiastic. Colet was a student of the French Technological school, who acted as helper and general utility man.

"Ah, how awfully hot this is!" muttered Colet at last, as he tried vainly to find a place where it was a degree or two cooler. "What wouldn't I give for a good swim now!"

"Keep still, there's a good fellow," expostulated Littlefield. "You are kicking up this dry sand, and it won't settle again for an age. Don't knock all our grub over, either. The Tauregs may stop the supply train, and vegetables don't grow in this country. There! you've gone and done it!"

For Colet had given another roll and dislodged a pile of boxes of provisions, which, with the miscellaneous clothing and instruments, came crashing down in a heap.

When they had been restored to their places, Belleau awoke from a troubled slumber. He glanced at his watch, and then, pulling his coat collar up to shield his neck from the solar heat, crossed the space between the hut and the tower.

"Four thousand feet," he murmured. "In forty-eight hours, we ought to reach the water-bearing strata."

By turning a lever he reversed the electric apparatus rapidly, and the drum began to wind the wire rope. When it was full, another was deftly substituted, and after that a third. Then the machinery stopped, and the heavy metal drill emerged from the black depths of the well, bringing with it a volume of dark earth, which, tumbling down a trough prepared for its reception, poured over the tawny desert sand. It was a curious contrast of hues.

The engineer fingered the soil. It was loose and friable. He smelled and even tasted it.

"We have not yet reached the belt of clay which confines the subterranean reservoirs," he said.

Once more with a humming sound, the drill vanished into the depths, the wire rope rattled furiously as it unwound, and then the apparatus resumed its work.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

When the sun declined it was obscured by a curious mouse-coloured cloud rising from the west.

"Can it be a thunderstorm?" asked Littlefield.

"Worse," answered the chief; "it is a sandstorm, the terrible simoon. I fear we are in great danger."

With incredible swiftness the "Devil of the Sahara" advanced. Where the three men stood, a deathlike stillness prevailed. The outlines of the tower seemed drawn in sepia on a background of fiery orange. Long, snaky fingers of smoke came reaching out over the sky, wriggling fantastically.

Then a wall of grey mist came sweeping over the desert, and the awe-stricken beholders saw the sand caught up in vast whirling columns. A dull booming sound, like that of breakers on hidden reefs, smote upon their ears.

"Inside and close the door!" shouted Belleau.

The engineers hastened into the hut and secured the door.

In a moment, it seemed, the storm was upon them.

The atmosphere became black as midnight. A sonorous hum, like the diapason of some mighty

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cathedral organ, filled all the dome of the heavens. There were sounds of titanic buffetings and demoniac yells.

It was as if all the ancient fiends of the Sahara had gathered to overwhelm its presumptuous invaders.

Had not the hut been strongly bolted together it would have been torn to pieces. The fiery particles hissed against its iron sides like a discharge of shot.

Sand sifted through the cracks until the three men, their heads wrapped in cloths, were almost stifled.

For a moment it seemed as though they were to be buried deep in a living grave. Then, as quickly as it came, the simoon fled away, and the sun, now red as blood, threw his level beams across the plain.

The drilling apparatus was not injured. Its delicate machinery was so protected that the sand could not reach it.

Then a terrible discovery was made. Colet, his throat burning with thirst, approached the tank which contained their supply of water. He found the tap open and the tank empty!

The lad gave a cry. His companions rushed to the spot.

"All gone—wasted!" he moaned.

It was true. Not a drop remained. When the pile of supplies had fallen over, the tap had been knocked open, and the thirsty sand had drunk the precious liquid.

"If a train doesn't get here to-morrow, we shall be in a fix," observed the assistant engineer.

Belleau shook his head.

"The sand-storm has blocked the rails," he said. "No engine can pass until the ploughs have made a path for it. That will take many hours, and a man cannot live many hours in the Sahara without water."

"Let us walk to the next station," suggested Colet.

"It is two hundred miles. If one of us tried he would perish before he had accomplished a quarter of the distance," replied the old chief. His eyes turned toward the drill.

"There is one hope, then," cried the Englishman, following the direction of his gaze. "If the drill reaches the water-bearing levels in time we shall be saved."

The old engineer bowed his head silently.

"Clink-clank! clink-clank!"

The long night had dragged away and the garish sun shot into view once more. The three men, haggard, gasping, with parched throats, avoided meeting one another's gaze. The drill had gnawed its way deeper into the bowels of the earth, but there were no signs of water.

The frightful agonies of prolonged thirst had set in. The victims neglected to note the passage of time, but lay in a sort of stupor. At intervals the chief tested the borings.

"It will soon be over, one way or the other," he whispered to his assistant.

Towards the middle of the afternoon Colet collapsed with all the symptoms of violent sunstroke. His face became almost black. His pulses beat furiously.

"Water!" he muttered, with cracked lips.

His companions turned away. Then followed delirium. He murmured of running streams and splashing fountains. Death comes quickly when the thermometer marks one hundred and thirty-five degrees on the Sahara. The poor lad suddenly sprang to his feet, and, staggering from the hut, he put his palms together above his head and dived, as one dives from a river bank, headlong into the black shadow of the tower, streaming across the sand. When Littlefield reached him he was dead.

The sun completed its circuit and sank like a plummet towards the western horizon. Belleau and his assistant feebly tried the boring again. The drill was withdrawn with some difficulty. When it came to the surface it was coated with stiff clay, cool to the touch. The old engineer pointed to it. He could not speak. It was a question of a few hours now.

Belleau, completely exhausted, threw himself down on the sand at the door of the hut and seemed to sleep.

Littlefield, lying flat on his back, tried to gaze through the grey depths of the zenith. Suddenly, far above, he perceived a black spot that hovered and circled in a wide orbit. It seemed to be watching intently. A sickness of utter horror and despair came upon the young man.

He approached his chief and touched the shoulder of the still form. There was no response.

"Belleau!" he exclaimed with hoarse emphasis.

No answer. He passed his hand over the temple fringed with grey locks. The flesh was still and harsh. The heart had ceased to beat. The old engineer had passed away as peacefully as a baby goes to sleep within its mother's circling arms.

The drill never stopped.

"Clink-clank! Clink-clank!"

When Littlefield opened his eyes again the lids seemed to grate heavily upon the balls. He looked up. The grey sky was gone and the odious black spot with it. It was night, and over the velvet depths of space the tropic stars were passing in a majestic procession. They shone with wonderful brilliancy.

The young engineer gazed drowsily at them. He felt strangely comfortable as he lay there upon the sand. The tormenting thirst had ceased. He did not even feel surprised when he found that his limbs had lost the power of motion. Life seemed concentrated in a small area of the brain just behind the eyes. He perceived nothing but the glorious wheeling stars, some red, some blue, some of a yellow lustre.

Then came visions of a far distant landscape; great elm trees over-arching, and the continual gurgle of the brook, flowing underneath a plank bridge. He was walking up the path.

A girl stood at the gate and stretched out her hands to him, smiling angelically with brown eyes that looked clearly into his own.

"Harry," she said, and her voice sounded like a far away tinkle of silver bells, "you have come at last."

Then the light went out like a glowing coal, and only the great calm, desert stars, looked down pityingly.

"Clink-clank! Clink-clank!"

But when the day came again the great drill had ceased its clanking.

In those hours of darkness the waters under the earth, liberated from their prison, had burst with impetuous force through the vent, tossed the machine aside, and the first rays of the sun were reflected on the ebullient flood that bubbled up from the well, gushed in rainbow spray round the iron post of the tall derrick, filled the hollows behind the track with crystal pools, and then hastened by the three dark, silent forms that heeded it not, before plunging once more into the sands that gave it birth.

FRED. THORNTON.

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The Woman Who Jilted a Man.

THE news of the young man's death affected Miss Darrow disagreeably. The close friendship existing between the two families would call for some display of concern on her part, if only for form's sake. Being a girl of strong convictions and unalterable opinion, she regretted this necessity. She considered it incompatible with true honesty to simulate grief for a person she could not respect.

Moreover, there was the Captain. Women can be very rigid in their censorship of the conduct of a lover to whom they have grown indifferent. When to that indifference is added the power of the spell wielded by the Other Man, this rigidity is intensified. The Captain was tall, bronzed, athletic, handsome—all, in fact, that the late Arthur Herrick had not been. Miss Darrow had found him strangely fascinating. Now that young Herrick was dead she felt saddened, perplexed. Remorseful also? Possibly.

Nowhere in all this world is the sky so blue as at Dharjeeling. It is a pale, turquoise blue—a burnt-out blue, for the sun is fierce enough there to burn red-hot iron white. Miss Darrow's eyes were strong, as well as very large and very black, and the brilliant blue of the sky this morning failed to cause her so much as a blink. She was sitting in the indifferent shade of a scraggly tree in the gorgeous garden of the most gorgeous hotel in the land. She was dressed in white, and was good to look at. All girls with royal black eyes who dress in white are beautiful, at least in northern India.

It was the hour for morning parade, and the hotel piazzas were free of military gentlemen with glove-fitting uniforms and glittering swords. There were women up there, plenty of them—some quite as beautiful as she—but in these Miss Darrow was not in the least interested.

High overhead a great buzzard balanced himself, motionless, except for the occasional jerky tilting of his wings. Near by a fountain plashed monotonously—drip, drip, drip.

It was in these very gardens, then flooded, most romantically and most beautifully, with moonlight, that Miss Darrow had last seen Arthur Herrick, to whom she had been engaged for three years.

There had been a dance at the hotel—your army-loving girl will dance at any hour and in any temperature, however hideous—and Miss Darrow even now could remember the white imperial silver of the moon flooding the palm trees, and the wailing of the violins from within, as she walked in these gardens with the *fiancé* she had decided should never be her husband. The laughter of young newly-arrived officers, feverish with the rapture of their first campaign could be heard from the piazzas as the little life tragedy was played, out here on the grass beside the fretfully-splashing fountain. The conversation was not difficult to remember; every phrase was simplicity itself.

"Your decision is quite irrevocable."

"Quite."

"You have decided you will not marry me. It would at least be courteous in you to tell me why."

"It is a woman's privilege to change her mind. I choose to exercise it."

"I have been very faithful to you—Elizabeth."

"Yes." The insolence of the monosyllable was merciless and infinite.

"I have the right to demand a better reason."

"I have a better reason."

"And it is——"

"All the men I know are brave. They are thinking of sterner things than marriage. They have entered the army. You have not. Arthur, I will not marry a coward."

She had watched him walk away proudly, and in silence. The moonlight accentuated the pallor of his face, but his civilian's evening dress became him. She had had no chance to regret her severity, for the next dance was Captain Hough's, and his footsteps fell heavily on the walk as he came to claim it.

And now the young man was dead. If her conduct had occasioned him suffering, it was ended now—and she was tolerably sure that he had suffered—else his lips would hardly have grown so white. Still, she did not regret, even now. She was a soldier's grand-daughter, and her conscience told her that she had done rightly. She rather harboured toward the young man a certain feeling of resentment. He had chosen an inopportune time to die.

She reclined in the garden chair with her eyes half shut, her attitude one of utter grace. Above, the buzzard still circled and sailed in the heat-waves, and near by the fountain went drip, drip, drip.

Captain Clayton Hough was coming slowly up the walk. The Captain's regular army training was evidenced by his masterful tread, the superb rigidity of his figure and the piercing glance of his eye. It was a bright blue eye, kindly and gentle in expression ordinarily, but capable of emitting sparks in a fight. As it rested on Miss Darrow, the kindness was unmistakable.

From beneath drooping and delicately-veined lids, the young lady in white watched him approach. She had only known the Captain since the arrival of his regiment two weeks before, but as he came near, her full lips parted slightly, and the bodice of the white dress rose and fell. Had it lain within the power of the late Arthur Herrick to awaken such manifestations, the condemnation of his cowardice might have been less harshly expressed.

The Captain was as shy as he was big. Red as his face was with the exercion of drill and with the heat, it reddened still more fiercely as he diffidently saluted the white figure and subsided into a very uncomfortable three-cornered rustic seat, opposite. Miss Darrow smiled upon him with exceeding sweetness, as she remarked placidly: "Another boiling day, Captain."

"Yes," acquiesced the Captain, stabbing at the grass with his sheathed sword. He was studying the artistic little tendrils of brown hair at the base of the lady's neck, and wondering how any human being could look so exasperatingly cool on such a day.

"It is a shame," she averred sympathetically, "to make you parade on such a day."

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"It will be hotter," said the Captain simply, "in Poongar."

Miss Darrow shot an oblique glance at the soldier from beneath the veiled lids. The softness of his voice indicated the gentleman—the flashing of his eye, the soldier. The very ideal, this, of a man.

So regarding him, Miss Elizabeth Darrow knew why she had been merciless to Arthur Herrick.

On the lawns officers in mufti and women in light frocks were beginning to move about languidly. The prospect of an interruption to their *tête-à-tête* did not suit Miss Darrow. The Captain's eye had flashed adoration as well as patriotism as it had rested upon her. She had realised vaguely in the last twenty-four hours that she was approaching the passion of her life. The cowardice of her *fiancé* had afforded her excuse for giving it rein. The experience of the last three minutes had convinced her of the sweetness of its possible reward. And the orders to leave for the front might come at any hour!

The Captain was still stabbing at the turf with his scabbard. "I feel wretchedly blue," he confessed suddenly.

"Oh," cooed the lady, wreathing the back of her head with a perfect forearm, "why, I wonder?"

"I was with that young chap Herrick last night, when he died. He and I were together at Winchester. You knew him, did you not?"

Miss Darrow turned a shade whiter. "Er—slightly," she murmured. He did not know, then. She felt immeasurably relieved.

"I don't know when I've been so broken up," went on the soldier, rather shamefacedly, "he was half delirious, you know, but rational enough at times to make out a pretty clear story. And it's the saddest I ever listened to."

"Tell me about it," urged the young woman bravely. She wished to learn how much he knew. Was it possible Arthur had betrayed her?

"There wasn't much of it," admitted the Captain clumsily. "He'd been engaged for three years, it appears, to a girl he loved very dearly. He worshipped her, he idolised her—you ought to have heard the poor chap rave! And he would not tell her of his condition because he feared it would cause her suffering."

"Of his condition," echoed Miss Darrow faintly, "what condition?"

"He'd been suffering for a year with the complaint that carried him off—some sort of heart trouble, you know—and the doctors gave him hope that he would get over it. Then it seems the girl threw him over, squarely and flatly, because he didn't enter the army. She taxed him to his face with cowardice. That broke his heart."

The listener's face was very pale, indeed, now. "Go on," she requested, with praiseworthy calmness.

"And the pathetic part of it is," concluded the Captain, with a final, vindictive stab at the turf, "that the boy was as brave as a lion in spirit, though physically as weak as a cat. He had applied for enlistment in eight regiments, and had been rejected by the examining surgeons in every case. The last words he said to me were: 'I was afraid to tell her the truth, Hough. I didn't want her to know what a wreck I was. But I should die happier if I thought some day she'd know I wasn't a coward.'"

As he finished his recital, the Captain arose and shook himself like a large dog. He had never looked handsomer or more desirable in his life.

Miss Darrow stood up and faced him timidly. "It is very sad," she said softly. "What do you think of it all, Captain Hough?"

The Captain bowed gallantly and answered with great gentleness: "I am so nearly in love myself that my sympathies are all with the young man. If I had that girl before me I think I should be tempted to wring her beautiful neck."

The soldier had lost his diffidence, and was staring boldly into his companion's velvety eyes.

Miss Darrow was both courageous and impulsive. There came upon her now the impulse to be honest. Perhaps it was the plucky gambler's impulse—added to the knowledge that discovery, in any event, must come sooner or later—that prompted her now to declare calmly:

"Captain Hough, I was the girl."

The Captain drew back a pace and paled a trifle through his bronze. He looked first incredulous, then indignant. Watching his expression, the lady felt her hopes slowly congealing in her breast. As they stood there together, uncertainly, beneath the scraggly palm tree, there came suddenly from the interior of the hotel a hurricane of cheers, followed by a prodigious scampering along the piazzas, and a waving of flags from all the windows.

The Captain drew himself erect, clicked his heels together and gave a military salute.

"As I live, Miss Darrow," he said, in tones of relief, "the order has come to move to the front.'

He turned and strode up the pathway.

Miss Darrow stood beneath the scraggly palm for some time—meditating. Overhead, the great buzzard still sailed, and the fountain chanted its monotonous—drip, drip, drip.

ARCHIE BALDE.

ONE OF TWO THINGS MUST HAPPEN.

Either you do get the Double Summer Number of *Pearson's Weekly* on Friday, July 29th, or you don't. If you don't, that, we may safely say, will be your loss; if you do, you will hold in your hand the most scrumptious twopennyworth this world has ever seen.

Two of the special features are: A fifteen-thousand-words story, entitled:

"HELLVILLE, U.S.A." By George Griffith,

and a Prize Competition run on absolutely fresh lines.

The Editor has selected ten names from the London and Provincial directories all over the Kingdom, and has addressed ten envelopes to these people. In each envelope is a £5 note. On receiving an application from the ten persons, the envelopes will be stamped and posted.

It does not necessarily follow that the persons selected are readers of *Pearson's Weekly*. One of them may be yourself. Anyway, get a copy of

Pearson's Double Summer Number,

and see the conditions for addressing your post-card, as no application will be considered unless made in proper fashion.

This is the biggest prize scheme devised for a long time, and as it costs you but a halfpenny postcard, you should go in for it at once.

Pearson's Double Summer Number,

PRICE TWOPENCE.

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A FORCED LOAN.

Two of the best friends that were ever on earth were Fred Bentley and Tom Stockton. They had been chums at school, the same at college, and partners in business on their first entry into the outside world.

The singular unanimity of their tastes had also prompted them to fall in love with the same girl, and, strange to say, their friendship for each other proved too strong even for the green-eyed monster, and the only quarrel which they ever had over the girl was which of them should have her, or, to put it more correctly, which should have the privilege of sacrificing his love on the altar of Friendship, and retiring in favour of his friend.

Under such circumstances it was, of course, only to be expected that a third party should step in and decide the difficulty for them by stealing away the young lady's affections while they were disputing about her.

This duly happened, and the only reproaches that passed between the two friends were based upon their mutual obstinacy in insisting each upon giving her up to the other. If this had not been the case one of them might have married her and invited the other to dinner, and so all three might have lived happily ever afterwards.

As a matter of fact, however, it was a very good thing for the young lady that she married neither of them, for, although they were both excellent fellows in their way, their business capacity was of the smallest, and the few hundreds that they started on in business as joint proprietors of a society paper rapidly melted away, and before a year was out they found themselves unable to meet their printing and paper bills, and the journal, of which such great things were hoped at its birth, died quietly and ingloriously before the first anniversary of its birthday came round.

After this they went into journalism as journeymen scribes, and in the pursuance of their avocation were brought into contact with the theatrical profession to a considerable extent. Then a maternal aunt of Stockton's died and left him a few more hundreds, which he, of course, paid into the firm's common fund, replying to his friend's protest by telling him that he would have done just the same thing, and the firm, being thus rehabilitated, proceeded to get rid of their second capital by taking a select theatrical company on tour with a play of which they were the joint authors.

It would be almost superfluous to state that this venture ended even more disastrously than the first.

They struggled along for a few months, unlike some managers who take companies on tour, paying the salaries as long as the treasury held out, and at last found themselves stranded in a provincial town in the far north, whence, after selling the properties at a ruinous sacrifice, they were just able to pay their fares back to London, and live meagrely for a few weeks while they were looking for something to turn up.

The something did not turn up. As usual in such cases, they found it a great deal easier to get out of collar than to get into it again, and at last they found themselves practically penniless, a fortnight behind in the rent of the single room that they shared, and quite naturally, on the verge of desperation.

Now, although, as I have said, they were good fellows as the world goes, and though they had started out in life with an average stock of moral principles, I regret to say that rubbing shoulders with adversity had not had that purifying effect upon them which one reads about in story-books appointed for Sunday afternoon perusal.

On the contrary. In their brief but intimate experience of the world they had seen that where money and personal convenience were concerned, the majority of men were honest only as far as the fear of the policeman obliged them to keep straight. Now that they were face to face with poverty in its most unpleasant, that is to say its genteel form, they neither of them felt that they would kick at any considerations of abstract morality to get out of such a desperately unpleasant position.

At length a crisis came. About eleven one night—the eve, in fact, of the rent-day which would see them turned into the street—they met in their room after several hours of the weary tramping about in the unsuccessful search for employment to which they had become so miserably well accustomed. Bentley was gloomy and taciturn with settled despair; Stockton was excited, restless, almost feverish, and looked as though he had something serious upon his mind.

Bentley noticed this, and said to his friend, after waiting in vain for him to speak:

"Well, old man, what's the matter? You look rather queer. You've not been drinking, I suppose, for it would hardly run to a drunk unless you've had a good deal better luck than I have."

"Luck!" said Stockton, pulling a chair up to the other side of the little table at which Bentley was

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sitting. "I don't know whether you'll call it luck or something else, but you've got to know the facts, and if I can't trust you I don't suppose it's any use trusting myself."

"Look here, now," he continued, putting his elbows on the table and staring straight across into his friend's eyes, "when I started out this morning on this everlasting ghastly search for honest work that's not to be found, I went with my mind made up to end this horrible state of affairs one way or the other. I resolved either to get hold of some money, honestly if I could, but anyhow to get hold of it before twelve o'clock to-night, or else to go out of the world for good over one of the bridges.

"Well, I wandered about all day with nothing to eat, and, of course, without any success, until at last I got so hungry that I actually offered to carry a hand-bag for a middle-aged lady, apparently very much from the country, who happened to ask me the way to London Bridge Station. She looked a bit surprised when I told her point blank that I'd be glad of the job of carrying the thing, but she gave it me willingly enough, for it was fairly heavy, and she was hot and tired, and when we got to the station she gave me a shilling.

"At first I thought I'd go and get something to eat, but meanwhile this wretched tooth of mine had begun to ache furiously, and put all thoughts of eating out of my head. I'd been headachy and neuralgic all day with fatigue and want of food, and when the tooth started it drove me pretty nearly out of my mind.

"I went into a chemist's and got an ounce of laudanum and some cotton-wool. Then to a public, got threepennyworth of brandy, put twenty or thirty drops of the laudanum into it, and drank it straight off. In five minutes I was a new man; pain, hunger, and all vanished like magic. I got a pennyworth of tobacco at the bar, sat down, and enjoyed a thorough good smoke.

"It was rather a low sort of public down Southwark way, and, while I was sitting smoking and thinking, I heard a conversation going on in the next compartment which very soon convinced me that a couple of sharps had evidently got hold of a greenhorn, and were trying to work the confidence trick on him. Of course, I pricked up my ears at once, and listened all I could.

"The voice of one of the men seemed familiar to me, and I soon identified it as that of a fellow who had got six months for pocket-picking in a case which I wrote up for the *Comet*, when you and I were doing lineage before that last spec. of ours in the provinces.

"Just as the worthies were getting the greenhorn up to the scratch, I pushed the door of the compartment open, went in, accosted this fellow by name, and told him that the game was up.

"They looked ugly, and they talked ugly, but they found it convenient to clear out, and so they did, leaving me alone with Mr. Greenhorn. He was a young fellow of five-and-twenty or so, with less horse-sense than a fourth standard Board-school boy, and when I explained the swindle to him he became very grateful and very communicative. Of course he insisted on standing drinks, and wouldn't hear of my paying for any, which was convenient in the state of my finances.

"He had had a good deal to drink already, and he had a good deal more with me, and by the time I got him out of the place he was pretty well drunk. Outside he was fool enough to tell me that I'd saved him a loss of at least £50. It seems that he had just come into a small legacy, and had drawn £50 of it in gold on the lawyers' cheque. The money was in two little bank bags containing £25 each, and here they are."

As he said this, Stockton put his hand into his trousers pocket, pulled out the two bags, and let them drop on the table with a dull but musical clink.

"Good Heavens, Stockton!" exclaimed Bentley jumping up from his chair. "You don't mean to say that you robbed the man?"

"Yes, you can call it that if you like. Now don't get excited; sit down and I'll tell you how I did it, and then you can go and tell the police if you like."

"I'll not do that anyhow, old man, so go on," said Bentley mechanically sitting down again. And then Stockton continued:

"When the idiot showed me these two bags I remembered my resolve, and in them I saw rescue and, perhaps, another chance in life. The liquor that I consumed had not made me drunk, for the laudanum stopped that, but it had got away with any scruples that I might have had left, and I made up my mind to have those bags at any price. To make matters worse he took out a sovereign and insisted on my accepting it. I took it, and then suggested that we should have just one more drink and say good-night.

"I found another shady-looking public and took him in. I sat him down in a corner of the coffee-room in which there didn't happen to be anybody else, and fetched a couple of glasses of hot brandy-and-water from the bar. He was half asleep, and I managed, without him seeing me, to slip a good stiff dose of the laudanum that I had left into one of them.

"He drank it down at a gulp, and then I roused him up and got him out, and steered him up towards the river. Just as he was getting helplessly stupified I got him into a deserted by-street leading to a wharf, and half filled with carts, laid by for the night. He wanted to sit down here, and I let him; in fact, I stowed him away in one of the carts, took his two bags of gold, and left him to sleep it off at his leisure.

"That happened about an hour ago; he won't be found until the morning, and by that time I mean to be in Liverpool, that is, if you don't mean to give me up on my own confession."

"I told you before I'm not going to do that. What's done's done, and there's an end of it. You get out of the way as soon as you can, and never fear any danger from me. I daresay I should have done the same myself if I had been in your place, after all; I'm just as sick of this infernal poverty and starvation as you are."

"That's like business," replied Stockton, tossing a bag across the table. "Now, you take that, and I'll take this, and we will say good-bye till better times come."

Bentley made some show of protest; but the temptation of the gold was too strong, and he took it. Then without more ado the two friends shook hands, Stockton packed his few remaining effects into a shabby portmanteau, ran down into the street, called a cab, and drove to Euston. He just caught the midnight express, and by noon the next day he was on board a liner bound for New York.

* * * * *

Five years passed, and the two friends heard nothing of each other. Bentley found that the wheel of fortune had taken its lowest turn, for a few days later he got work on one of the dailies in place of an acquaintance who was taken ill. The man died and the post became a permanent one.

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Taught prudence at last by adversity he stuck to his work, won promotion, and found himself in possession of a decent income. As he never heard anything of Stockton he concluded that luck had not changed for the better for him, and that he had probably sunk out of sight in the undercurrents of New York life.

This, however, was by no means the case. Luck had turned for Stockton as well. On the passage out he made the acquaintance of an Australian gold-digger who was going out to try his luck in California. The two struck up a friendship, and the Australian advanced Stockton enough money to enable him to cross the continent and get a miner's outfit.

Then the two went into partnership, and after a couple of years of hard and fairly successful work they had a lucky hit and struck a rich vein that yielded them a couple of thousand apiece before it gave out.

With this capital they went to work on a more extended scale, and in three years more they sold out for £50,000 apiece and dissolved partnership, Stockton refusing all his partner's entreaties to go with him back to Australia and try his luck again there.

The fact of it was that Stockton had made up his mind to go back to England, and if possible find out the man from whom he had taken the £50 that had formed the foundation of his fortune, and secretly repay him with handsome interest, which, of course, was a sufficiently honourable resolve under the peculiar circumstances.

Arrived in England, he found himself in a very different position to that in which he was when he left. Then he had wanted money so badly that he stooped to crime to get it; now he had plenty of money and didn't know what to do with it.

His spendthrift habits had vanished during his spell of hard work, and he was a cool, hard-headed, thrifty man of business, not content with the income that his £50,000 would yield him at interest, and therefore determined to go to work with it, and double, or treble, or quadruple it as speedily as the Fates would allow him.

Of course he looked out for Bentley as soon as he got back, but he absolutely failed to find any trace of him. The reason for this was chiefly that Bentley, detesting his old name and its sombre associations, had dropped it as soon as he found himself on the road to respectability again, giving as an excuse to the few who knew him that he had come into a little property, to which was attached the condition that he should take the name of the imaginary uncle from whom he had inherited it.

After he had been casting about for a month or two for some means of employing his money, Stockton made the acquaintance of a gentleman who was running a small but fairly prosperous bucket-shop. He had experience, but wanted capital. Stockton had money and some knowledge of the mysteries of stock and share dealing, which he had picked up in America.

An examination of the business satisfied him that it was a money-making concern, and only needed a few thousands spent in profuse advertising and handsome offices to make a big concern of it: and so it came to pass that he became a partner, disguising his identity under the style of Swappem and Co.

The business flourished apace, for it was profusely advertised, and many fish came into the alluring net that was spread in the columns of the most respectable newspapers of the day.

That was the time when financial journalism was beginning to be a specific enterprise, and one day there came to the office of Swappem and Co., the advertising manager of a newly-founded paper, entitled *The Pactolian*: A Weekly Journal of Politics and Finance. After some little difficulty an advertisement order was obtained—half a page, at the very moderate price of £10 per insertion.

Before the contract had expired *The Pactolian* made a very lucky shot in financial prophesy, by which, as it happened, Swappem and Co. profited very considerably. The order was increased to a page at £30, with a laudatory article thrown in. Then came two or three more lucky shots, and the circulation of *The Pactolian* went up, to use the current phrase, "by leaps and bounds."

Instead of soliciting advertisement orders it was soon in a position to select them, and, of course, the prices went up accordingly. Swappem and Co. stood the rise for their page until it reached £100 a week, and then they kicked.

There was a dispute over the contract to begin with. Swappem and Co. claimed the space for three months, while *The Pactolian* people insisted that the order was terminable in a month. Of course there was a law-suit, and *The Pactolian* won. Swappem and Co. paid up, and the advertisement was taken out. Then one or two other firms in the same line took theirs out, and finally a new financial paper was started by a syndicate in which Swappem and Co. had a considerable interest.

After this it was war to the knife. *The Pactolian* suddenly became intensely curious as to the identity and antecedents of Swappem and Co. Stockton had kept himself carefully behind the scenes while his partner, whose real name was Mr. Emanuel Moss, ran the business in the name of the firm.

Unhappily, this gentleman had been engaged in one or two doubtful transactions a year or two before he had started the business in which Stockton had become a partner, and these *The Pactolian* managed by some means to ferret out. A week later it came out with a scathing article, casting the most serious reflections upon the commercial reputation of Swappem and Co.

So serious indeed were they that there was nothing for it but an action for libel to clear the reputation of the firm by proving that the matters alluded to by *The Pactolian* had not the slightest connection with it as Swappem and Co., and that its hands were as clean as the nature of its business permitted it to be—that is to say, as clean as those of any other highly respectable firm in the same line.

It was a battle of money against money. Both sides had plenty, eminent counsel, silks and juniors were engaged to do battle for the veracity and public spirit of the defendants and the reputation and *bona fides* of the plaintiffs. Several weeks were occupied in the usual interlocutory proceedings which are so deftly contrived to swell the expenses of a law-suit, and at last the day of trial arrived.

It had been decided by the legal wisdom enlisted on their side that, for the purposes of the lawsuit, Swappem and Co. should be represented in court by Mr. Stockton, whose financial record was absolutely irreproachable, and that Mr. Emanuel Moss should be considered merely as the manager employed by him, the capitalist who had found the money to develop the business.

It was in accordance with this astute arrangement that Stockton found himself seated in the well of Court No. 3 of the Queen's Bench Division on the morning of

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the trial beside his solicitor, listening to the eloquent opening speech of Mr. Jiggers, Q.C., his leading counsel. The speech was not over when the Court rose for luncheon, and as he got up from his seat to go out, Stockton took a look round the crowded court, and to his horror, saw his old friend Bentley on the opposite side engaged in earnest conversation with the solicitor for the defence. He recovered himself in a moment sufficiently to ask his own solicitor:

"Who is the man talking to the solicitor on the other side?"

"That? Oh, don't you know him. That's Mr. Frederick Matthews, the editor of *The Pactolian*, the man who wrote the article containing the libels. He's here to give evidence in justification."

The strange name puzzled Stockton not a little, but there was no doubt in his mind as to the identity of the man who bore it. Like a flash it crossed his mind that this man could give him penal servitude if he liked.

True, in the old days he had promised never to open his mouth on the subject of that dark deed in the bye-street in Southwark; but five years had gone by since then, and men change with time. What reason, therefore, had he for believing that Bentley, or Matthews, would now keep the promise that he had made under such very different circumstances?

He slipped out of court by the other door and went out into the Strand to think the situation over. He had grown a beard and had otherwise considerably altered in personal appearance, but when he was put into the witness-box, as he would be that afternoon, with all eyes upon him, Bentley's included, the dangers of recognition would still be very great. He turned the problem over and over again in his mind, and at last determined to take the bull by the horns. If his former chum meant mischief it would be bound to come sooner or later, and it might as well come sooner.

Thus thinking, he retreated his steps and turned into the Law Courts again. In the entrance hall who should he meet but Bentley, face to face. Acting on the impulse of the moment, he went up to him, held out his hand, and said:

"Well, Bentley, old man, and so we are to meet as enemies after all these years. How did you come to change your name?"

Bentley stared blankly at him for a few seconds, and then a smile of recognition broke over his face as he clasped Stockton's hand heartily and said:

"Why, Stockton, you don't mean to say it's you! So you're Swappem and Co.—are you?—and I'm the editor of *The Pactolian*. Well, I'll be hanged! Come and crack a bottle with me, old man, before the fight begins again."

They adjourned to an adjoining restaurant and cracked a bottle, but the fight did not begin again. When Mr. Jiggers rose after luncheon, it was to ask for an adjournment pending a proposed settlement between the parties. Of course, the adjournment was granted, and the case was settled out of court.

That night the head of the firm of Swappem and Co. dined *tête-à-tête* with the editor and proprietor of *The Pactolian*, and, as a result of certain information conveyed by the latter to the former, a certain Mr. Alfred Johnson, of Wickham Market, Suffolk, received on the day but one following, to his intense astonishment, a registered envelope containing five £100 notes, round which was wrapped a half sheet of note-paper on which was typewritten the single line:

"In grateful repayment of a forced loan."

GEORGE GRIFFITH.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

On account of the August Bank Holiday, all the following papers will be on sale on Friday, July 29th.

"Pearson's Weekly," dated August 6th.
"Short Stories," dated August 6th.
"Home Notes," dated August 6th.
"Pearson's Magazine," for August.
"Isobel's Dressmaking at Home," for August.
"Home Cookery," for August.

- - M. A. P. - -

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Most y All Paragraphs;
Much After Pearson's.
Matter Agreeably Presented.
Masterly And Pithy.
Modest And Prudent.
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Many Admirable Phrases,
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More Attractions; Probably
Memoirs, Annals, Prizes;
Many Appreciate Pencil-cases.

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P.W. offers the substantial prize of £10 to the inventor of what we consider to be, after a fair trial, the best all-round, inexpensive pipe.

We shall not undertake to put the winning pipe upon the market or to finance it in any way.

All models must reach this office, together with clear instructions as to the method of using, not later than Tuesday, August 2nd.

If sufficient postage accompanies each attempt, the models will be returned at the discretion of the editor who, however, does not hold himself responsible for loss or damage.

What do Dreams Mean?

We recently made the acquaintance of a lady who has made the laws of Oneirology a life study, and her explanations we have found to be singularly true in cases upon which we have consulted her. She has the reputation of being the most expert person in the world in this science. Accordingly we have made arrangements with her to give the fullest information to any reader of this paper who cares to send asking her advice. Readers should be very careful to explain in the fullest manner the whole extent of their dream. MADAME GEORGES will reply, giving a full explanation.

Readers should address their letters to "DREAMS," *Short Stories* Offices, Henrietta Street, Strand, W.C., and inclose six penny stamps and a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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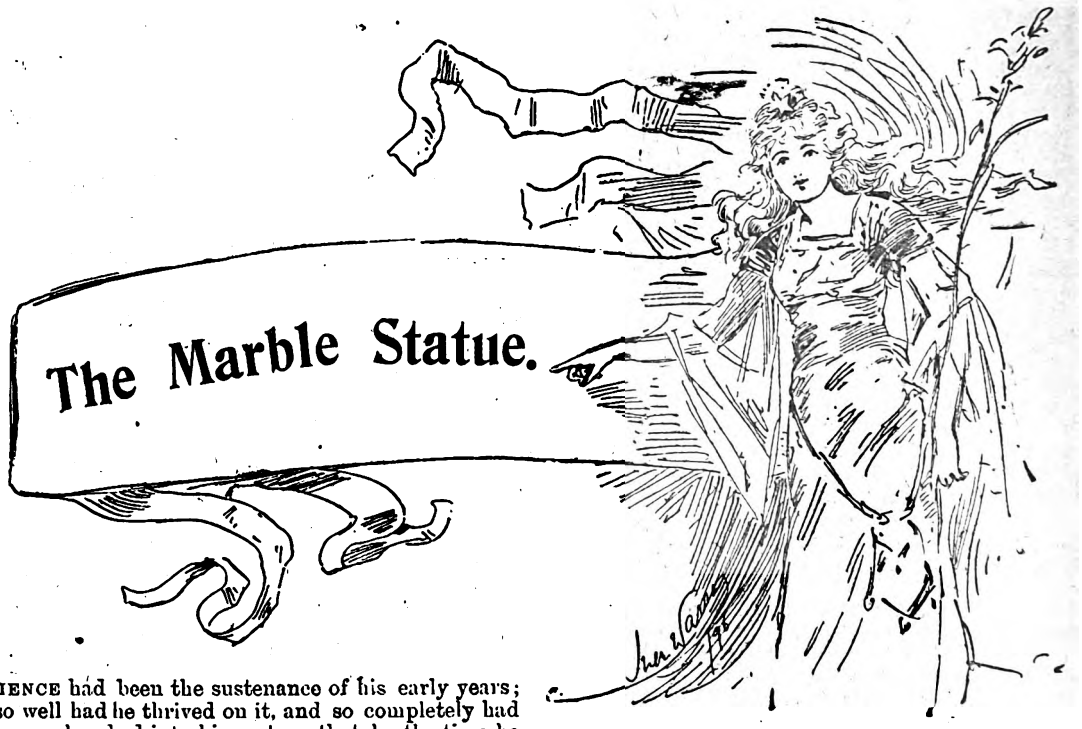

The Marble Statue.

Science had been the sustenance of his early years; and so well had he thrived on it, and so completely had it become absorbed into his system, that by the time he reached man's estate it was not only a part of his life—it was all of it. His wife, his home, his child, were mere incidents, and entirely subservient.

It was characteristic of the Professor that if he took up a subject, he became absolutely engrossed in it. He was not one to study superficially. So, when hypnotism attracted his attention, he not only devoured all obtainable lore upon the subject, but he went to India and to Egypt, and delved to the uttermost depths of its mysteries.

About the time he completed his investigations in the Orient, his unassuming little wife passed quietly into a state of higher intelligence than even her scientific spouse had attained—that is, she died. Her legacy to the Professor was Winifred, dearly beloved and only child.

In his lucid intervals the Professor loved his daughter to the verge of adoration; in his scientific moments she was something not quite so dear as his books, his antiquities, and his instruments. Still, even then, Winifred was a useful adjunct, and thus escaped being an encumbrance.

She tried hard to be a companion to him, to be interested in the dry tomes over which he was for ever poring; she endeavoured to store her mind with their abstruse contents that she might discourse intelligently in their evenings together; and if her success as a scientific conversationalist was not remarkable, at least she was a good listener.

She would sit at his feet, to all appearances in rapt attention; but whether or not the thoughts behind that earnest, interested expression were always exactly relevant, is a question between Winifred's conscience and herself. Sometimes it would occur to the learned man that he was taking that feminine mind far beyond its depth; and he would pause and sigh. He often told her she had no potentiality for great things. He would say, and shake his head dolefully:

"I suppose you are a beautiful woman, Winifred; but what has beauty ever done to solve the great problems of the world, and the mystery of life? I would much rather you had been gifted with a high order of intelligence."

It was shortly after they had settled down together that the masterpiece was conceived and executed. It had been formulating in his mind for months, and his laboratory had been the scene of extensive experiments. At last, one evening, the preparations were completed, and all was in readiness for the final test.

He waited until the servants had retired, then called his daughter; and when she had entered the room wondering, he carefully closed and locked the door.

"My daughter," he began solemnly, "I am on the eve of a great discovery—the greatest discovery of all the ages. Its full scope is incomprehensible, its possibilities are unbounded. It will seem a miracle to you when I tell you it means the perpetuation of life, the annihilation of death. Now the time has come when I must weigh my belief in the balance of practical experiment, and in this I need your assistance."

Winifred assured him she was only too glad to be of any use.

"Listen carefully, then. I want to hypnotise you into a state of syncope, in which case your muscles will be dormant but your senses alert. The vital forces, while retaining their full vitality, will suspend activity during the period for which I hold you under the influence, and you will remain in any fixed position until I remove the influence.

"Do you see the possibilities? Its usefulness is manifold. If a man became mentally depressed, for instance, instead of committing suicide he would simply put himself away for a time until matters brightened. Then look at it from a standpoint of domestic economy; when a man is out of work and cannot provide for his

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family, he will 'put them away' till business revives. It can also be used for recuperation, and thus save millions of money in summer resort bills. Its uses are infinite."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed his listener.

"But," continued the Professor, "that is only one step of my discovery. The second is what I may call its artistic development. You can, of course, understand that unless places were especially provided for these dormant bodies, it might be somewhat gruesome to have them about the house. So I have thought of making them artistic, of posing them as statuary; and to that end I have invented a marble enamel, in which the body, after being hypnotised, is submerged. The enamel hardens in a few hours, and the person is encased, to all appearance, in a coating of the finest Carrara marble."

"A living statue!" cried Winifred, clasping her hands. "What a glorious idea!"

"Yes," he went on, pleased at her enthusiasm, "and now the question is, have you the courage to undertake your part for the cause of science, and be 'put away' until to-morrow, say, when I will bring you back to life?"

"I will get ready at once," cried the girl, jumping up with alacrity. "I have a Grecian costume that I used once in *tableaux vivants* at college when I posed as the blind girl. I am not in the least afraid, but I would like to know how I look when I am hypnotised and marbleised. Will you take a photograph of me, so that I may see myself afterwards?"

He said he would, called her a brave girl, and watched her with loving eyes as she tripped from the room.

* * * * *

The Professor stood trembling with excitement before his masterpiece. Success, perfect and complete, had rewarded his efforts. The silence of midnight was over the outside world, and within the laboratory his own heavy breathing was the only sound. He stood before his statue panting with the exhilaration of his joy.

If art had carved that statue, with what strides would its creator have ascended to the pinnacle of fame! He was overcome, and with his face in his shaking hands murmured brokenly:

"I am frightened at my success, Winifred. My brain is in a whirl. Perhaps you are but a phantasm, after all." He rose and walked about the room, and finally sank upon a couch in a distant corner.

"I will lie here and watch till morning," he thought; "then I will waken her."

But his nerves were under too high tension to be quieted. He tossed from side to side. He grew feverish.

"I will take a sedative," he said at last. "This excitability is unlike me; I cannot stand it."

Ten minutes later the Professor was stretched upon his back; the sedative had responded quickly—the Professor was asleep. And the statue stood guard with outstretched hand, while the small hours grew larger and the quiet in the street grew more intense.

Did she hear stealthy footsteps outside the door? Did she feel its cautious opening? Did she see an evil face appear at the aperture? No, she was blind, she could not see.

"Hist! Bill," said a voice, "look alive now. Take whatever ye can get ahold of in a hurry. Oh! That statue made me jump. We'll take it along; it looks valible. Lively, now! Look out ye don't break it,—won't be no good if ye do. Go easy; don't wake the old duffer."

* * * * *

The apartment was luxurious, and its owner, stretched at ease to the full of his six-foot length among multi-coloured pillows, was pleasing to look upon. He was one who could take his ease gracefully; indolence was a part of his inheritance.

In straight line with the direction of his vision, in a niche, between parted curtains, bathed in prismatic colours from the cut-glass globe of an incandescent lamp, stood a life-sized marble figure of a Greek girl, with outstretched hand and tender, drooping eyelids.

The man among the pillows looked at the figure before him. It had been there only a few days, but he had got into the habit of talking to it as he smoked his pipe after dinner.

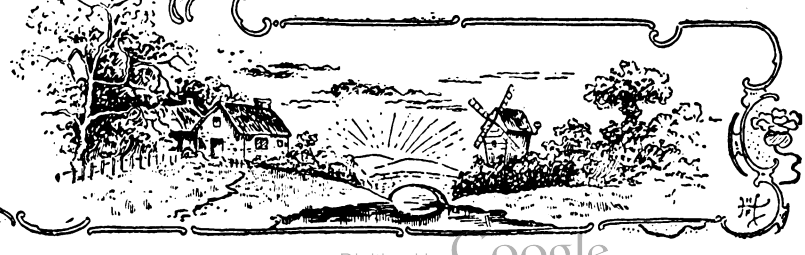
"Ah, Nydia," he said softly, "I believe I would have given all my fortune, if the villain had asked it, to possess you. How you got into that wretched little curiosity shop I don't know. I don't want to know. I asked him no questions. I paid what he wanted, and had you brought here at once before anyone could claim you; and now I wonder how I lived without you so long.

"I will not think of you as marble. I know there is a soul within that stone. I know it because I feel it. It draws me to you. It is like the magnetism of a living person.

"I don't understand it, but it is so. And now, you shall be my confidante. I am lonely; there is no living soul to whom I would tell my thoughts, but I will to you.

"I will tell you first, little blind girl, that I am not happy. I ought to be? Yes, I suppose so. I am a strong

Look out for the August Number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE.



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able-bodied fellow with a good digestion, no nerves, and plenty of money.

"I think I might be happy if I were not so useless—so superfluous. I am tired of doing things for myself. What does it amount to? No one else is pleased because I happen to be. Life is nothing without incentive, Nydia, I am convinced of it.

"I will draw your curtain now, for I am due at a great lady's. We will talk again to-morrow."

* * * * * *

"I am going to hold your hand, Nydia, while I talk. I am glad it is marble; you would not let me if it were not. When I hold it close for a few minutes it grows warm; I feel it throb. Don't tell me it is the throb of my own veins; I know better. I will warm you into life yet, you will see.

"I am going to tell you about Maisie to-night. I am thinking of marrying Maisie. Do you know, little girl, I am getting so maudlin about you that I actually imagined I saw your eyelids quiver when I said that. Oh, about Maisie! She is a charming girl—everyone says so—and we are very companionable; no doubt we should be the most congenial of couples. I have not asked her yet. I never seem to be in the mood, somehow—the proper degree of warmth seems to be lacking; but I shall, for I despair of ever having the proper degree of warmth for anyone, and I want to belong to someone and I want someone to belong to me.

"I am out of sorts to-night. You irritate me, Nydia. You are tantalising. I know quite well that you are only cold, hard stone; yet as I sit here and look at you I can hardly master the longing to take you in my arms. I would start out and hunt for the model who posed for you, but I know I should never find her. Your face haunts me continually. I am losing interest in everything else in the world. Some day you will tantalise me beyond endurance and I shall arise and crush you into dust—marble dust—and then I will sweep you up in a dust-pan and throw you out, and perhaps then I shall have peace.

"I have decided to speak to Maisie to-morrow. I must settle this; my mind is losing its balance. I can fancy myself in a padded cell, and those who come and look at me through the grating will say: 'Poor fellow, he loved a marble statue.' Nydia, Nydia, what is your power? I never thought my reason was weak—there were never any unbalanced minds in our race."

He paused in his soliloquy, for there seemed to be a commotion in the hall outside his rooms, and footsteps rushing up the stairs in frantic haste. Suddenly the door was flung open, and a man, dishevelled and wild, rushed in. The intruder stopped and looked eagerly about.

"Thank Heaven!" he ejaculated.

Tears in a torrent poured from his eyes. He started in the direction of Nydia, but the tall, athletic young man stepped between them.

"Be careful, man," he said quietly.

"Stand aside; she is mine."

"She is mine; dare lay one profane finger upon her and I will not hesitate to strike you down in an instant."

"Yours! She is mine; my daughter. Fool! Imbecile! Stand aside, I say!"

The two men grappled. The Professor was something of an athlete himself. Their bodies swayed from right to left as each struggled for the advantage. Furniture fell, the glass globes rattled. Once the younger man was down, but recovered immediately, and with all the concentrated power of his sinewy muscles he grasped the other and threw him prostrate.

The Professor gasped for breath.

"Let me up," he roared, when he could speak.

"I'll let you up when I have you in a straight waistcoat."

The Professor groaned in anguish of spirit.

"Fool!" he muttered.

Then, with one desperate effort, he lifted himself on his elbow, turned his face to the statue, and shrieked:

"Winifred, I command you, AWAKEN!!!"

There was a cracking, as of glass or porcelain breaking. The young man turned and staggered back against the wall. His Nydia was emerging from her chrysalis.

The warm tints of flesh and blood supplanted the dead white of the marble surface as it fell away. She stepped down from her pedestal, gave her draperies a truly feminine shake, and fell into the arms of her father—who, in the excitement, had been permitted to regain his feet.

"My child, can you forgive me?" he cried.

She looked over his shoulder archly at the figure against the wall.

"Fully and freely, my dear papa, absolutely and irrevocably, now and for ever."

She took a step in the direction of the other, and held out timidly a little hand, to which still clung a fragment of the marble enamel—but he made no move to take it. He stood spellbound, and simply stared.

"I used to wonder what you looked like," she said wistfully.

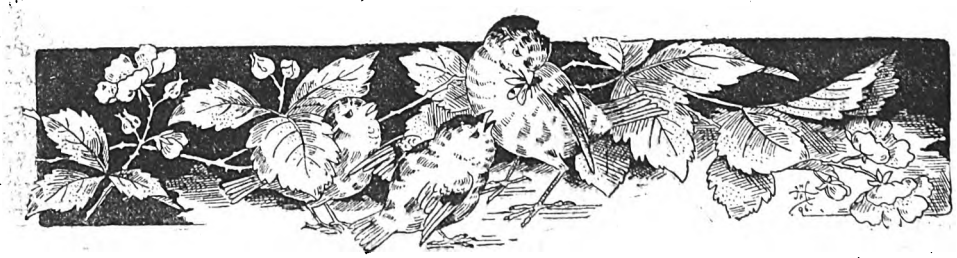
Still he remained motionless.

"Then you did not mean it?"

She turned back toward her father. There was a little catch in her voice; it seemed to break the spell which held him. The blood rushed back to his face, the life came back to his eyes; he took a step and caught the floating drapery before it was quite out of reach.

"Only give me a lifetime to prove it," he said.

F. TOMALIN.



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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

Gardener. — Your raspberry canes should be placed in a rich and heavy soil, where no drought can reach them.

S. T.—Fusiliers were formerly soldiers armed with a lighter fusil or musket than the rest of the army, but at present all foot regiments carry the same pattern of rifle.

Holiday Maker asks: "Does the air at a seaside place contain salt?" ————Only when it is windy. The salt of sea-water cannot evaporate into the atmosphere, and it is only when the wind carries off salt spray held in suspension and derived from the wave crests that the air becomes impregnated.

W. A. L. wishes to know which is the largest fossil land animal of which we have any trace.————The Camarasaurus. (You had better practise a little before you attempt to pronounce it in public). The thigh bone of a specimen found about a year ago is six feet in length, and takes four men to lift it. The tail is about twenty-seven feet long and composed of gigantic vertebræ. It is estimated that this creature stood sixteen feet high.

S. I.—The general notion that Siberia is a deadly dull place—that there is no pleasure, no civilisation, nothing except a plentiful supply of misery—is erroneous. There are fashions and fashionable people in Siberia, and the traveller meets women as well dressed as in any European city.

Cautious wants to know if St. Paul's Cathedral is insured, and for what sum.————St. Paul's Cathedral is insured for about £95,000.

Canal.—The oldest British canal is the Foss Dyke, in Lincolnshire. This is admittedly of Roman origin. It has been deepened and widened on two occasions; its length is about eleven miles. There was another Roman canal—the Caer Dyke—in the same county, but only the name remains.

S. C. N. puts the following question: "Why does severe and continued pain cause thirst?"————Pain, especially when accompanied by shock, not only stops the secretion of saliva, but weakens the heart's action, and this assists in causing thirst. When recovering from a fainting fit, people generally complain of thirst. Loss of blood has a similar effect.

Sorrow.—The "sorrowful tree" is a singular plant, found on the Island of Goa, near Bombay. It flowers in the night only. At sunset there is not a flower to be seen, but within an hour the tree is full of them. As soon as the sun rises some fall off, and the others close up, and thus it goes on all the year round.

Cyclist.—You cannot do better than choose France for the tour you are meditating. The roads there are really excellent. The Government keeps up a perfect system of care and inspection, and wherever you go you will be sure to find the roads in excellent order. They are often bordered with trees for miles, and are in a perfect state for cycling.

Edel. — Yes, there is considerable danger of the extirpation of the much-prized Alpine plant, edelweiss, about which so much romance and poetry has been woven. Not only do tourists play havoc with it, but large quantities of roots are pulled up and exported. The Provincial Diets of Styria and Carniolia have passed laws forbidding the uprooting of the plant, the sale to tourists, and the exportation in large quantities by anyone.

S. S.—A lifeboat costs twenty-seven shillings a week to maintain.

C. K. J.—Perhaps the nearest approach to exact similarity between the dresses of both sexes is to be found among the Chunchas, who live in the Montana district of Peru. Men and women both wear a single garment similar to the poncha, which is a shawl with a slit in the middle. The only difference is not in the garment itself, but in the wearing of it. The men wear it with the slit from shoulder to shoulder, and the women with it the other way, down the breast and the back.

H. R. S. T. writes to ask if the state of the weather has any effect upon the number of crimes committed.————Undoubtedly it has. November is, on the whole, the busiest month, for not only are the plain clothes policemen near the bridges obliged to keep a sharper look-out for would-be suicides, but also the dark, murky days are a great assistance to housebreakers and pickpockets. As a rule the rainy weather protects the public, for very few burglaries take place on a soaking wet night.

T. E.—The horn of the male narwhal is a specially developed upper tooth; it is sometimes nine or ten feet long. The tooth on the opposite side of the head, in the male, is a rudimentary affair, about ten inches in length, which is embedded in the jaw.

Precious.—In ancient times Tyre was the market for precious stones; later, Alexandria, Rome, and Constantinople had their turn. Venice was the chief market for a time in the middle ages. Of recent times Amsterdam and Antwerp have been prime centres—especially for diamonds—but London and Paris have taken their places now. As to your inquiry, "Where do most of the precious stones go?" the answer is that somewhere between one-third and one-half of the total production of the world go to the United States.

W. W. asks if it is true that the Pope never preaches.————Quite. Only once during three hundred years has this rule been broken. This was when Pius IX. was Pope.

Myrtle wants to know what it costs to be presented to the Queen, and if there any privileges attached?———— To be presented at Buckingham Palace costs at least fifty pounds, and the return for the outlay is nothing more substantial than having one's name in print. It gives the presentee, whether male or female, no right to again appear at Court, and it does not entail a single invitation to a function of royal or even semi-royal state. There may be a certain amount of satisfaction in being able to say that one was presented at Court, but I fail to appreciate it.

P. P. asks: "Is any animal mute under normal circumstances?" ———— There are several examples among the mammalia. For instance, the giraffe, the armadillo, and the porcupine, are all unprovided with vocal cords, the whales can only produce a snorting sound.

Recruit is anxious to know whether it is more painful to die from a sword-thrust or a bullet wound.———— Although I cannot speak from experience, I am told the latter causes the greatest agony. This conclusion is arrived at from the fact that amongst the dead on the battlefield after an engagement, the expression on the faces of the men who have died from a sword thrust is generally of peaceful repose, while those who owe their death to a bullet wound show traces of agony and suffering.

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NO TIME TO LOSE. **100** NO TIME TO LOSE.

BICYCLE PRIZES.

Ladies' or Gents' £23 A.B. Cycles.

WHAT TO DO.—Make up the best sentence you can of eighteen words. The first letter of each word commencing with a letter of "NOVEL ADVERTISEMENT," in any order. Thus: "*O*ur *V*aluable *L*ight *R*oadsters *E*arn *E*very *E*xcellent *T*estimonial *T*hat *N*umerous *D*elighted *V*otaries *S*end; *N*ot *M*entioning *I*ncreasing *E*arnest *A*dmirers." It will be seen that the initials of each word, when transposed, form the phrase "NOVEL ADVERTISEMENT." The above sentence is only given as an example of what we mean, and must not be sent in.

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We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. Neither after you have won a prize (if you are fortunate enough to do so) do we compel you to purchase any accessories. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office get the benefit of. Thus we can honestly and truthfully assert of this thoroughly genuine Competition that it is

ABSOLUTELY FREE TO ALL.

LIST OF PRIZES.

First Prize, £23 A.B. Safety, fitted with A.B. tyres.

The following ladies and gentlemen are amongst the number of persons who have recently received free bicycles, each of whom have signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected either directly or indirectly with this firm. We will forfeit £1,000 if this statement is incorrect. A few Free Cycle Winners: Mr. Geo. A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. A. J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. M. Fraser, Haglefort Shinrone, Ireland, etc., etc.

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COMPETITION CLOSES AUG. 2, 1898.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Prizes may be considerably increased in all or any one class. Unless stamp is enclosed for postage of Catalogue and Result of Competition, the Company will not guarantee to inform competitors of their success. Prize-winners need not purchase any accessories with their machines, unless they so desire. As the majority of competitors may not be able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for a Consolation Prize (less carriage), **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. We have no agents. All Machines Guaranteed for Twelve Months.

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We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to an ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. We do not allow a shilling extra discount beyond the 34 per cent. off the catalogue price. A machine possessing all those sterling qualities which make a really first-class machine of the highest grade cannot be purchased anywhere in the United Kingdom under £15 cash. Every experienced cyclist knows that.

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BANK HOLIDAY NUMBER. "THE FINAL WAR" BEGINS

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 501. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 6TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

SUMMER LANGUOR

In the warm summer weather, when appetite fails and languor and indolence creep over us, there is nothing more likely to destroy health and render the body liable to the attacks of disease, than the pernicious habit of taking into the system excessive food. Very great care, in fact, is needed to prevent this being done.

One source for the demand of food is the continual loss of heat to which the body is exposed by contact with the air and other surrounding objects. In summer the loss is greatly reduced.

People who will persist in devouring as much food as they do in the winter clog the system, and food which has been utilised by the tissues for the production of energy is cast back into the blood in a state of partial decomposition, and cannot be got rid of without overheating the body.

And yet, in face of these scientific facts, how many people sit down to breakfast and drink tea and coffee—an utterly unscientific practice in itself—and follow this up by partaking of a more or less quantity of flesh food?

Just think for a moment.

The injurious effects of frequent indulgence in tea are well known; and coffee, usually used as a means of keeping people awake, is commonly seen on the breakfast table at an hour when people certainly require no waking up! It is simply compelling the stomach to digest food which the system does not require, and which it cannot get rid of.

Drugs and medicines are worse than useless in such circumstances; they simply assist in the clogging process.

What is wanted is not so much food as nourishment, and a partially digested food beverage as Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa would, if universally used during the summer months, as its merits deserve, do much towards relieving the distress caused by carelessness in choice of food. It is at this season, too, that families on pleasure bent are more liable to overlook such facts as the above, with the result that what should have been a holiday and release from business worries is simply made an excuse for overfilling the body with unsuitable food, the severe effects of which make themselves felt at a time when health and vigour should, if the natural laws of health had been studied a little, have been firmly established. Every portmanteau and hamper should, therefore, contain a supply of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, it ought to be on every breakfast table.

Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, 6d., 9d., and 1s. 6d., can be obtained from all Chemists, Grocers, and Stores, or from 60, 61, and 62 Bunhill Row, London, E.C. As a test of its merit, a dainty sample tin of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa will be sent free on application to any address, if, when writing (a post-card will do), the reader will name *Short Stories.*

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to EACH PURCHASER of a bottle of PETROLINE, the New Remedy for the Hair, who fills in correctly the missing letters in the following sentences relating to our PETROLINE.

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2. D- - - - - - Y U- - - - - - - - - S
3. P- - - - - - - - - - Y R- - - - - - - - E
4. D- - - - - - - - - Y I- - - - - - - - - - E
5. P- - - - - - - Y I- - - - - - - - - - E

PETROLINE, the NEW HAIR PRESERVATIVE,

Promotes profuse Locks. Is directly uninjurious to the Hair, and its good qualities are particularly remarkable to all who use it. It is doubtlessly inirritative and perfectly indispensable to everybody. Is free from Odour, and invaluable for Dandruff, Scurff, etc.

THIS IS A GENUINE COMPETITION.

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What you have to do is, when you have found what you think are the missing letters, write the words out on a sheet of paper, numbering them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, as above, and send same to us with a P.O. (not stamps) for 1s. 6d. and stamped addressed envelope for results, and we will forward to you post free a bottle of **PETROLINE,** the New Hair Preserver. (Foreign orders, 3s., payable in London.) We offer the above prizes to purchasers of our **PETROLINE,** in order to make this remarkable invention known to the public.

Remember, EACH ONE who correctly fills in the missing letters will receive a Beautiful Brand New £25 Gent's or £26 Lady's A.B. Cycle, fitted with the celebrated A.B. Unpuncturable Tyres. These machines are the very best sold by the A.B. Cycle Co. Ltd., of Birmingham and Coventry, and cannot be bought for less than £17 10s. and £18 cash respectively. All we ask you to do when you get the machine is that you pay the carriage on it. These elegant Cycles can be viewed at the Company's London Showrooms, 59 and 60 Chancery Lane W.C. As a guarantee, we have deposited a sum of £300 with the A.B. Cycle Co. Ltd., on account of the Cycles we anticipate giving away, and print below a copy of their receipt. We are quite prepared to spend several thousand pounds on this scheme, as we believe it will do more to advertise our new Hair Preservative **PETROLINE** than if we were to spend this amount in newspaper advertising.

Do not delay but send AT ONCE for a bottle of **PETROLINE,** and grasp this opportunity to win one of these beautiful Cycles. Write your name and full address very distinctly, and put the name of this paper on the top of your letter. Keep the number of your Postal Order in case it goes astray. This Competition will close on September 30th, 1898. Prizes will be awarded and results posted during the following week.

YOU CAN HAVE THE BICYCLE AT ONCE

before the Competition closes; full particulars regarding this will be sent you when you receive the bottle of **PETROLINE.**

COPY OF RECEIPT. June 25th, 1898.

Received of the Petroline Company the sum of Three Hundred Pounds (£300) on account of Cycles to be supplied to their order.

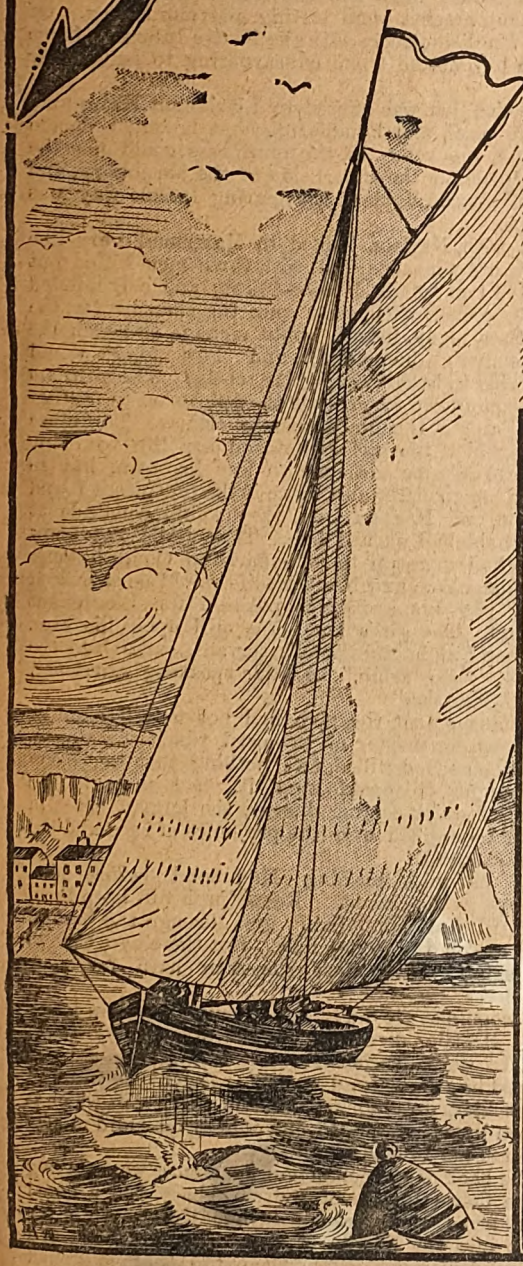
(Signed) for the A.B. Cycle Co. Ltd. The Manager.

Please address The PETROLINE CO., 39 GROSVENOR RD., HIGHBURY, LONDON.

SHORT STORIES

BANK HOLIDAY NUMBER

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON



No. 501.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 6th, 1898.

UNTOLD TALES OF THE INDIAN MUTINY.

By H. HUNTER.

I.—THE BATTERED RUPEE.

"Deen! Deen! Allah, illa hu!"

The cry rose fierce and exultant. It came from the cavalry lines, whence also issued the sounds of jingling bridle, clashing sabre, and clinking spur.

The squadron of the Fifth Irregular Cavalry which had been stationed at Goojapore was riding off to join the mutineers at Delhi. Unlike their comrades in the infantry lines, they were going with clean hands. No murder had been done by the sowars. They had deserted their colours, but they had respected the lives of their officers.

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Charlie Hammond jumped from his charpoy, and running to the window of the bungalow, peeped out between the slats of the double venetians.

The stars were still in the sky, but the dawn was fast coming. In a few minutes the sun would leap up flaming hot, from behind yonder wall of inky blackness, and the long Indian day would have begun. How many of the handful of Europeans, who, including the doctor and two civilians, numbered no more than ten, all told, would see the fiery orb go down at the end of it? Hammond hurried on some clothes and ran out.

"*Deen, Deen!*" shouted the troopers, as turning in their saddles to cheer, they swept past the sepoy cantonments at the gallop; while from two hundred yelling throats uprose the terrible war-cry of the Hindoo: "*Jai! Jai! Kali mah!*"

Three companies of the Thirty-first Native Infantry were quartered at Goojapore; and the 'slogan' of the Brahmin answered the watchword of the Mussulman.

Hammond had stumbled against something in the verandah—a bundle of shawls and muslins which lay close against the door. The bundle had risen up and caught him by the knees, while a girl's voice had whispered in tones that were shaking with terror:

"They are killing them, sahib! They are killing them down there—the four white sahibs of Oomree's regiment. They will come here next and kill you!"

At that moment, sharp and clear, came a sound which Hammond had heard too often not to recognise instantly. It was the "ping-ping" of a bullet. It came from the infantry lines. Before Lieutenant Hammond could realise what had happened, a dozen balls were cleaving the air, and a figure, bareheaded, and minus jacket or tunic was seen running through the shrubbery at the back of the compound.

"Wilson, sahib," said the girl, holding Hammond tightly by the arm.

Captain Wilson was the senior officer in command of the three sepoy companies stationed at Goojapore. He ran on towards the cavalry stables, where English voices could be heard calling one to another.

Suddenly a great blaze filled the sky. The air was rent with shouts, yells, and execrations. The cry of "*Kali ki jai!*" rose loud and triumphant, mingled with the noise of breaking glass and the sputter of fiendish laughter. The mutineers had fired the cantonments, and were looting the officers' quarters.

"Quick, sahib—quick!" said the girl, trying to pull Hammond along. "They're coming! This way, sahib, this way—quick! If the shameless ones see you, it will be too late!"

She muttered a few words under her breath. It was an invocation to Ram, most widely popular of the many incarnations of Vishnu. She besought him to aid her in saving the white sahib, who had been good to her father and kind to herself. If only the white sahib might be saved, it mattered nothing what happened to her—Narisha.

Lieutenant Hammond, of the Fifth Irregular Cavalry, paused irresolute.

At the mess overnight, the trouble in the air, about which everybody had been talking, but in which so few, it seemed, had really believed, had been discussed seriously for the first time, and in the event of a rising at Goojapore—"a contingency which I think very remote," said Major Murray, who commanded the station—it was decided that the Commissioner's bungalow, which was well placed at the distance of a furlong from the parade ground, should be the rallying point for Europeans.

"I can answer for my men," the major had said to Captain Wilson when the latter had expressed doubts about the stability of his sepoys. "The troopers of the Fifth will never be false to the salt they have eaten."

But again it was the unexpected which happened, as happen it did, times beyond counting in the early days of the Mutiny. In the morning the troopers had ridden off, their faces towards Delhi, and the sepoys in the cantonments were looting and murdering. Of the four English officers with the Native Infantry, three had been bayonetted while endeavouring to leave their houses.

The choice that was offered to Lieutenant Hammond was both cruel and humiliating; but he must decide swiftly, for the voices of the mutineers could now be distinguished on the other side of the shrubbery, and already the broad light of the glaring Indian day was upon them.

To go with Narisha looked to Hammond very like deserting his comrades; but, with three men killed out of ten, and two hundred blood-thirsty and evil-minded sepoys to reckon with, what were the chances for the rest? How many, indeed, would manage to reach the Commissioner's bungalow; and how long would they be able to hold it against the rebels? The murders already committed would urge the fellows on to further excesses, and still more desperate crimes. To refuse the help which the girl had risked her life to offer, would probably be not only to lose his own, but to condemn her to suffer also, since if the mutineers found him gone, and Narisha here, they would conclude at once that she had warned him. They would not know that he had gone up to help garrison Commissioner Ewer's bungalow; and Narisha's life would be sacrificed in vain. It was a painful position for Lieutenant Hammond. The girl's hand was still upon his arm, when Roop Singh, Hammond's servant, came into the verandah. "Go, sahib," he said, speaking hurriedly, "Go with Narisha."

Till that moment the man had not moved hand or foot to warn his master of the peril which threatened. It would be as God willed, and nothing that he, Roop Singh, might do could alter it. But now, in the presence of quick-coming danger, the human heart in the man triumphed over the prejudice of race and the fatalism of creed.

"Go," he said, pushing Hammond before him. "They are in the garden. Roop Singh will keep them in talk till Hammond Sahib gets through the bushes. They'll search the house first. But there's no time to linger, sahib. You must run—run hard for your life."

But woman's wit was a better councillor than man's advice. Hastily divesting herself of a heavy shawl which she wore, Narisha threw it over Hammond. It enveloped him from head to foot. Deftly she wrapped it about him, draping it after the fashion in which it was worn by native women, and putting his hand in hers he suffered her to lead him away.

At the back of the compound, dark faces were peering into the dense foliage of the shrubbery, and a dozen pair of arms were making savage thrusts with the bayonet into the middle of every clump of bush and cluster of tamarisk. From the cavalry parade ground Hammond could hear the mutineers shouting the cries of faith and race.

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He wondered if Wilson had succeeded in getting up to the bungalow. When they found that he (Hammond) wasn't amongst them, what would they think? That he had met the fate of Hubbard and the other poor fellows of the N.I.? His conscience smote him for leaving them; for a moment his steps halted. Narisha hurried him along. Not a word was spoken till they reached the edge of the jungle.

"Where are you taking me, Narisha?" asked Hammond, as she plunged into the thick of the gloom.

"Is my lord, then, afraid to go with his servant?" said the girl wistfully.

"Not so, Narisha," replied Hammond, "but the *sahib-logues* will all be at the Commissioner sahib's; and, truly, that is where I ought to be too. They will look for me and not find me; and what shall I answer when they ask me 'Whither wentest thou? Was it thee who stole away like a thief, disguised in the garb of a woman? Let us not wander far, Narisha. The sepoys mayhap will go after the sowars when they've burnt and plundered the quarter, and I don't want to hear men call me 'namurd' coward."

"Thy own people surely will not call thee by that name, my lord," answered the girl softly, "and what son of a dog is there in Goojapore who shall compete with Hammond Sahib in courage and daring? Yet though friends be few, and enemies many, if but my lord will put his hand in that of his servant," she murmured, "I will save him alive from those that seek to destroy him. Protection of God!" she burst out. "By my soul! I will not live if the evil thing should come nigh him. The *sahib-logues!* Why should my lord go to them? Can they save him? They cannot save themselves. The *haramzadras* will kill them, every one.

"I have told Oomree—may his soul perish in Nurruk if he deceives me. He is my brother, but I will surely kill him if any evil befalls my lord at his hands—Oomree loves not the English sahibs; but last night, under the *neem* tree, I made him promise thy life, Hammond sahib, to me. Then we arranged it together. But for Roop Singh, who stayed in the village with his people, till the morning star grew faint in the sky, I had warned my lord before ever the sowars came on parade."

"In which case, Narisha, I'm afraid you would have had only your labour for your pains; since I should have been bound to go up to the Major-sahibs to make my report."

To this the girl answered nothing, but, taking Hammond by the hand, led him further into the depths of the forest.

A great silence had fallen suddenly upon them. The heart of each was perhaps too heavy for speech, as the thoughts of each were too full for utterance.

From the direction of the cantonments came the long dull roll of volley firing.

How long they continued to thread the tangle of cane, and bush and tree, before Narisha stopped, Hammond had not the faintest conception. It might have been only minutes; but it might have been hours. The sense of time and place only came back to him with the cessation of motion. He was standing before a low thatched hut, and Narisha was saying: "'Tis a poor lodging, sahib; but you may sleep in peace. None will disturb you in the dwelling of Krishna. See, here is food and water. On the morrow I will return, please God; and my lord shall have news of his people."

"What have you got there, Reynolds?"

She threw herself at his feet and embraced his knees. Hammond lifted her up. Her features worked convulsively under the effects of suppressed emotion. He would have spoken, but the light in her large, soft eyes struck him dumb. The next moment she had broken from him, and, like a startled fawn, was rushing swiftly from the hut.

Hammond sat down feeling utterly miserable.

* * *

"The *sahib-logues* are all dead, my lord; and the *wardi-major* and the two sergeants who were with them. They shut themselves in the bungalow and fired from the windows. Mootee's men begin soon to drop. One—two—three—many! Then Mootee calls for lighted sticks. They throw them on the thatch. They keep on throwing them. By-and-bye, the flames burst through, and the sahibs come out. Then Mootee's men shoot them."

It was a pitiful tale, and Hammond listened in silence.

"The sahib will leave here at sundown for Ranipur," said Narisha suddenly, observing the absorption in which her story had plunged the Englishman. She spoke in a hard, dry voice, very unlike that in which she had related the siege of the bungalow.

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Hammond looked at her. Ranipur was a head-quarter station. At Ranipur he would find friends. There was always a battalion of the line and half a battery of artillery at Ranipur.

"Everything is ready," she went on hurriedly, dropping her eyes. "The dooly and bearers will arrive this afternoon. Oomree has sworn to me by Holy Mother Gunga that no harm shall happen to thee. He will see thee even to the gates, and thou wilt give the chief bearer a token to bring back to me. Then shall I know that my lord has found safety with his own people."

"Narisha," he began—but she interrupted the words he would have spoken.

"See!" she cried, displaying a muslin scarf and silken saree, "see what I have brought to deck my lord withal. Ah! but he will make a handsome girl when the woman's veil hides the moustache of the soldier."

She laughed, but the laugh gave Hammond a pain at the heart to hear.

"My lord is to be Oomree's wife. Will he pardon his servant for putting such shame upon him as to make a woman of him? Oomree will take thee away, my lord, in the dooly as his own precious one; and if any male eye should behold thee he will but see the saree and scarf and veil of Oomree's wife. But by what token shall thy servant know if it be well with her lord?"

She held up her head proudly as she spoke. She was a beautiful girl, and Hammond thought he had never seen her look so superbly beautiful as she did at that moment.

He fumbled in his pockets. His things had been thrown on in a hurry—money, ring, nicknacks, all had been left on his dressing table. He had nothing; nothing but a battered rupee—a battered rupee with a hole drilled through it.

"Would you know it again, Narisha?" he inquired, offering her the coin.

"When I see it again, my lord, I will go to Benares and pay my vow to Krishna. Oomree will go to Delhi when he has discharged his pledge to Mother Gunga; but Narisha will stay in her house at Goojapore till my lord's token is brought back to her."

In the dusk of the day a dooly in charge of a *havildar* and two sepoys was met on the Ranipur road by the peasants returning from their work in the paddy fields.

* * * * *

"What have you got there, Reynolds?" It was in the narrow lane leading from the Lahore Gate at Delhi—the lane where, only a few days before, John Nicholson had got his death. The speaker was Lieutenant Hammond, late of the Fifth Irregular Cavalry.

"It's a woman, sir," answered Corporal Reynolds.

"Dead?"

"Yes, sir."

"I hope none of you men killed her. There have been several women found killed in the city. Of course, if they're mixed up with the men, you can't always say where a hand will fall when blows are going."

"This one's been shot, sir. What could she been doin' here now? Good-lookin' gal, too."

Hammond was turning away, when an exclamation from the corporal arrested him.

"She's got a sort of a charm round her neck, sir. Blest if it ain't an old battered rupee slung on one o' them cords what the old Brawmin's call holy threads."

Hammond bent over the body and recognised the features of Narisha. She had followed Oomree then to Delhi.

"Cover her up, men," he said, removing his cap, "and take her outside the city. I will attend the ceremony. Of ten Englishmen stationed at Goojapore I only am left; and, but for her who lies there, I should have shared the fate of the nine. It was she saved my life. The battered rupee was a token I sent her—the only thing I had then about me—that she might know that the agent she trusted had placed me in safety. Let it be buried with her."

Hammond felt a strange thrill as he stood by the shallow grave and thought of Narisha as he had last seen her, in the full flush of youth and beauty; and now, lying cold and stark in her narrow bed, with the battered rupee above her heart.

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The Search for Emeralds

"We haven't half tried yet," said my friend John Harlow. "If there had been no difficulty about finding where the emeralds came from, they would have been hunted up long ago."

"I have it!" he exclaimed, after a moment's thought. "There's some timber growing at the upper end of the flat; let us make a stout raft of logs, trust to luck, and float down the stream. That's the way to find both the limestone and a place to get at it."

I did not reply, and was still hesitating as to whether I ought to consent to so wild a scheme, when a great uprooted tree stranded on the point where we were standing. Directly my eyes rested on two great branches which had grown so closely together that at twenty feet from their junction with the trunk they were only a few feet apart, I felt here was a means of making our journey without the danger attending an ordinary raft—of having it torn to pieces against some obstacle in the stream.

A similar thought had crossed my partner's mind. We set to work to chop the trunk into shape for our purpose. And here I may explain how we came to be in that Central American cañon.

John Harlow and I had been rolling about South and Central America, trying to make our fortunes in various ways. While in San Salvador, I was able to render assistance to a man—an old miner—who had met with an accident. He died, however; and on his death-bed he gave me a packet.

That packet contained a description of a gorge in a large cañon in a wild part of Central America, together with a piece of limestone with emeralds imbedded in it.

That was all, but it was sufficient to start us off. After much trouble, we had found the spot; but had got no nearer the treasure. But to continue.

The next morning we carried our provisions on board, secured them firmly, and with long poles we had cut for such purposes, pushed off in the stream. Our craft was a success, for although the bow dipped a little when the current ran swiftly, the platform remained perfectly dry. About an hour after we had started, our speed became so great, and the shocks our craft received so violent, that we were very much alarmed.

"Listen; what does that mean?" said John Harlow as a heavy roaring broke upon our ears, and when we were swept round a bend, he shouted: "Hold on for your life, we are coming to a waterfall."

I slipped my arms and legs through some of the loops.

During the next few moments I thought that nothing could save us from destruction. We crashed against the side of the cliff, rebounded, whirled round and round, struck rock after rock with the force of a battering ram, then rushed straight forward at racehorse speed. A cry of terror escaped me as the stern of our craft was lifted in the air. Half-blinded by spray, down we plunged into the foaming mass below.

When the waters closed over me, and the daylight was gone, a giant seemed trying to tear me from the raft. I believed my time had come; but just as I thought that I could no longer hold my breath, our brave little craft lifted her bow above the foam, and the danger was past.

"Why, the fall can't be more than eight feet high," I shouted, as I looked back.

"Eight feet or eighty, it nearly did for me," replied John Harlow, holding on with one hand, and wringing the water from his beard with the other.

We now entered a part of the cañon where even John's cheerful spirits became depressed. Peaks, cliffs, and rocks, were stained vermilion; the same colour was reflected on to everything; and once when I withdrew from the river a dripping pole with which I had been steering, I instinctively wiped my hands, for the clefts and caves appeared like horrible wounds, and the water dripping from them, human blood.

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A few minutes more and we were out of the blinding glare of the awful place. Then we came to a long stretch of the kind of formation for which we were looking, and all at once John Harlow pointed to an opening or flat of semi-circular shape, and shouted:

"There's our landing place!"

Then he plied his pole so vigorously that our craft came close enough to the land for him to leap ashore. We made fast to a rock with a strong rope, and our boat, swinging out of the current, lay along the bank. After landing some provisions, our rifles, and a few other things, we looked about us.

No sunlight could penetrate the dismal place; for high above our heads, a great mass of rock covered it in and reached so far over the river itself, that we were unable to see the top of the opposite precipice. Huge fungi—white, yellow, brown and red—clung along the base of the surrounding cliffs; while a grey, woolly-looking substance of the same family, depended like drapery from the jutting crags, and waved about with every breath of air.

We dried ourselves at a fire of driftwood, and, as the ground was damp, we began to look for some cave in which to pass the night. I had taken one side of the flat and John Harlow the other, and I was standing somewhat despondent at my want of success, when my partner called to me and pointed to a narrow cleft in the wall.

"Look there," he said; "that is the entrance to a cave. A large one, too, it seems, and the floor slopes upwards, so we are sure to find a dry spot to sleep on, and Jem, old man, I believe we shall find the stones about here somewhere."

After a short consultation we decided to bring all our things ashore, and for this purpose we approached the bank of the river.

All at once John Harlow clutched my arm. "Great Heavens!" he cried, pointing to a mass of branches which were being carried rapidly down the stream. "There goes our raft; some floating trees have become entangled with it and torn it loose."

My heart stood still. What an awful fate awaited us, imprisoned in that loathsome place.

Our small supply of provisions would soon be exhausted, and then——

Despairingly I stood and gazed at the great rock overhead, and the towering walls that shut us from the world. Once I tried to speak, but the words stuck in my throat. Presently John Harlow put his arm through mine, and said:

"It strikes me we've been and gone and done it.

"Cheer up, old man," he continued. "And now as it will soon be dark, you take the things up to the cave, while I collect some driftwood for our fire."

By the time I had carried my last load into the cave, my partner had laid in a sufficient supply of fuel to last us through the night.

As soon as we had eaten our supper we made our fire blaze, and examined our immediate surroundings. There was not much to see. The side at which we had entered stood out boldly in the ruddy glow, but the roof and further portion of the sloping floor were lost in darkness.

"Well," said John, stretching himself comfortably on the sand which covered the floor, "things might have been worse, and you won't make them any better by sitting there as solemn as a man at his own funeral. To-morrow we'll try exploring the cave, and if the ground keeps on rising it might bring us to an outlet of some kind, and salvation."

Although our chances of escape were small, I could not help being cheered by Harlow's hopeful way of viewing our situation. At last, tired out by our day's exertions, we lay down on the sand and slept.

The next morning we had our breakfast in the open air, and then prepared to explore the cave.

A happy thought occurred to me whereby we could save our candles. I had a small can of lard. I melted the grease, soaked in it pieces of dry wood about eighteen inches long, and in this way made eight fairly-good torches. With these stuck in our belts, our small stock of provisions on our backs, and our freshly-filled water-bottles slung over our shoulders we commenced our journey.

As we went on, the floor became steeper and steeper, until at last we had to climb, and John's idea of a possible outlet began to seem reasonable.

For about half-an-hour our exertions kept us silent, but all at once John Harlow, who was leading, gave a cry of warning and we stopped. We were standing on the edge of what appeared to be a great expanse of mud or water. On touching it with my foot, however, it proved to be sand, covered by a thin crust which gave way under the slightest pressure.

My partner hesitated about advancing any further into this unknown country. Alas! it was I who suggested we should continue on our way. I pointed out that, even though we had no landmarks to guide us, and our compass might be influenced by deposits of mineral, still we should leave such a plain track on the perfectly smooth sand that we could easily return if we wished, without any danger of getting lost.

On we went for an hour or more, and low reefs of partly decomposed rock began to make their appearance, like a succession of dark waves rolling towards us. Suddenly, John Harlow dropped on his knees so unexpectedly that I shot over his head, extinguishing both his torch and my own. At the same moment there was a terrific crash, a crash so terrible that the earth shook at the concussion; the air dis-

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placed by the fall of some huge mass of rock rushed past, and the whispering echoes became less and less, then died away.

"What has happened?" I cried.

"We've come to the emeralds," shouted my partner, still on his knees, nearly putting out his freshly-lighted torch as he waved it wildly above his head.

"What do you mean? Have you gone mad? Did you not hear that awful crash?" I exclaimed, shrinking back from him.

"Crash? Well, let it crash—Jem, my boy; look here—look," and with trembling hands he scooped up some sand, and held it towards me. "Emeralds! Emeralds!" he shouted with excitement. "The ground's alive with them! We're millionaires!"

I could see little green specks shining amongst the sand, and had I not previously received a great fright I should probably have been as much excited as my partner. Instead of this I felt angry.

"Millionaires are we!" I said, pushing away his hands. "Yes, millionaires, and with all our wealth we could not purchase a crust of bread!"

My words brought John to his senses, and after a short silence, he said in his usual manner:

"You are right, Jem. Still, I would rather be somewhere else with my pockets full of emeralds than in here with a crust of bread as big as a church." Then while trying to scratch one of the green crystals with his knife, he added: "They are emeralds right enough."

We now picked up handfuls of the sand, blew away the finer particles, put the stones in our pockets, and continued to do so for some time. How long I should have remained thus employed it is hard to tell, for as I felt my store increasing, I became more and more excited, until my partner impatiently pulled me to my feet, and, despite my angry protests, fairly dragged me away.

My excitement soon subsided, yet as we plodded on, thoughts of wealth and happiness in the future made me almost forget the dangers and difficulties of the present.

In half-an-hour or so the air became much warmer, and the sand gave place to rocks; but the thick dust with which they were coated still retained our tracks. And now we had to stop and discuss a matter on which our lives might depend. We had lighted our last torch! Should we use the candles?

We determined to use half of them before giving up all hope of an exit, for we thought that, if we used but one at a time on our return journey, they would carry us back as far as we wished to go.

Shortly, a great change took place in our surroundings. The ground became rougher as we advanced, and we were obliged to climb heights and depths of which, in the intense darkness, we could form no definite conception.

Yet, judging by the time it took us to descend one of these crevices, a false step meant death. And now, to add to our danger, the air became damp and the rocks slippery.

At last we reached comparatively level ground, but dense mists enveloped us so closely that we were stumbling over protruding rocks. Then it gradually became clearer, and the moisture overhead was drifting along in clouds.

"Ha!" cried my partner, "there must be a draft of air to carry the mists along like that; somehow I feel that our troubles are almost at an end."

Scarcely had the words left his lips than his feet slid from under him, and he rolled down an incline towards—oh, Heaven! the awful sight comes again before my eyes!—towards a dark, oily, turbid substance, through which bubbles of gas forced their way, accompanied by little jets of steam.

With a shriek that froze my blood, he disappeared. Half frenzied with horror I cried aloud:

"John Harlow, come back, come back!"

Then I ran from the place until I caught my foot against a rock, my candle went out, and I came heavily to the ground. As with shaking hands I fumbled for my matchbox, the darkness seemed peopled with ghastly forms—every way I looked John Harlow's apparition rising from the ground. Once more I had a light. Then—on—on!

Delirious with sorrow and fear I rushed on. I know not how I went or how the time went. I was brought to my senses by a discovery. I was at the edge of a chasm and could hear the splash of water below.

While I leant forward and tried to penetrate the darkness, the rock on which I stood gave way under me, and I fell with sufficient force to dash my candle from my hand. I rolled over twice, and then was stopped by a second rock in time to hear the first splash into the water below.

It was useless to think of finding the candle—the last one—for I had jerked it far out into the chasm; but I still had some wax matches, and I came to the desperate resolution that I would continue my descent, and, if water barred my way, to plunge into it and drown rather than prolong my sufferings.

But I had no choice. Before I could make a move my support gave way and I went sliding down to the waters below. Then I fainted with fright.

When my senses returned, I lay for many minutes trying to think where I was. On either side was a great cliff, above, the moon shone calmly as she floated through the fleecy clouds. Thinking that I had awakened from a horrible dream, I wearily raised my head and looked about me.

I was lying at the base of a huge cone-shaped heap of decomposed rock, its apex resting against the cliff, and terminating in some black, ragged object, which I could not quite make out at first. Soon, however, a peculiar hissing noise struck my ear, and as I gazed upwards, the black object showed itself to be a kind of irregular archway, through which a grey torrent of small particles poured down the cone, and I knew that it must be the exit from the scene of my suffering.

For days I wandered in a network of interesting gorges with perpendicular sides. Once with my revolver I killed a squirrel, and so badly did I need food that I ate it raw. Another time I used my ragged shirt as a net, and caught some minnows in a pool.

I have dim memories of Indians giving me food; and once, I think, they fled before me, as though I were some dangerous animal.

Then one day I found myself being carefully tended by rough but kindly hands—some prospectors had found me.

Years have passed since then, and though I have twice been very poor—I lost all my emeralds, save half a dozen small ones, during that dreadful time—the wealth buried in that dreadful place has never tempted me to revisit the scene of my awful experience.

T. GREENE.

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The Spanish (Onion) Privateer.

I.

Ye wad dootless ken that me an' Jock MacGregor wur jint owners o' the splendid twenty ton steamship *Haggis* plying between Spain and Prestonpans in the Spanish inyin trade, but ye wudna hae suspeckit that she wis the first privateer tae get letters o' marque frae the Spanish Government.

It a' cam' aboot this way. Ye see, me an' Sagasta wiz aye kin' o' chummy owre the heed o' me and Jock daein' sic a big thing in Spanish inying, an' when I ca'ed on him at Madrid some months syne he says tae me confidential like:

"Senyore MacParritch," says he, "the interests o' commerce and the Spanish inyin trade are menaced. In a short time ye'll see America picking a quarrel wi' us aboot Cuba or some siccan a trifle so's tae divert the Spanish ingin trade frae Prestonpans tae America. In event o' war can I rely upon you?"

"Senyore Sagasta," says I, "you can. Me an' Jock'll fecht tae the last gasp in defence o' justice an' the Spanish inyin trade. *Viva la Espanya!*"

"I knew it," says he; "bring in Senyore Jock."

So I gaes oot and brings in Jock an' a' the rest o' ma gallant crew, an' lines them up in imposin' array afore the dazzled gaze o' the Spanish Premier. "Jock MacGregor," says I, "stan' oot." "Whit fur?" says he. "Tae be reviewed," says I, turning wi' haughty dignity tae Sagasta. "This man here," says I, "is pairt owner o' the s.s. *Haggis* wi' masel'; this other yin is Bill 'Icks an English body that means weel, though he disna aye dae weel, an' this here is Terence O'Hara, a rale guid sort when it comes to fechtin' an' drinkin'; windin' up wi' this young loon, Jimmie Dougal, oor caibin boy."

"What a splendid body o' men!" says he. "Don Jock," says he, "when the American eagle swoops upon the s.s. *Haggis*, will you stan' calmly by?"

"I'm shair I'll no'," says Jock. "I'll wring 'is neck first."

"Bravo, my fine fellow; an' you, Senyore Billicks, will you also defend your freedom tae the death?"

"Yes," says he, "if Saunders MacParritch pays me my back wages."

I looked at him wi' a freezing glance o' silent contempt, an' Sagasta says, smiling like:

"Oor sojers keep sayin' that, tae; but they're guid sojers for a' that. Your wages 'll be a' richt, ma man," an' under thae condeeshuns Bill agreed tae defend 'is freedom.

"An' you, Senoyre Terence, will you fight?"

"Oi will, yer 'onor," says Tarry; "who is it Oi've got to foight, an whin do Oi begin?"

"I'll tell ye in plenty time, Senyore Terence," says Sagasta, pleased like, an' pattin' Jimmie on the heed he adds; "I ken this yin 'll dae a' richt, I see he's a Scotsman like yersel."

Sae wi' a wave o' 'is soord he knighted us a', an' then presented me wi't as a token o' esteem an' respec'; an' efter handin' me a letter o' marque an' anither letter wi' nae marque on 't ava, containin' sealed orders to be opened in the English Channel.

"Come oot tae the back-yaird," says he, "and get a piece o' ordnance tae pit on board the *Haggis*."

So oot we a' gaed, an' he shows us a nate wee brass cannon.

"Aw, but there's a hole in it," says Jimmie.

"That's the touch hole," says Sagasta, an' he showed us hoo to work the deedly weapon, and gied us a stock o' powder an' shot, an' then Bill 'Icks hurled the hail affair doon tae the docks in a wheel barra.

"*Buenas noches, Ustedes,*" says Sagasta tae oor cavalcade as we moved grandly awa', an' I yells back "The same tae yersel, Senyore," an' wi' thae waurlike an' encouraging words ringin' in oor ears, we left the shores o' sunny Spain wi' anither cargo o' Spanish inyins aboard.

II.

Sae after some hard steamin' we reaches the English Channel, an' I opens ma' sealed orders in the presence of o' ma' trusty band an' reads them oot:

"Intercept a' vessels fleein' the American flag and tow them back tae Spain—Sagasta."

"Bring oot ma' telescope," says I, an' syne I sweeps the horizon. "Yonder's yin," says I; "an it's a fat yin. Great Scott," says I, "it's the *Paris!* A' hauns on deck till I tell ye whit tae dae." Sae they a' cam' croodin' roon an' I draws ma' soord an' pints tae the rapidly approachin' *Paris*.

"Yonder," says I, "are the tyrants that wad grund ye beneath the iron heel o' slavery. As freeborn Britons, wu'll we staun tae be trodden on? Naw," says I, "wu'll shed the last drop o' bluid in oor veins first. Oor orders are tae capture yon vessel, an' accordin' tae the law o' nations whit we tak' an' keep we get tae oorsels. An' though we're Britons we're Spanish Knights, forbye, mind that. Wu'll sune be steeped tae the lips in gore, bit wu'll fecht like men in defence o' the Spanish ingin trade an' oor happy homes in Prestonpans, an' Ballymena, an' Auchterarder, an' Seeven Dials, and Mullguy. Are ye a' ready, men, to fecht tae the daith?"

"Ain't we to hev no grub first," says Don Bill Icks; an' I says, "Yes, ma brave lad; gae doon tae the caibin an' bring up oor rations. Noo, ma gallant band," I conteenued, "wur on the verge o' a glorious battle—"

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and Don Bill 'Icks pops up 'is heed, an' says he, "Don Jimmie's ate the sardines." "What!" says I, "a' yon fivepenny box, put the scoondrel in irons, lock 'im up." "It wizna me," says Don Jimmie, "it wiz Alfonso XIII." Noo, Alfonso XIII. was oor cat, but on accoont o' 'is illustrious name I didna' like tae look *him* up, so I thunders oot ferocious-like, "Lock up the sardines efter this; discipline must an' shall be enforced aboard the s.s. *Haggis*. Beat tae quarters."

Sae Don Jimmie rattles on an' auld corn beef can, an' then I yells oot, "Clear the decks fur action," and Don Bill 'Icks chucks Don Jimmie's bonnet intae the watter an' I roars out, "Ye're no tae heve things oot o' the ship that wey; put them doon in the engine-room," So Don Bill 'Icks drops a besom doon the shaft, an' I hears a kind o' noise, an' Don Tarry bangs up frae whaur 'e'd been shovellin' in coals, an' says he, "Oi'll break yer jaw for yez, Don Bill 'Icks, if yez throw things on me heed agen." So I pacifies them by sayin', "Men, men, can ye no' unite in the face o' a common foe? Hist the Spanish colours, Don Tarry," says I; so 'e whups oot the flag 'e used tae carry at the Orange Walk, an' unfurled it flutterin' proodly tae the breeze.

"Noo, Don Jock," says I, "stan' by wi' a rope an sling it on tae the *Paris* as she scoots past; see an' catch on an' haud her ticht; is the cannon loaded, Don Jimmie?" "Aye, aye, Don Saunders," says he, an' I sings oot—"Full steam ahead, Don Tarry," an' wi' that we swept majestically intae action. Oh, it wiz a graun sicht tae see us bearin' doon upon the doomed ship wi' colours fleein', an' me graspin' the tiller wi' the yae haun an' ma soord wi' the tither, an' Don Jock stannin' calm bit determined wi' a coil o' rope roond his neck, an' Don Tarry wi' the steam haunle in his caurie haun an' a chunk o' coal in his richt, an' Don Jimmie haudin' a lichted match to set off the cannon wi' when the time cam', an' Alfonso XIII. sittin' on the death-dealin' ordnance washin' his face, an' Don Bill 'Icks sittin' on the gunnle o' the ship eatin' a hunk o' breed an' cheese. It wiz truly an awe-inspirin' scene.

The *Paris* wiz jist aboot a hunner fathom awa' when I gies the command: "Deed slow stop full speed astarn," so's to rin alangside o' 'er till Don Jock got cleekit on til 'er, and then the *Paris* cam' abreast o' us. Jock snibbled 'er wi' a masterly twirl as she tried tae rush past, an' in a meenit we were bein' draigled starn first through the bilin' ocean at twa an' twenty knots an 'oor. "Haud on til 'er, Jock," says I, forgettin' in the wild excitement o' the battle that I was addressin' a pure-blooded Spanish nobleman, wha had preserved his prood title unspotted throughoot coontless generations o' a fortnicht. "Haud on till 'er, Jock," says I; "she's worth haudin'," an' wi' that Jock wips the rope roon a post an gies it a kinsh that made a' thing snug.

The capture o' the *Paris* wiz an accomplished fac'.

She wiz oors.

III.

"RESERVE yer fire, Don Jimmie," I yells.

"Oh, I've burnt my thoom," says he, an' wi' that the careless loon drapt the burnin' match on the touchhole. Bang went oor cannon, an' Alfonso XIII. got sic a fricht that he loupt the hicht o' the funnel an' the deedly instrument rowed owre on Don Bill 'Icks's taes.

"Blarst this war!" says Don Bill 'Icks.

The scene o' carnage and devastation resultin' frae that shot was something awfu'. For yairds aroon' the sea was covered wi' the sheets o' auld newspapers Don Jimmie had wadded the gun wi', an' oor quarter pun shot had scraped echt-pence or nine-pence worth o' pent off the side o' the devoted *Paris*. "Load 'er up again, Don Jimmie," I yelled, fur the battle fever was on us a'. Twa or three men cam an' looked owre the bulwarks o' the doomed vessel an' yin o' them asked us if we were in distress.

"Oi'll dishtress yez," roars Don Tarry; "it's Fogarty, the biggest villain that iver left Ballymena unhung."

"Barrin' yersel'," shouts Fogarty, an' wi' that Don Tarry lets fly the chunk o' coal he had in his haun' an' knocks Fogarty's pipe oot'n 'is jaw.

The dugs o' waur were let lowse wi' a vengeance.

"*Paris* ahoy," says I, wi' freezin' hauteur, "heave tae or we'll sink ye," and just at that meenit a lump o' cauld pie catcht me richt in the lug. "Men," says I, "ye saw that; let there be nae quarter, slay them without mercy; bring up the reserve amuneetion an' butcher them in cauld bluid." An' then the battle raged. Don Bill 'Icks brocht up the reserve ammuneetion, a box o' rotten eggs, laid last year, an' we commenced to shell the enemy wi' ghastly effect. Everywhere oor shells struck they spread panic amongst oor foes. Don Bill 'Icks got hame a magneeficent shot richt in Fogarty's e'e, an' Don Jock an' Don Tarry played terrible havoc wi' the miscreant that threw that piece o' cauld pie. An' a' this time Don Jimmie mainteened an incessant rakin' fire wi' oor heavy ordnance. He sent yae shot slungin' in through a porthole intae the cook's pantry, smashin' a soup tureen tae atoms, an' wi' 's very next shot he struck the cowerin' cook 'imsel' an' knocked oot twa o' 'is false teeth. Oor foes fled dismayed before oor witherin' fire; but a second or twa later a puff o' white vapour spurted frae the side o' the *Paris* wi' a deafenin' roar.

"Button up your jaikets, my men," says I; "she's begun tae use 'er Krupp guns'—but syne I saw she was only blawin' off steam; then oor foes trained the deck hose on us an' tried to droon us off till they got the rope cut, but every time a hose gunner showed himsel' we picked him off wi' a rotten egg. I saw that we wad hae tae board the vessel an' stop 'er ingines, so I gied the order:

"'Cease firin' an' board,'" an' Don Jimmie Dougal grabbed up Alfonso XIII. and pitched him on tae Fogarty's neck, cryin':

"Forward brave heart, Dougal will follow thee," an' it wis a' that Fogarty cud dae tae teer Alfonso XIII. frae his muffler an' throw 'im back at Don Bill 'Icks, fellin' that splendid warrior on a heap o' Spanish inyins, but Don Bill 'Icks springs tae his feet in a saycond an' clutchin' up the biggest inyin 'e cud see 'e screeches oot:

"Blime if I don't slab that bloke on the snitch," an' aimin' wi ruthless preceesion he smashed Fogarty richt on the nose wi 'd, an' jist at that meenit the rope broke an' the *Paris* escaped frae 's like the win', an' Don Tarry howls oot tae Fogarty:

"Ye're Cunnaucht," an' the last we saw o' the *Paris* was Fogarty foamin' wi' impotent rage, an' covered wi' bluid and rotten eggs.

IV.

VICTORY was oors, an' the settin' sun gilded that scene o' strife wi' a halo o' glory as we steamed calmly on in search o' anither victim, wi' Don Bill 'Icks openin' a fresh tin o' sardines for oor gallant band.

Of course the *Paris* got safe tae America efter that, but Sagasta was sae pleased wi' oor heroism that he decorated us a' wi' the Order o' the Spanish Inyin an' promised us mair tae follow.

G. VINCENT-HOLYTOWN.

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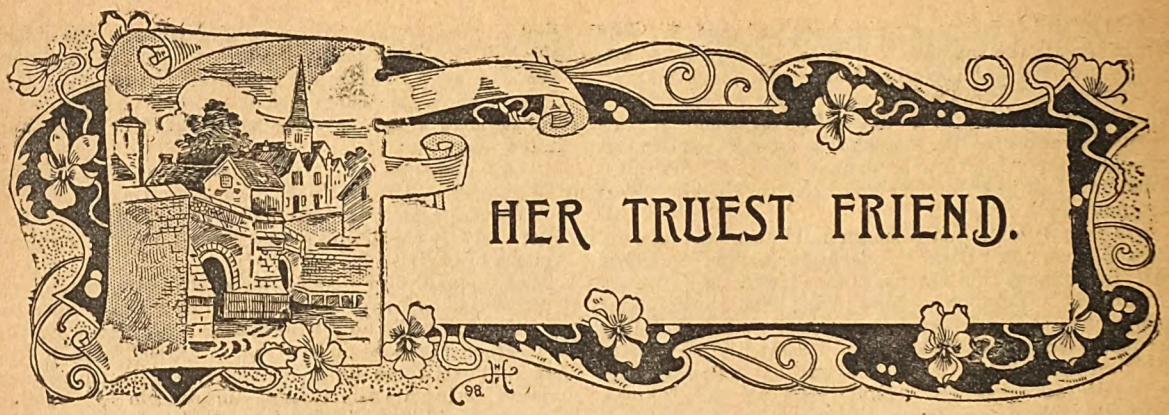

HER TRUEST FRIEND.

Miss Dewar was five-and-forty years of age on the 19th of March, 18—, well, no matter what year.

And she was stout and short, with no visible waist; and hands that were red and fat, instead of white and slender; and features that belonged to no Grecian type or Roman mould, but seemed to be setting up each on its own special account, with no reference whatever to the others.

But we have not mentioned the most important fact of all. Miss Dewar had £10,000 of her own.

And that was without doubt the reason that her relatives sent her pressing invitations to "come and visit them," and despatched various presents to the farm. And that is also why little girls worked hideous pincushions and tidies to decorate her rooms, and young men wrote acrostics for her birthday, and everybody listened politely to her speeches, however prolix they might be.

For a rich old maid was worth cultivating, and it wasn't at all likely now that Miss Dewar would ever marry.

It was a bleak afternoon, the red and brown leaves whirling round and round in the blast, and the great wood fire upon the hearth sending, every now and then, spiteful little gushes of smoke into the room where Miss Dewar and her second cousin and companion, Janet Heath, sat together, working crotchet roses for a counterpane.

"Janet," said Miss Dewar politely, "you're a fool!"

Janet looked up with a flush of colour on her pale, pretty cheek.

She was not at all unaccustomed to these little complimentary remarks on the part of Miss Dewar.

"Be a sensible girl," added the elder lady. "Give him up, and I'll buy you a blue silk dress and a black lace shawl."

"But I love him, Miss Dewar."

"Oh, psha-a-aw!" grimaced the spinster. "Love indeed! I never was in love!"

"And," added Janet, growing more rosy than ever, as she stooped to pick up her crotchet hook, "he says he would be miserable without me. Don't, please, be angry; but, indeed, I must marry him."

Miss Dewar jumped up so suddenly that the dozing blackbird in its cage uttered a shrill note of consternation.

"Very well," she said, "very well, Janet Heath. Pack your trunk as soon as you please. I can dispense with your services at once. And pack mine first, if you please, Janet Heath."

"You are not going away, Miss Dewar?" queried poor Janet in consternation.

"I'm going to visit my relatives," said that lady with pursed lips.

And then little Janet knew that her own fate, as far as any worldly advantages to be derived from her kinship to the heiress, was sealed.

"Put in the black silk gown, Janet," said Miss Dewar in a tone as lugubrious as if she were giving orders for her own funeral. "Of all sin, I regard ingratitude as the basest—and the China silk scarf—to think that I have nursed a viper to turn and sting me at last! And don't forget my easy slippers—though I don't know either why my corns should be entitled to any more consideration than my poor bruised heart."

And then, as Janet Heath began to cry, Miss Dewar marched out of the room.

"I never could endure the damp," said the maiden lady. "I'll go to my niece Maria, or I'll make Herbert Smythe a sort of a visit; he's always saying how delighted he would be to entertain me. As he's a bachelor I must put up at a hotel; but he will take me about. They both love me, although I haven't done half for them that I have for this little serpent's tooth of a Janet. I dare say she expects to be my heiress, but she'll find out her mistake."

"They seem to live very nicely," thought the rich relation, when she arrived at the house of her niece Maria. "I didn't know her husband's income justified such style as this."

The servant showed her into a reception-room, furnished after the style of Louis Quinze. His mistress was out, but would return presently, he explained.

"I'll wait," said Miss Dewar.

A wizened little girl, with her hair braided in long Chinese plaits, and red, chill-looking elbows, was tinkling away at the piano. She looked round as the guest entered.

"You are Angelina, I suppose?" said Miss Dewar affably.

"Yes," said the child, "I'm Angelina. And who are you?"

"I am Miss Dewar," said the heiress graciously. "You have heard your mamma talk about me, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes!" said Angelina, her small eyes lighting up.

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"You're the old maid that mamma says is so out—out—"

"Out of health?"

"No; some very big word."

"Outrageous?" suggested Miss Dewar, somewhat discomfited.

"No—not that—outlandish! And you're going to die and leave me all your money, and then we're to travel on the Continent. But papa says he doesn't see but what you're going to live for a century."

"Hem!" said Miss Dewar. "So your mamma's kind enough to consider me outlandish, is she?"

"Mamma's going to invite you to visit us," went on the unwisely communicative Angelina, "when the De Veres are gone. She says she doesn't want them to be shocked with your Noah's-Ark ways. I had a Noah's Ark once," added the child, "with a dog in it and Shem, Ham and Japhet."

"I dare say," said Miss Dewar, checking a strong inclination to laugh, although she felt herself growing purple in the face with indignation. "I think I won't wait any longer, Angelina. Good-bye."

And Miss Dewar shook the dust of that mansion off her feet.

"A pretty hypocrite's nest I should have got into there!" she said, half aloud, as she entered the vehicle she had been wise enough to bid wait. "Janet Heath, with all her faults, was at least frank and truthful enough. Drive to 27 Batchelor Square, coachman!"

It was one of a row of "Mansions," and her cousin occupied a suite of apartments on the third floor.

She beat a brisk tattoo on the panels with the handle of her umbrella, and a voice answered:

"Come in."

But to her amazement the occupant of the apartment, instead of a young artist in a black velvet painting jacket, was a grim female, sitting very upright on a gothic chair, with tattered gloves and bonnet bent on the side.

"Is Mr. Smythe in?" asked Miss Dewar.

"No," answered the stony female, "he ain't. But if you're wise you'll sit down, like me, and wait until he does come in. I s'pose you've come after your bill?"

"Have you?" asked Miss Dewar, taking the first part of the hint, by depositing herself on a sofa, and wondering where the man-servant was.

"Yes—for the seventh time. He owes everybody—Smythe does. I'm his laundress, but you can ask his landlord and the wine merchant, and the tailor, and the hatter, and——"

"Then," curtly observed Miss Dewar, "I should think you were all great fools for trusting him!"

"So we be," said the woman grimly; "and I ain't a denyin' of that, but you see he's kept us on the string all along with stories of his rich cousin, Miss Dewar, as has made her will in his favour, and is goin' to leave him no end of money."

"Oh!" said Miss Dewar, rubbing her nose vehemently with the end of the umbrella handle.

"He says," added the unconscious traitoress, "that she's as old as Methuselah, and can't live but a few days; but I, for one, don't believe a word of it. But you ain't a-goin', be you?"

"Yes," said Miss Dewar, rising. "Please give him this card when he comes in, and tell him, if you like, the little conversation we have had."

And she was nearly downstairs before the laundress, fitting on a pair of spectacles, had read the two words inscribed upon the card:—

"Miss Dewar."

The heiress was very silent during her drive to a hotel. Perhaps she was engaged in rendering the

Janet Heath sat by the fire . . . musing.

funeral rites on her dear departed delusion! All that she said to herself was contained in one sentence.

"I don't like being made a fool of," she mentally enunciated, "and I believe I've come very near it."

Janet Heath sat by the fire in the next evening's twilight, musing, perchance, half in sadness, half in shy pleasure, when the door clicked on its latch and in walked Miss Dewar.

Janet started to her feet with a slight cry.

"Don't be alarmed," said Miss Dewar stroking her soft brown hair with a kindly, reassuring touch. "I've come back to you, Janet Heath; for I believe, in spite of everything, you are the truest friend I've got, and that you love me after all!"

"Indeed, Miss Dewar, I do!" sobbed Janet, with her old foolish trick of tears.

"And so," said Miss Dewar. "You can marry that Harry of yours, and he can come here to live, and we'll be a happy family together. Untie my bonnet strings, Janet—they've got somehow into a knot—and make me a cup of tea. Those railways are enough to shake one into a jelly!"

So Miss Dewar settled back into the old groove again, and when the letters came she sent them back unopened. And when Mr. Herbert Smythe and the Barton family arrived in *propria personæ* she obstinately refused to see them.

"I won't be bothered!" said Miss Dewar; "Janet's my heiress, and there's an end to the matter."

And the relatives discovered that they might as well attempt to move the rock of Gibraltar as to alter her determination.

HARRY MOORE.

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STARTS TO-DAY.

THE FINAL WAR

By LOUIS TRACY.

PROLOGUE.

Why London is Safe in November.

London in a fog is a disembodied city.

There is life without form, motion without visible intent, weird cry and rumbling sound without apparent reason or locality. Buildings lose their distinctive shape, and abruptly fade into impenetrable gloom; men and women possess no outward individuality, but pass, strangely shapeless, from darkness into darkness.

All around there are millions of people and miles of streets, but the wayfarer recks not of them. His tangible touch with the outer world is confined to an effort to plant his feet firmly on the greasy pavement, whilst he seeks some guidance by grasping the iron railings in front of a house. Each yellow-rayed lamp is a discovery; each lighted shop-window an event of importance; the crossing of a street places every sense upon the alert to discover unseen dangers. The instinct of self-preservation causes men to curse and women to shriek when they stumble against an obstruction. If the object proves to be some equally perturbed pedestrian, the muttered apology is due more to habit than to concern.

On the night of November 2nd, 1898, a fog of unusual density had temporarily blotted London off the map. Experienced people who were anxious to get home from the City abandoned cab or omnibus in favour of the underground railway.

The stranger in London was well advised to stay indoors at hotel or lodging-house, as it was utterly impossible to reach any distant point unless complete acquaintance with the topographical features of the way were joined to knowledge of the best-lighted streets.

Two men who had been dining together in a pleasant set of chambers situated in one of the streets leading out of Portman Place, quickly discovered this unpleasant fact when they endeavoured, about nine o'clock, to walk towards Hyde Park. They had managed to reach and cross Oxford Street—were cannoned into a bye-street by a hansom whose driver had been offered a sovereign if he succeeded in getting his fare, a celebrity of the variety stage, to a well-known music hall in time for his "turn"—and finally came to a standstill near a lamp post in Hanover Square, without having the slightest clue to their whereabouts. They showed their annoyance by growling imprecations upon England and its climate in French and German, but agreed that it was best to remain in one spot until a passing pedestrian should pilot them somewhere.

They were both handsome and well set-up men, fashionably attired, and clearly persons of consequence. Whilst they spoke French as a means of communication it was evident, from the gutteral utterance of one, that he hailed from the other side of the Rhine.

"We are in a very awkward and untimely predicament, my friend," said the Frenchman. "Were we better acquainted with this detestable London and its peculiarities we would have ordered some more coffee and liqueurs and chatted quietly in front of a comfortable fire, rather than venture out into this truly British variety of atmosphere."

"So," replied the German. "Meanwhile, pass a cigarette."

His companion searched through his pockets for his cigarette case, but he had forgotten it.

"Misfortune!" he groaned, with humorous pathos. "England deprives us even of that resource."

"Ah, well. We will have our turn. But hold. Try your English on this pig of a coachman. They never understand what I say, and, holy blue, I am not surprised, as I hardly comprehend myself."

A smart brougham and a pair of horses had been drawn up close to the murky beams from the gas lamp. Before the Frenchman could interrogate the driver, a footman had jumped nearly on top of him in his haste to reach the door of the carriage.

"Beg pardon, milady," said the man, as he opened the door, "but the coachman says he cannot find his way, and your ladyship's party is running considerable risk if he proceeds."

"Oh, how stupid of him," came a voice from the interior. "Tell him he must go on. We cannot stop here."

"Mother, dear!" in a softer tone, "perhaps we had better

find out where we are before Thompson drives any farther."

"Wait a moment, Irene. We have not long left Brook Street, and I think this must be Hanover Square. I will just jump out and tell you in a jiffy, as I know how the numbers run." Suiting his action to the words, a young man sprang from the brougham and collided with the German on the kerbstone.

"*Pardon, monsieur,*" said the Frenchman, bowing. "Vil you do ze goodness of telling me ze how to go?"

Something in the stranger's voice and manner enlisted the keen attention of Captain Harington. He was the junior military attaché of the British Embassy at Paris, and spoke French like a Parisian. But he answered in English, without considering his motive:

"Yes, if you will wait until I learn myself."

The Frenchman hardly understood the concluding idiomatic phrase, but he gathered the general purport of the remark. Harington groped his way up the steps of the nearest house and struck a match to look at the number.

"If we are in the square," he cried, "we are just six doors from the Grasmeres. I will go and make certain," and they heard his retreating footsteps.

"What does he say?" queried the German.

"I cannot tell exactly," answered the other. "He is going to make something, but he will return. If it were not for the fog we might have a peep at the fair ladies in the carriage."

In a few seconds came Captain Harington's cheery voice: "It's all right, Thompson. Just pull up a few yards ahead."

The carriage moved off, and the foreigners were again left disconsolate by the one tangible thing they had so far discovered, the lamp post.

"He is a beast, that Englishman."

"A beast, undoubtedly. But I think he will come to our assistance, as he is taking these ladies to a house close at hand."

The Frenchman's opinion was justified a moment later. The young officer returned, and asked them where they wished to be directed to. They consulted together on this point, and the German suggested returning to their residence, but his companion prevailed, and finally intimated to Harington that they desired to reach the French Embassy.

Still speaking in English, their guide informed them that it would be a most difficult matter to proceed to the Embassy during the prevalent dense fog, but if it was of pressing importance he would put them in the easiest way of getting there. The Frenchman assured him that whatever the risk they must endeavour to gain their end, whereupon Captain Harington led them into Regent Street and gave them explicit directions regarding the turn into Piccadilly.

In order to render his meaning quite clear, he drew them close to a well-lighted shop window, and sketched a plan of their route with his finger on a pane of glass.

At last they parted with mutual hat-lifting and the Englishman retraced his steps with a puzzled expression on his face.

"For the life of me I cannot tell why it is," he thought, "but the presence of these two men in London seems to me to be a harbinger of trouble. Why are they both here at the same time, and above all else, why are they together?"

He could give no valid reason for his perplexity, but he was glad, in the same indefinable way, that they had no suspicion of his identity.

When he entered the brilliantly-illuminated house of the Earl and Countess of Grasmere, he found a numerous company assembled for the *musicale* to which he had been escorting Lady Eskdale and her daughter. Lord Eskdale was the British Ambassador at Paris, and, after enjoying a brief holiday in Yorkshire among the pheasants, he had hurried back to his official duties, leaving his family in London to fulfil a few social engagements before they rejoined him at the Embassy.

To Captain Edward Harington fell the pleasant duty of accompanying the two ladies until their return to France, and, judging by the bright glance with which Irene welcomed him as he took a vacant chair by her side, the visit to England was a delightful one for both.

"What a time you have been, Teddy," she whispered. Lady Eskdale was at the moment engaged in a voluble exposition of her adventures in the fog to a well-known judge, otherwise her daughter's remark would have been couched in less familiar language.

"I had to show those men who stood near the carriage, when the coachman stopped in the square, the way into Regent Street," he replied. "By the way, did you recognise either of them?"

"I? No. How could I? Did you?"

"I think so. Who is this chap singing?"

"The new Russian tenor. He is a great favourite in society, although practically unknown on the stage. I am told that he was introduced under the *ægis* of the Russian Ambassador, so he was immediately lionised."

"Well, that is curious," said Harington.

"What is curious?"

"The number of different nationalities I have more or less come in contact with during the last five minutes. Is Lord Salisbury here to-night?"

"No. He made a big speech somewhere to-day about the taxation of ground values, or some such mysterious subject, and he is tired, but the Foreign Office is represented by the Under-Secretary. I wish to goodness you would not be so jerky in your conversation. If you don't improve I shall have to talk to the judge."

"Where is he?"

"Why, standing near mamma, of course."

"I mean the Under-Secretary."

"There, near the window, smirking at the fat lady in black. What *is* the matter with Teddy," she went on to herself, for her companion murmured a hasty apology and went towards the couple she had indicated.

Watching his opportunity, Captain Harington caught the Under-Secretary as he moved away.

"Will you give me a moment, sir?" he inquired.

"Certainly," replied the other, with an air of polite surprise at being thus unceremoniously buttonholed.

"I am Captain Harington, of the Grenadier Guards, and at present second military attaché at Paris," said the young officer, rather at a loss to explain himself, now that he had succeeded in gaining the great man's attention.

"Oh, yes. I knew your father well. In fact, we were at Eton and Christ Church together. Dear me, how you remind me of him and of the years gone by. I am delighted to know you. Come into a quiet corner and let us become better acquainted."

They passed into an outer room, followed by Irene's wondering eyes, whilst an outburst of applause signalled the conclusion of the Russian tenor's song.

More at his ease now, Edward told the Under-Secretary of his *rencontre* with the foreigners, and concluded by saying: "I brought them quite close to a well-lit shop window so as to be sure I was not mistaken."

"And who were they?" asked the Minister, puzzled to account for the serious manner in which his companion had recited a trivial incident.

"Count von Bremen, the head of the Intelligence Department of the German Army, and General de Rosny, Chief of the Staff in the French Army of the North."

"A queer companionship," said the Under-Secretary, after a pause.

"So it appeared to me," said Harington, relieved to find that an older man than himself should have been similarly impressed. "They left me to make the best of their way towards Albert Gate."

"What! The French Embassy?"

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"Yes. When they were discussing their next move, de Rosny urged von Bremen to accompany him, as it had suddenly occurred to him that it was important they should go there."

"And what do you make of it all?"

"I have no theory that is of any value, sir."

"Well I should not mention the matter to anyone else. Ah, M. Pochowski, how are you? That was a lovely song you gave us just now."

Harington turned and saw the Russian tenor standing quite close to him, apparently taking an artistic interest in a fine collection of Satsuma vases.

* * * * *

The distinguished officers, who may now be designated by their proper names, had little difficulty in reaching Piccadilly after the careful instructions given them by their courteous guide, but when they left the area of partial illumination afforded by the places of business at the eastern end of that well-known thoroughfare, they had to exercise extreme caution to avoid further bewilderment even in such a straight road.

"It has just occurred to me," said de Rosny, as they quitted a tobacconist's shop where they had obtained a supply of the much-needed cigarettes, "that this is the Jour des Morts, the day that we French people devote to memories of the dead."

"A most cheerful reflection, truly," said the Count.

"And "—in a lower tone—"it is also *à propos* to say that if we were invading London to-day it would be a most suitable festival so far as the French army was concerned."

"Why?"

"Ah, your wits are dulled by the fog, my friend. Do you not see that the most invincible attacking corps would be powerless against this infernal mixture of smoke and mist?"

"It would equally affect the defenders."

"Not so. The English commander would say to the colonels of his regiments: 'The enemy are massed in the suburbs to the south. Take a couple of policemen, or postmen or omnibus conductors, with each company as guides; march by your own routes, and exterminate the enemy wherever you find him.' *Voilà tout!*"

"By the left bank of the Rhine, it is true, too," replied the German, as he was shot against his companion by the impact of a big Lifeguardsman who walked straight ahead as though it were broad daylight, for he was in a hurry to reach Knightsbridge before ten o'clock.

The Frenchman ignored the unpleasant form of the rejoinder and went on: "You now know why I wished to go to the Embassy to-night. We must delay our preparations until the spring or early summer. I never before understood what a London fog really meant, and I am told that such days as this are frequent during the winter. Moreover, I was always opposed to a campaign at this time of the year. It is so horribly unpleasant."

"I do not attach so much importance to that consideration as you do, though that it deserves to be borne in mind as a factor in the situation cannot be doubted; but I am disposed to agree with you for other reasons," replied Count von Bremen.

"And those are?"

"First and foremost, the necessity for an even greater surprise than we have presently arranged. These Englishmen are born soldiers, and we must absolutely give them no chance of rallying after the first blow is struck. The affair must be so rapid, so dramatic, so far-reaching, that England shall be prone at our feet within a few hours. I feel assured that I can convince you of the possibility of a greater *coup* than that which we now contemplate. Indeed, it was to discuss the details that I desired to return to our residence, but the Embassy will serve as well. Then, in the second place, we must have more definite assurances from Russia."

"France will soon secure those. I heard to-day from Paris that another big loan was about to be negotiated. A thousand thunders! What is this?"

De Rosny had run into one of the iron posts that guard the carriage ways at Hyde Park corner, and nearly swallowed his cigarette owing to the violent blow he had received in the stomach.

"When we are looting London," he growled, whilst spitting tobacco out of his mouth, "I shall make it my special business to blow up these things with dynamite. They are as hard as an Englishman's skull. Ugh! I hate this miserable country and everything in it."

When, at last, after a thoroughly uncomfortable walk, they entered the French Embassy, they were announced as M. Jean Riche and friend, and were at once conducted to the Ambassador's library. They remained closeted with him for nearly an hour, and Count von Bremen, at the end of that time, held telephonic communication with the German Chargé d'Affaires, the Emperor's representative being at that moment in Berlin.

As the result of a further consultation, de Rosny and von Bremen sent off telegrams to the Ministers of War at Paris and Berlin respectively, containing the apparently harmless message, "Financial settlement postponed," which was safer than a cypher telegram, as by a secret code it signified: "Imperative reasons for delay. Will communicate with you personally on my return."

In another hour the fog had lifted. Thousands of Londoners poured forth from places of amusement to sup at club or restaurant, or hasten home to distant suburbs; but not one amongst them, not one of the millions in the great city that lay around for miles, knew that for a brief season, and by the fiat of a little conclave of men gathered in a house overlooking Hyde Park, England had been spared the devastating horrors of war.

CHAPTER I.

The Ball at the Embassy.

The month of May in Paris, if the elements be reasonably propitious, is a perfectly delightful period, and May Day of 1899 heralded in the promise of a gracious summer. The French capital was more than ordinarily full of visitors, and life in the world of fashion was more like the changeful scenes of a *ballet divertissement* than the dull routine of ordinary existence. Americans were there from Chicago and New York spending millions made in packing pork, Russian notabilities abounded, and Germans, the male element vastly predominating, were in such numbers that the wonted supply of lager beer fell short in the cafés. A mad whirl of gaiety and light-heartedness filled the thoughts of every class of society. This social abandonment was, if possible, accentuated by a species of political electricity that permeated the air, and of which all men were dimly conscious.

The new Ministry in France had taken up and developed the policy of colonial expansion given effect to by their predecessors, and a singular *rapprochement* with Germany was vaguely supposed to have contributed in a very remarkable way to the furtherance of French ambition. Both countries had been working amicably together for nearly a year, and already the result had made itself felt in the most vulnerable portions of the British empire.

It is true that England had long ago secured all the best market for her produce, that her ships carried five-sixths of the commerce of the world, and that her surplus population had the pick of many continents wherein to live and prosper. But a determined attempt was now being made by our great commercial rivals to take from her some at least of the advantages that had been gained by centuries of enterprise backed up by daring perseverance.

The Rhine had dwindled into a stream of no political significance, and men openly said on the boulevards and in

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the *brasseries* of Paris and the beer gardens of Berlin that the star of England was beginning to wane. As a witty Frenchman put it: "The bones of Englishmen whiten the by-ways of the world: they make most excellent sign-posts for our future progress."

But Lord and Lady Eskdale and their beautiful daughter felt that, come what might in the future, it was their present duty to maintain in regal style, the hospitable traditions of the British Embassy, and thus it came to pass that the first night in May was chosen for an official dinner, to be followed by a grand ball.

During the six months events had travelled apace with Harington and Irene. Lord Eskdale thought so highly of the young soldier that his wife's desire for a more advantageous match for her daughter was over-ruled, and the pair were now affianced. The Prime Minister had personally conveyed his thanks to the Ambassador for the information placed at the service of the Government by the attaché, as subsequent investigation had shown that it was fraught with grave importance.

Inquiries had been made amongst the London bankers, with whom it was well known nearly every foreign prince had large dealings, and it had been found that there was a steady and continual withdrawal made by these, for no accountable reason of the securities they held. This was enough to put the Government on the alert. Harington's timely service was of considerable value, and he reaped the benefit, for the kindly interest of an exalted personage means much. In fact, a staff appointment at Aldershot, when the next vacancy occurred, was promised to him.

His sister Ethel, a charming girl of Irene's age, was in Paris on a visit to the Eskdales, and it was one of those coincidences suggestive of arrangement that Lieutenant Frank Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, should have chosen gay Lutetia as the scene of a short leave of ten days. Harington and he were fast friends, and it was not unlikely that the tie of friendship might be strengthened, if the guardsman had not judged amiss the tendency of the pleasant-mannered sailor's thoughts. It was his ardent wish that Rodney might make a match of it with his sister, and Ethel had even stronger views on the question than her brother, so for once the course of true love appeared to be running smoothly.

The gathering in Lady Eskdale's reception room before dinner was announced was very select indeed. The French President and his wife, the Russian Ambassador and the Grand Duchess, the German Ambassador, the French Ministers of War and Marine, the Governor of Paris, and quite a number of other great people made the brilliant *salon* glitter with the magnificence of their diamond stars and ornaments, whilst the lovely dresses of the women toned down the gorgeousness of the uniforms by their softer hues.

The British Ambassador, of course, took in Madame la Présidente to dinner. His interested and urbane manner gave no indication of the troubled state of his thoughts; and in very truth he had that afternoon had much cause for perplexity. A cypher telegram, dispatched at midday to London, was unaccountably interfered with *en route*, and a call from the Foreign Office for a repetition, had, as he ascertained shortly before the dinner-hour, resulted in even greater confusion. In the endeavour to put matters right he also discovered that the telephonic communication between the two countries had unaccountably broken down.

Now, his message to Lord Salisbury contained a very plain intimation that affairs were in an alarmingly unsettled condition in France, whilst large sales of British securities on the Bourse had emanated from inspired quarters, and not from any public movement. These sales had been proceeding steadily for some days and had seemingly culminated that morning. From this condition of affairs he argued the necessity for keen watchfulness on the part of the British Government.

By an extraordinary blunder, this message, although in a cypher believed to be known only to three men in London and three in Paris, had been metamorphosed into an absurd reference to the weather, and the repetition brought about an inextricable medley of meaningless nonsense. But Lord Eskdale was even more suave than usual to the President's wife.

There had been a grand review of the garrison of Paris that day, and the lady, with the fanfare of the trumpets still in her ears, asked the Ambassador what he thought of the troops.

"They were superb," he replied. "Their soldierly qualities were such that I almost regretted it."

"But why?"

"I would prefer to see such perfect manhood engaged in the arts of peace rather than part and parcel of a huge machine of destruction."

"That is the last thing I should expect to hear from an Englishman," said madame.

The Ambassador laughed. "Have we such a reputation as fire-eaters, then?" he queried.

"You speak in the accents of success," she retorted. "It is always the interest of those who have the booty to prate of peace."

"In such a matter, England's interest," he replied gravely, "is the interest of the world. The preservation of the peace of Europe is our inheritance."

Madame smiled.

"What would you do," she asked, "if the French were to dispute your guardianship?"

"Ah, madame," returned the courtly ambassador, "it is not your men we fear, it is your women."

"You laugh!" exclaimed madame, stung by his playful treatment of her words. "But take care. A hundred years ago France taught the world the art of government. She must now teach it the art of empire."

Lord Eskdale glanced rapidly at her, and for a moment a troubled look rested upon his face.

"A woman is seldom epigrammatic," he reflected, "without being also indiscreet."

Then, aloud, with perfect serenity:

"You have achieved more than half the task already, my dear lady."

Madame paused appreciably before she answered, with a quick look at her companion:

"In what sense?"

"Our hearts are already prostrate; it needs but the subjugation of our arms."

"Ah, you were only leading me up to a pretty compliment. But I am glad that you acknowledge it is for us to contest with you the domination of the world."

"I yield to you now, without a murmur of dissent," he said.

She saw that the Ambassador was in a frivolous mood, so changed the conversation to the prospects of the coming exhibition.

Why, he never knew until afterwards—but Lord Eskdale felt that he added years to his life during the progress of that meal. It was apparently unending, and it required all his powers of self-command to restrain himself from reviling the excellence and prodigality of his cook.

At last it came to a conclusion, and Lady Eskdale rose whilst his Excellency escorted Madame la Présidente to the door of the drawing room. He returned at once, to find that the President and the Governor of Paris wished to be excused from attending the ball on the ground that affairs of departmental importance in connection with the spring manœuvres of the army in the north required their attention. Their departure served to break up the men into groups, and Lord Eskdale encountered Harington, who was present officially, near the door.

"Edward," he said, "where is your friend, Rodney? Can I see him at once?"

Harington laughed and blushed. "To tell the honest

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Some of the illustrations from THE FI

By L

"You have indeed done your country a good turn."

BEGIN THIS GREAT WAR SERIAL TO-DAY.

TELL YOUR FRIENDS "THE FINAL WAR" HAS BEGUN.

The Grenadier Guards flung themselves into three of the enemy's trenches.

The German fel

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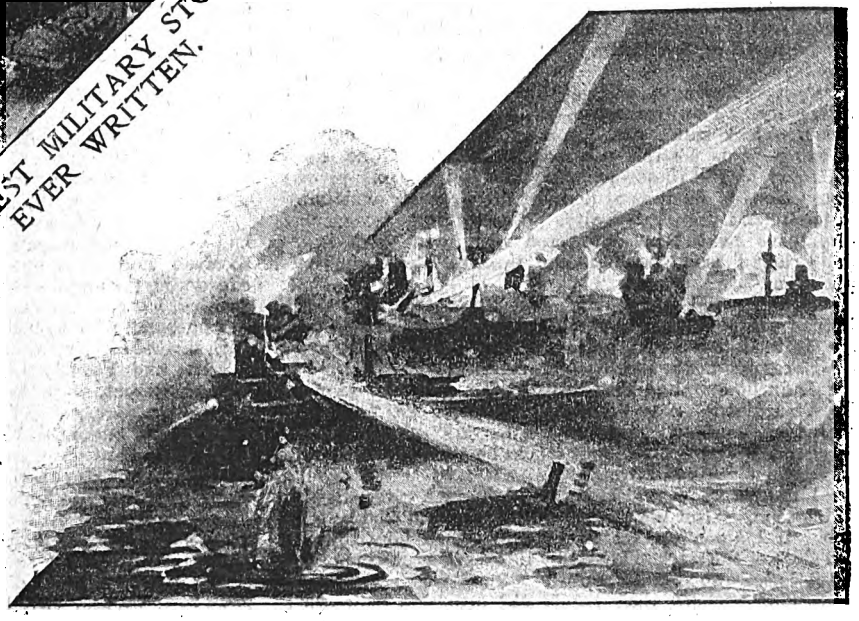
FAL WAR referred to in the first four chapters.

E Tracy.

A perfect tornado of shells swept the sea-front.



The British fleet had arrived upon the scene.

ned into the sea.

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truth," he replied, "he is dining in my bedroom, where he will dress, as he is bound to Ethel for the first dance."

"Tell him to prepare for a long journey at once, without anyone being the wiser. You do the same, and meet me in my private office in five minutes."

The guardsman was clever enough to smilingly assent as he lit a cigarette, for the German Ambassador had come to say that he also had pressing official work which would prevent him from remaining longer, and he hurried from the room.

In one of the passages Harington met Irene. He glanced hurriedly round to see if anyone was looking, then took her in his arms, hopelessly crushing her frock the while, kissed her fervently, and said: "Goodbye, dearest. Your father will explain, but don't say a word to a soul."

And he disappeared towards his own apartments.

Irene thought he had taken leave of his wits, but she kept her amazement to herself nevertheless.

When Frank Rodney heard his instructions, he thanked Heaven that he had had his dinner, seized some of Harington's clothes and shirts, in case he should not have time to go to his hotel, and in three minutes announced himself ready for orders.

When they reached his Excellency's study they found him awaiting them.

Without any preamble he thus addressed the naval officer:

"Lieutenant Rodney, I wish you to catch the ten o'clock train from the Gare de Lyon for Italy. You will reach Modane to-morrow morning at eight o'clock. From there send by Italian cable the single word 'Britannia' to the Governor of Malta, and to Sir Michael Culme Seymour, who commands the Mediterranean Fleet, which is at present at Valetta. Repeat these two messages from Turin in the afternoon in case the first may have miscarried, as the officials at Modane are French. A P. and O. steamer arrives at Brindisi the following morning, and you must catch it, if necessary taking a special train for the purpose, and wiring the captain to wait for you as a Queen's messenger. Go on to Malta, and tell the Governor in person the circumstances under which I sent you, and proceed by the same steamer if you can, to Gibraltar, where you will then find the Mediterranean Fleet. Here is £250 in gold for your expenses, and this sum should be ample for all contingences. It is now 9.15. You can do what I ask?"

"Yes, sir," replied Rodney. "But my leave expires in two days."

"Captain Harington will get that put right for you at the Admiralty. You, Harington, will leave for London by the eleven o'clock train, and, if you reach there by to-morrow morning—it is possible you may be detained—find Lord Salisbury or the Under-Secretary, and tell him my precise instructions to Lieutenant Rodney, subsequently explaining matters at the Admiralty. To-day my telegraphic dispatches have been interfered with, and from other indications I fear immediate and pressing European complications."

"It is an odd thing, sir," said Harington, "that the French army manœuvres should be held so early this year and quite close to Brest, while the Germans having followed their example in the locality of Bremerhaven."

"And this morning, sir, whilst driving with Eth—I mean Miss Harington—near Vincennes, I counted 400 field guns with their limbers, drawn up in a barrack square, and an astonishing number of empty trucks on some adjacent railway sidings," added Rodney.

"I know, I know," said Lord Eskdale, with utter anguish in his tone. "But now, my dear boys, go, and God be with you. If I am mistaken, Harington, return here towards the close of the week. Leave by this door, as it commands readier access to your rooms."

He silently shook their hands and opened a door other than that by which they had entered.

The two men darted out and nearly fell over Lord Eskdale's French valet, who was in the passage engaged in the needless operation of dusting his own boots.

"Who is that fellow, Teddy?" said Rodney, and, on learning, he added quietly: "Call him to your room on some pretext."

The servant murmured an excuse on hearing Captain Harington's order given in French, but when it was peremptorily repeated he came with them. Once inside the chamber Rodney said sternly to the valet, speaking in English:

"Why were you listening outside Lord Eskdale's study?"

After a moment's hesitation, the man replied that he did not understand what the officer was saying.

Rodney smiled.

"You are clever," he said, "but that pause was fatal. We shall be under the disagreeable necessity of gagging and tying you for the rest of the night. Tear up one of the ambassadorial sheets, Teddy, and be quick, as we have not much time."

The Frenchman was no coward. The electric light switch and bell-push were near him, and with a bound he had turned off the one and pressed the other, knowing that even if he did not escape from the room, the two officers would hardly care to explain why they were found assaulting a servant. But he had never had any personal experience of the methods of English sailors. In a second Frank threw him to the floor, grappled him with arms and legs, rolled with him under the bed, and being a much more powerful man, forced his arms beneath his back, whilst effectually smothering his mouth. Then, in a singularly calm tone, he said: "Turn up the light, Harington; order two cabs when the servant comes, and then shift the bed."

The result of this arrangement was that in very brief space of time the valet was tied, dumb and helpless, upon a sofa, and the Englishmen were hurrying off with their portmanteaux. Harington on the way out, giving instructions that his room was not to be disturbed before the breakfast hour. To enforce the command he locked the door and gave the key to his own soldier servant.

"I should like to see Tommy Atkins' face in the morning," laughed Rodney, "when he finds our trussed bird. It's a good job we saw him in the passage or we should have been stopped on some pretext during our journey. By-the-way, Harington," he added, "His Excellency forgot one thing. I will wire you at the club from Modane to-morrow to say I have got through. It may be allowed to pass even if the frightful burst-up which the business seems to indicate comes off. One more word, old chap, kiss Ethel for me."

"Oh," said Harington, "I didn't know you had reached that stage. Good-bye, old fellow, and good luck."

And their *fiacres* rattled off through the lines of carriages which were bringing up guests to the Embassy.

The Russian Ambassador and several French Ministers had by this time absented themselves, and Lady Eskdale received more than one laughing complaint from a wife concerning the ungallantry of her spouse. Her ladyship was puzzled, but could get no opportunity of a quiet word with her husband, who looked completely at his ease chatting with several distinguished personages.

Irene and Ethel, who were, beyond doubt, the loveliest women present, were astonished at the absence of their wonted partners, and if Irene had some perception of the facts of the case, she obeyed her lover's instructions and kept her scant information to herself. At last Ethel Harington lost all patience, and asked Lord Eskdale if he knew where her brother was.

His Excellency smiled as he replied: "Both he and Lieutenant Rodney have left Paris on affairs of State. They had no time even to say 'Good-bye' to you, my dear."

Whereupon Ethel, in wonderment, communicated the news to Irene, and they both marvelled greatly; but the fact did not prevent them from scribbling a name in front of every dance on the programme.

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About midnight Lord Eskdale's English valet managed to reach his master and whisper: "There's an English gentleman in the hall, my lord, and he says as how he has a note for your lordship from Captain Harington, and he will give it to no one but your lordship personally."

"Take him to my study, Jenkins," was the reply, and when his Excellency entered the room later he found awaiting him a stout, red-faced Briton, in the regulation check suit and deerstalker hat of the middle-class Englishman, when travelling on the Continent.

The stranger evidently meant to make sure of his man before stating his errand.

"Is your Excellency my lord—I mean is your lordship his ex—that is to say, my lord, are you—"

"Yes, I am Lord Eskdale," was the kindly answer, much to his relief.

"Well, my lord, my name's Briggs, William Briggs, of Catford, where I do a bit in the bicycle line, though I don't ride much myself nowadays, being a bit too 'eavy above. I've bin over 'ere a week, my lord, partly on business and partly on pleasure, as the sayin' is, and I was a-goin' 'ome to-night when a young gent 'e comes up to me on the platform, an' 'e says, says 'e: 'You're an Englishman?' 'Why, anybody can see that,' says I. An' says 'e: 'Are you in any special 'urry back?' and says I: 'It's the season, but I won't lose much for a matter of a few hours. But why d'ye ax?' Says 'e, 'I'm Capting Harington, from the Hembassy. 'Ere's my card,'—which 'e gev me—'I want yer ter do his lordship the Hambassador a service. Will yer stop till the morning train and take 'im'—meaning you, your lordship—'a note on a matter of great himportance to England, and 'ere's a fiver for yourself.' 'E seemed in desperate earnest, my lord, an' I wouldn't take 'is fiver, but 'ere's the note," and he handed Lord Eskdale an envelope addressed to himself and endorsed "Per kind favour of Mr. Briggs."

"'E said as 'ow I wasn't to give it to anybody but your lordship's own self, my lord," and Mr. Briggs glowed with the thought of the fine story this would make for the *habitués* of the Cat and Anchor at Catford.

The note ran as follows: "Whilst detained for a moment in a block of carriages outside the Embassy, I heard one coachman say to another that he wondered why the President and a lot of Ministers and Ambassadors were driving off to Versailles at this time of the night. Here, on the platform, there are General de Rosny and a large number of staff officers, travellers to Brest by the northern line. I thought you should know this.—E. H."

"Mr. Briggs," said Lord Eskdale, when he had gravely re-read the pencilled message, "you have, indeed, done your country a good turn by your readiness to postpone your journey. Will you write to me from Catford and assure me of your safe arrival there?"

"I will, my lord," said Briggs, visibly inflated.

"You had better stay here to-night, as it is so late, and I presume your luggage is at the station. My man will look after you. Good-night."

Briggs did not explain that his luggage, consisting of a woollen shirt, a pair of socks, a brush and comb, and six collars, was contained in the small hand-bag on the table—his mind was too full of the glorious possibilities of Catford.

The President's wife had retired at midnight, and by three o'clock the last carriage had rolled away from the courtyard of the Embassy. Lady Eskdale was about to seek her husband and chat with him concerning the events of the night when a closely-veiled woman sprang out of a hired carriage at the entrance to the Embassy, sped silently past the astonished footman, and approached her ladyship. It was Madame la Présidente, pallid, with a fever-light in her eyes.

"My dear," she said in trembling accents, "I like you, and I have come, wrongly perhaps, to warn you. You will be called upon to leave France before many hours have sped. I tell you, that you may be prepared. Farewell!"

Without another word of explanation, she quitted her astounded hostess, and was rapidly driven off.

CHAPTER II.

A Council of the Powers.

During the same night a strange scene was being enacted at Versailles.

On leaving the British Embassy so soon after the conclusion of dinner, Lord Eskdale's guests entered their carriages. Quiet directions were given to their coachmen, and the vehicles turned into the magnificent avenue of the Champs Elysées, already radiant with the freshness of early spring. They sped swiftly along past the Arc de Triomphe, and entered the Bois de Boulogne. It was scarcely ten o'clock when they passed Longchamps, on which the white tents of the soldiers, who had that day been reviewed, shone beneath the moon. Soon Passy was left behind, and the hoofs of the horses clattered along the deserted streets of the village of Versailles. The carriages drove through the great gates of the Court of Honour, and pulled up before a narrow doorway, where their occupants got out.

In a tapestried room above a small group of men awaited them. Here, in the pleasure palace built by the great Louis, where he feasted with his mistresses and learnt the fatal news of Blenheim that shattered his ambitions—where Napoleon, too, met his Ministers after his last brilliant campaign in Italy, and rested before making his last dash to Waterloo—a grim and unexampled Council was being held.

There were scarcely twenty men present, but each was a figure of commanding importance in European politics. The military and diplomatic strength of a whole continent might be said to be represented here at its best. It was a strange alliance, hereditary foes meeting in friendly union and Ministers who had for years schemed against each other with all the artifices of cunning at last linked together in a common purpose.

No small issue could have achieved this miracle. Before these men was set the hardest and most momentous task that ever perplexed the strength and wisdom of the world.

The President of the French Republic took the chair at the head of the table. Opposite him was General Caprivi, the Chancellor of Germany. To right and left were M. Hanotaux and Count Holbach, the French and German Foreign Ministers, and several of the chief diplomats of both countries. Near the President sat a tall and distinguished-looking man, with hair of iron grey, and a grave impenetrable countenance, who seldom spoke, but at whom, from time to time, those around him glanced uneasily. It was General Gourko, the trusted emissary of the Tsar of Russia. Other faces, too, known in every Court in Europe, and feared in many, might be seen.

Each one was grave and anxious. It might have been thought that some guilty bond held them in artificial union. Distrust seemed to peer from their eyes as a chance remark called up the lurking fires of hereditary hate. Yet there was a respectful silence when the President opened the conference.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I have just paid the last official visit of a President of France to the representative of the Court of England. The armies of Germany and France are on the point of success. To-morrow before noon we shall be at war with England!"

He turned, with a true French love of dramatic effect, to mark the effect of these words. The only response was a grave bow from Count Caprivi.

"The details we, of course, all know. It is enough for me to say that they have been efficiently carried out. England is secure and confident. Her ambassador is occupied in the dance. Her navy is distributed over the globe. Her army is in India. And yet at Brest and

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Bremerhaven there are the invincible navies of the two allied powers, together with transports that will carry to the shores of England a mighty army. To-morrow we shall land upon those shores. Within a week we shall be at the gates of London. There is nothing that can withstand us. It may be that the instinctive courage of the English race may lead to a defence of London. We may not be able to occupy the city for three weeks. But I believe you are with me when I express the conviction that within a month the British Empire will be shattered, and that the flags of the chief united powers of Europe will float from the dome of the Mansion House!"

A murmur of approval followed the recital, and then Count Caprivi interrupted:

"Time is precious, and we have much to settle. The destruction of Great Britain is a matter of simple generalship. We need not waste time in estimating the number of days, or the details of military occupation. We may regard the British Empire as already struck off the map. But I must remind you that several points remain yet to be settled in our joint treaty. How is Great Britain to be dismembered, and how are we to share her dependencies?"

Here M. Hanotaux rose and walked behind the chair by the President. Touching a cord that hung down from a roller upon the wall, he liberated a large map of the world which covered the whole space. It had many curious lines upon it and strange colours. Across the British Islands were written the words: "Under joint government."

It was the map of the world as it was intended to be after the collapse of England. The strange colours were the emblems of the foreign powers that had bidden for her colonies. The lines were marks to show how, in the greed of cruel appetite, the confederates had arranged to share some fair possession and split up a fertile country into fragments.

"Here," said the President, "is a *précis* of what we have already arranged. You will see," pointing to the map, "that Canada falls to France, East Africa to Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa are governed by a joint board for the profit of the allies. Malta and Aden are dismantled. Dover is held by a joint garrison. England herself," he concluded, "will be governed by a military council in the interests of France and Germany for a time at least. We are not inclined to be merciless, and if she behaves herself, we may be induced later on to grant a limited form of home rule, which will necessitate a sanction for all legislative measures from a combined Board of Administrators meeting alternately at Berlin and Paris. We shall also occupy Ireland to watch movements in England and stamp out any signs of rebellion. Turkey and the Egyptian question can be settled satisfactorily at a later date."

"There yet remains," said the German War Minister, "Gibraltar, India, West Africa, and West Indies, the Chinese possessions, and a number of smaller but yet difficult points."

This observation produced a sudden silence. Secure in their belief that England was already a conquered nation, each delegate was wholly engaged in selfish schemes for the aggrandisement of his own country.

An eager discussion then arose, in which no one seemed prepared to come to a point. And at times there passed looks of malice and anger ill-suppressed as some slight word lit up hideous depths of selfishness or jealousy.

At last M. Hanotaux observed:

"We might begin with India. It is a large and splendid territory. France at least——"

At this point General Gourko's impassive face relaxed. Turning to the President, he said:

"There is no need to discuss that point. India is claimed by Russia. Is there anyone who disputes her claim?"

M. Hanotaux started—and turned red.

"A huge plum!" he exclaimed. "Do you want the lion's share, sir, without doing the lion's part?"

"M. le President," said Gourko calmly, paying no heed, "there can be no discussion on this head. My instructions are final and peremptory. Is it said we are not fighting for our spoil? Is it not agreed that Russia's part is to hang back and make no move till the moment comes—if ever such a moment needs to come? You forget, perhaps, that it is you, and not we, that have demanded this blow. You have been forced to action by the decline of your commerce, the decay of your trade, your imperative need of fresh markets, your lack of colonies. England has seized all that is fairest on earth, and you can no longer exist against so huge a moncpoly. You are both in desperate straits, and the imperative voice of your suffering peoples forces you to close with this all-devouring race which is checking your growth, crushing your strength, and throttling your prosperity. That is why you have formed this alliance, is it not?"

He paused, but there was no answer.

"Russia, however," he continued, "has no such need. She has rich and fertile lands. Siberia alone adds a second empire to her throne. What she wants is, no doubt, a sea-coast. That sea-coast is India. If Russia helps you to secure the success of schemes she is not interested in, she demands that sea-coast. Gentlemen, you cannot oppose the resistless necessity of things. Russia must and will secure for herself the Indian Empire."

His words fell inexorable and unanswerable. The quiescence of Russia was essential to England's overthrow. It was essential to the peaceful division of spoil. Large though the price she asked, there could be no refusal.

Then rose a debate upon Gibraltar, and it well nigh brought to a close the temporary alliance between the powers. That impregnable fortress was coveted by both. But Count Holbach had not come unprepared for this. He had, that morning, had a long interview with the Spanish Minister, and it was in his power to outwit his French comrade.

He proposed that Gibraltar be returned to Spain.

To his joy, the French Minister accepted this method of settlement as the most satisfactory way out of the difficulty. If he could have seen a letter bearing the official stamp from Madrid that even then lay in M. Hanotaux's pocket, he would perhaps have been less satisfied with himself.

And thus the Conference went on, and by slow degrees all of the British Empire that remained was divided between the two countries. What was left of England was a crippled island under the heel of a despotic military government, a tributary state of less consequence than Bulgaria, and a people crushed, ruined, and enslaved.

"One point only," observed Caprivi, as the Council was about to rise. "Germany, of course, claims Belgium."

The Frenchmen started to their feet at this amazing announcement.

"Impossible!" cried the President.

"Not so," replied Caprivi calmly. "It is no doubt a prize of value, but we are prepared to pay for it."

M. Hanotaux turned upon him a look of disdain.

"And what payment do you presume to consider adequate?" he said.

The German put his finger carelessly upon a map which lay on the table. Then quietly:

"We offer Alsace and Lorraine!"

It was a startling *dénouement* of the grim drama of hatred and selfishness that had just been played. But the German statesman knew his men.

Before he returned to Paris that night he placed in his pocket a signed *précis*, in which Belgium figured as a German dependency.

It was almost dawn when the Council rose.

"Adieu, gentlemen," said the President with a bow. "When we next meet, it will be in Whitehall."

(To be continued.)

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A SANE LUNATIC.

He was considered eccentric by most of his acquaintances, and by others a mild sort of lunatic. Indeed, it was rumoured that he had spent a portion of his life in a private asylum, and had been discharged as incurable, but harmless.

He was apparently wealthy, and spent his money lavishly. Being myself possessed of a goodly share of this world's goods, it was not the man's prodigality that attracted me, but his eccentricity. Underlying it I discerned a brain of unusual power, which I thought was somewhat hampered by some great sorrow which I considered the key to his many peculiarities.

His favourite topic of conversation was psychic phenomena, upon which subject he was seemingly well versed, a fact not to be wondered at, as he informed me that he had spent several years in India devoting his entire attention to the study of this subject. On this account I dubbed him "Doctor," and he seemed to prefer it to his own name.

Having hinted somewhat vaguely regarding his eccentricities, or peculiarities, call them what you will, it would seem pertinent to here offer some explanation regarding this point, upon which the main thread of my story hinges.

Many times, while discussing his favourite topic over a small bottle, or being otherwise happily engaged, has he suddenly uttered a sharp cry of pain, and suddenly left me with no explanation, nor did he subsequently offer one. Only once did I question him on the subject, at which time he made it so apparent that the query was distasteful to him that I ever after held my peace.

He also had a way of suddenly leaving town without giving me the slightest notice, or advising me as to his destination or intended time of return. Many times has he casually strolled into my rooms, after long absence, and informed me that he had just returned from Australia, Siberia, or perhaps some place of which I had never heard. I honestly believe he had been in every civilised and uncivilised country on the globe. He had no intimate acquaintances other than myself, and expressed the desire not to be presented to anyone except those with whom he was unavoidably thrown into contact.

Late one afternoon I received an invitation from him to dine, and, later, go to the theatre, which I gladly accepted, and at the appointed time presented myself at his rooms. Handing my card to his man, I was shown into the library, the servant disappearing into an inner room, from whence he soon returned, and without offering any explanation as to when I might expect to see his master, disappeared into another apartment. This, was the first time I had ever seen this fellow, and I learnt later that he was dumb, which fact did not much surprise me, knowing, as I did, "Doctor's" antipathy to having anyone about him of a questioning turn of mind.

The hangings, rugs, furniture, and wall decorations of the room in which I was seated had been brought from every known land, and the ten or fifteen minutes that elapsed before "Doctor's" appearance were well spent in admiring the many curios which my friend had collected during his extended travels over the world.

At length he came, with an apology for having kept me waiting, He seemed to be in exceptionally good spirits, and remarked that he had never felt better in his life.

"Do you know, Duckworth," he said, "I have been looking forward with unaccustomed pleasure to our visit to the theatre this evening, as it is the first time for ten years that I have dared to go to a place of public amusement, and undoubtedly you surmise the reason why."

"Well, Doctor, I am glad you are in such good spirits," I answered.

This was the first time that he had ever referred in any way to his "eccentricity," and I was in hopes that he would go on and confide in me more fully, and his next remark almost convinced me that he would.

"I have had a premonition," he went on, "that I am to have peace and enjoyment for this night at least, and propose to make the most of it."

Hereupon he changed the subject; and try as adroitly as I might, I could not bring him back to his original theme.

We went to the play, which was of absorbing interest to both of us. Nothing occurred to mar our enjoyment until we were leaving the theatre.

"Doctor" was walking immediately in front of me, and we had just reached the street, when, suddenly throwing up his arms and uttering a sharp cry of pain, he fell prone upon the pavement. I was upon my knee at his side in an instant, and found him perfectly conscious but utterly unable to rise. His face was set and pale, and he was evidently suffering excruciating pain.

"Call a cab, quick," he whispered, "and don't mention a doctor. Take me to my rooms as rapidly as possible."

A bystander called a cab and helped me place my companion inside. As we rode rapidly towards my friend's apartments he remarked, half to himself, "A broken leg this time. Good for six weeks at least."

Upon my request to be allowed to stop for a surgeon on the way, he flatly refused, and begged me to take him directly to his rooms and leave him in the hands of his man Andrews, who thoroughly understood the situation.

When we got him upstairs I noticed that he had lost consciousness, and as Andrews had left the room I took occasion to examine both my friend's legs; and, although I had heard him aver that his leg was broken, I was utterly unable to find the slightest bruise or damage of any description. The man's limbs were as sound as my own.

Just as I was concluding my examination and was still bending over the unconscious man, I was suddenly roughly seized from the rear and quickly drawn back from the couch. As I turned to resent this treatment I beheld Andrews bowing low before me with an expression of abject apology on his intelligent face. I asked him what he meant by handling me so unceremoniously, and by signs and looks, which he had a wonderful faculty of making one understand, he told me, as plainly as I could have expressed by speech, that it would be his master's earnest desire to have me leave them alone, as he thoroughly understood the case. He then wrote upon a tablet which he always carried with him, the following:

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"Please do not call again until master sends for you."

"Doctor," having at various times informed me that he placed implicit confidence in his servant, I quickly decided it was best to accede to Andrew's request, and took my leave.

On the evening of the fifth day after the "accident," I was in my den busily engaged in arranging some papers when there was a knock at my door. It was Andrews with a note from his master, which read as follows:

Dear Duckworth.—I trust you do not feel offended at not hearing from me before, but the fact is, I considered it best to be left alone with Andrews until somewhat recovered. The delicate tact and silent sympathy you have shown towards me during the several inexplicable occurrences which you have been unfortunate enough to witness, have convinced me that you are a man who can be thoroughly trusted, and I have decided to make clear to you, as far as I am able, the strange influence of which I am the helpless victim.

If you have no other engagement, kindly call this evening. If possible return with Andrews.

Cordially yours,
"Doctor."

It was but the work of a moment to change my coat, snatch up my hat and gloves, and signify to Andrews my readiness to accompany him to his master.

I found "Doctor" seated in an easy-chair with his right leg reposing on a pillow supported by a stool.

"Good evening, Duckworth," he said, "I am very glad you found it convenient to come."

"I am very glad you sent for me," I remarked. "How is your injured leg?"

"As well as might be expected," he answered drily. "Andrews informed me that he found you examining my understandings on the night of the accident, and what you found or rather did not find has undoubtedly imbued you with some misgivings regarding my sanity; and on this account, among others, I am about to give you a short and concise sketch of my life, and would request that you keep it a profound secret."

I bowed without speaking.

"You have shown considerable interest in my views on psychology, and this is another reason for my making you acquainted with my life.

"I was born in a small town in the south of England in the autumn of 1853. My mother died when I was in my third year, and from then up to the time I graduated my life was uneventful and happy. My father, being wealthy, humoured me in every way, and my future life promised to be rosy.

"About a month after my return home from the University my troubles began. I was very fond of riding, and one afternoon had just returned from a long ride in the country, and was proceeding at an easy canter down to the stables, when suddenly I received a severe blow on the back of my head which knocked me from my horse. I almost immediately became unconscious and knew nothing until an hour after, when I opened my eyes to find my father and the doctor bending over me.

"I was lying in bed in my own room, and upon opening my eyes my father and myself almost simultaneously asked 'What happened?' I insisted that I had been struck a crushing blow on the back of the head, but my father averred such was not the case, as he saw me fall from my horse without any apparent cause and ran up to find me lying unconscious.

"I was suffering from a bursting headache, but there was not even a bruise on my head, although it was sore to the touch.

"Some three weeks later my father was taken with pneumonia, and within ten days had passed away. I will pass over the two months following my father's death and relate the circumstances of the next attack of my peculiar malady.

"I was seated in the library engaged in arranging certain affairs which had been neglected since my father's death, when suddenly my left hand, which had been resting on the table, was forced down flat as if by some heavy crushing weight, and for the space of several minutes I was absolutely unable to move it. I threw myself back in my chair and with all the force at my command endeavoured to release my hand from the table, but without avail. With my eyes fixed upon my flattened fingers, from which all the blood seemed to have been forced, the remembrance of the first visitation of the unseen force flashed across my mind. Up to this time I had felt no pain, but soon the pressure began to relax and I was able to release my hand, and then terrible pains began to shoot through my fingers and arm. That lasted for two hours.

"I knew of an eminent specialist on nervous and mental diseases and called upon him. He expressed himself as believing that my trouble was an extreme nervous affection of which he had known but two cases before, and advised me to travel, interest myself in the outside world and keep my mind off myself as much as possible.

"I decided to take the doctor's advice and travel, although I had not much faith in his diagnosis. Having decided on this plan I returned home, made arrangements for an extended absence, and the next week sailed for New York. I visited every corner of both the Americas, but all this was of no avail, as at various intervals my strange attacks have returned in ever-changing form. I have experienced a broken rib without the usual accompanying ocular evidence, of which my present condition is a parallel case. I have felt the grip of powerful unseen hands about my throat, and nearly choked to death in consequence; have been stabbed in the back, and experienced in various other ways the force of some unseen and inexplicable power, which I felt would eventually cause my mysterious passing away.

"After spending five years in America I returned to England. I then became interested in spiritualism and psychological research, and soon became a firm believer in the latter doctrine, which I have since coupled with many original theories of my own.

"I believe in the presence of a fluid, universally diffused, which animates all living beings on the face of this globe, and that the actions of these beings are due to their own individual organisations. I also believe, that two individuals of the same general temperament, physical and mental organisation, will, through the medium of this universal fluid, be affected by each other in various ways; that in different cases this influence may tend entirely in one direction, which in my case is that of the transference of the sensation of physical suffering. I believe that ninety per cent at least of the so-called lunatics in this world are not in reality wrong mentally, but are influenced in this way.

"I am practically convinced that there is living somewhere a man whose aches and pains I am obliged to endure, and the one aim of my existence is to find this

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individual and if possible attach him to my service and keep him out of harm's way, if he chances to be in a walk of life that will make it feasible: if not, some other plan must be found.

"It probably occurs to you that, considering the vast population and area of our world, my task does not present the slightest probability of success, and for many years I laboured under the same apprehension; but now I believe I am on the right track.

"During my extensive travels I have found that in some localities where I have spent considerable time I have been practically free from the influence, while in others it has been very strong. After carefully considering this phase of the manifestations, I have arrived at the conclusion that the closer proximity of my man, the more potent the influence, and in consequence my field of search has narrowed itself down to the city of Manchester and its immediate surroundings.

"Now as to the sort of man I am looking for, In all probability he in no way resembles me in appearance; the little finger of his left hand is missing; he has a scar from a cut on his left cheek and one on his back under the shoulder blade a little to the left of the spine. These are the remains of certain accidents which have befallen me. At present he is laid up with a broken leg, and in consequence I am practically in the same fix. I believe I shall find him to be of exactly my own age, and considering the number of wounds and broken bones in the case, he is probably following some hazardous occupation.

"He may be an honest working man, or what is more likely, a criminal. Now I surmise that our broken legs are not so bad as they might be, and if he gets proper care, we shall be up and about in three weeks from now, and I then propose to go North and ferret him out, and what will please me next to finding my man will be to have you accompany me."

"Doctor" here concluded his story, and it is hardly necessary to inform the reader that it left me for several minutes in a state of speechless wonder, for it was the strangest recital that had ever come to my notice outside pure fiction.

"I'll go with you," was my first remark after somewhat recovering my senses, whereupon "Doctor" grasped my hand without a word, but his face spoke volumes.

It was now nearing midnight, and I took my leave after arranging to spend some time with him each day in maturing our plans, as far as was possible, with the material we had to work upon.

At the end of the three weeks "Doctor" informed me that he was ready to start, and two days after we were on our way to Manchester, where we eventually arrived and engaged two adjoining rooms at one of the smaller and less frequented hotels.

Andrews was left behind in care of "Doctor's" apartments.

We spent several weeks hunting in every quarter of the city and the surrounding neighbourhood for an individual bearing the marks as described by "Doctor," but with no success; however my friend assured me that we were on the right track, as he had experienced various sensations which, in his mind, pointed conclusively to the near proximity of the object of our search.

"Doctor" was not an early riser, but on the other hand I was, and one morning while awaiting his appearance, it occurred to me that, inasmuch as "Doctor" expected to find his man among the criminal class, and as we had visited every known haunt of the criminals at large in the city, would it not be a good idea to carry our investigations to the prison?

Then my companion sent word that he was suffering from headache and must keep his room. I therefore decided to carry out my plan alone. I went straight to the chief of police and told him the kind of criminal I was trying to find. He looked at me for a moment and then said:

"You must mean Wilson?"

"Who is he? What is he like?" I asked eagerly.

"Wilson is about forty-three. Height five feet ten inches. Hair black. Eyes black. Scar on left cheek from nose to ear. Scar under left shoulder blade. Small finger missing from left hand," said the chief, as though reading from a book.

At last we were on the track, for here was the description of a man who answered all requirements to the letter.

I asked the chief if he could give me any further information regarding this man.

"Certainly," he answered. "I see you are not quite posted in the affairs of Manchester. He was arrested for murder about two months ago and in an attempt to escape he broke his right leg. He was tried, found guilty and pays the penalty at ten o'clock this morning. If——"

But I waited to hear no more; rushing from the place like a madman, I jumped into a cab and shouted instructions to the driver to drive with all speed to the hotel and not to spare the whip, at the same time glancing at my watch. It was just five minutes to ten.

Should I reach the hotel in time? And what could I do if I did?

Ghastly visions flashed before my eyes as we rattled through the streets. The cab stopped. I jumped out and rushed up to my friend's room; throwing open the door, I beheld "Doctor" standing in the centre of the room.

The sight of him held me spell-bound. He was standing as rigid and straight as a post, feet together, arms close to his sides, and on his face an expression of agony such as I hope never to see on a human face again.

"Thank Heaven you've come," he groaned, "I've been standing here for about five minutes, bound and ——"

I shudder with horror as I recall what then occurred.

His words died in his throat, his body seemed almost to leave the floor, and then all his muscles relaxed, and he pitched forward on his face.

I quickly raised and placed him on the bed. His face wore an expression of profound peace, and at last his troubles were at an end.

Wilson had paid the penalty of his crimes and——

"What's the verdict, gentlemen?" asked the Coroner.

"Heart disease," came the prompt reply.

E. B. R.

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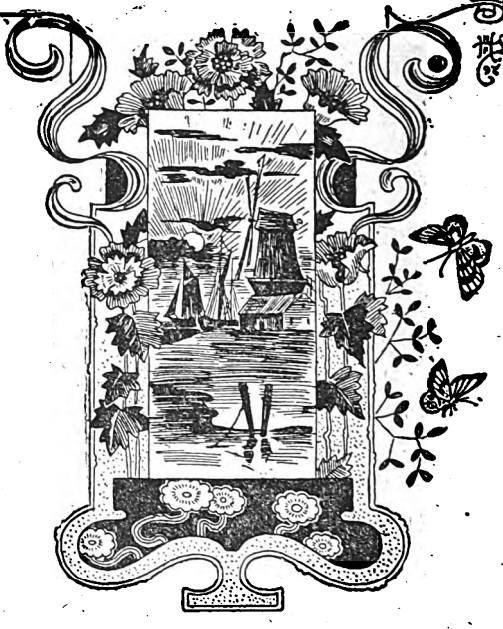
SAM'S RIVAL.



"So you never heard of Myrtle's ghost, eh?" said Jack Catlin, tilting his chair back and snickering most aggravatingly.

"Don't understand you," said Jack's brother Sam, reddening. "I suppose Myrtle has a ghost. All men are mortal, so are women. When they die they 'give up the ghost,' I believe. So Myrtle must have a ghost to give up."

"Oh, yes," said Jack, "but Myrtle has another ghost all to herself—one that she hasn't given up yet—I suppose she wouldn't tell you about it, though. But you might ask, just to see what she'd say."

Sam Catlin was uneasy about that ghost. There was something of an insinuation in his brother's words. He became more uneasy after leaving his brother, and decided to call upon Myrtle Brooks at once.

"Why, Sam," the young woman exclaimed, "I never expected to see you here at this time of the day! Sit down, won't you?"

"No," said Sam gruffly, "I don't suppose you did."

"What's the matter, Sam? What makes you so cross?"

"Cross? I cross? I'm not cross. I only came to ask you something, that's all."

"Oh!" And the red of the two pretty cheeks spread indefinitely. "Ask me something! I wonder what you've got to ask me now."

"It won't take you very long to answer," said Sam looking up from under his eyebrows, while he kept tapping the toe of his shoe with his cane.

Myrtle made no answer. She was smiling and looking at the tips of her fingers in the awkward way some girls have of seeking relief from a sudden palpitation of the heart.

"You won't mind answering, I suppose?" Sam asked.

"No; that is if I can, Sam. Go on."

"I want to know"—(Myrtle's head was beating like the works of a very large watch)—"I want to know about—that—that ghost of yours."

Myrtle's expression changed. The blush was still there, deeper if anything, but the half embarrassed, half happy smile was gone.

"Who told you?" she exclaimed defiantly. "Who told you that story, Sam?"

"Oh, fortunately, if I have to be absent, there are people who—who are friendly enough to tell me what has been going on, you know."

"Friendly? What has 'friendly' to do with it? What do you mean by this, Sam?"

"Tell me, first, what you mean. I want to know about that ghost of yours."

"And I want to know, first, who has any right to tell you—to—to meddle in my affairs."

She was getting angry, too.

"Then you won't tell me about that ghost?" Sam asked, rising from the chair and taking his hat, with an air of grim determination.

"It isn't that I mind telling you, but—what have you heard?" the girl asked, rising at the same time.

"What is there to hear?"

"Nothing. That is——"

"Yes? 'That is?' 'That is'—what?"

"Nothing but some silly talk."

"Silly talk always has some foundation, Miss Brooks."

The girl stood biting her lip, seeming to be mentally occupied in debating some difficult problem.

"I don't know whether I ought to tell you or not," she said at last, turning a defiant look upon him.

"Just as you please, Miss Brooks," and Sam moved towards the door.

"Of course, it's just as I please," she burst out, losing all self-restraint. "What do you mean by talking to me about your 'friendly people' and 'what has been going on?' I don't know that I ever gave you any right to talk to me like that."

"Oh, no," the young man sniffed. "And I don't know that you ever will, either. Good morning, Miss Brooks."

And he was gone.

Myrtle threw herself face downwards on the sofa as soon as she heard the front door close, and sobbed. She and Sam were not engaged, but everybody in her family and in his fully expected that these two would either become engaged or else marry without the tiresome prelude of a formal engagement.

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Myrtle sat sobbing with her forehead against the back of the sofa.

Sam Catlin walked at a good, brisk, high-tempered rate in the direction of his brother's office.

He arrived at the office ten minutes after Jack had gone out to lunch. So, guided by the instructions of the office-boy, he made off for the restaurant where Jack was accustomed to eat.

Sam's two week's stay at home had begun only two days before this, and he had not yet shaken hands with all the people he knew there, and who were supposed to be glad to see him again after a year's absence. Many such passed him as he stalked through the street to the restaurant, but he was in no mood for greetings, and only returned curt, hurried nods.

As he pushed the swinging door open, a slim, pale young man, with a cigarette in the left corner of his mouth, was all but toppled over by Sam's momentum.

"Where the——" Sam began.

"That you, Sam?" the pale young man interrupted him, saving his hat with one hand, and his cigarette with the other.

It was Myrtle Brooks' adoring cousin, Welby.

"Oh, how-d'you-do?" Sam said hurriedly. "Beg pardon. Glad to see you."

And he went in, leaving Welby to straighten himself and wonder what was wrong.

"What's the matter with you, Sam?" Jack asked, as Sam violently occupied the chair opposite. "You nearly ran over poor Welby, didn't you?"

Sam took up the bill of fare and looked at it mechanically.

"What's the matter with me? H'm, question is, what's the matter with him? Can't see where he's going. Smokes too many cigarettes. H'm. He's as pale as a——"

And then Sam suddenly dropped the bill of fare and stared dumbly at the pepper box and the sauce bottle.

His brother looked up quietly, too busy satisfying his own hunger to pay much attention.

"Pale?" he said. "Yes. Have some mutton. Where have you been?"

Sam grunted his order to the waiter and continued to stare at the condiments.

Jack steadily continued his meal, only stopping long enough to remark. "You did need rest, Sam. That's a fact. Yes, you are pale."

No reply.

Presently that abominable smile of Jack's began to be in evidence.

"By the way," he said, "did you find out anything about Myrtle's ghost?"

Sam laid down his knife and fork.

"Look here, Jack," he said. "I don't want to have an unpleasantness in my own family. Yes, I have found out about—it. Now, please don't tell me any more about that ghost. I've had quite enough."

The smile was gone. Jack was staring wide-eyed at his brother. The lunch was finished in silence.

Sam Catlin went home, and straightway wrote as follows:

My Dear Miss Brooks.—I have to apologise to you for my rude and unreasonable curiosity of this morning. I acknowledge that you have given me no right to insist upon explanations of any kind from you. Please to pardon this indiscretion of mine and forget it, as well as all that may have gone before it, and led up to it.

By accident, I have found the answer to the question with which I offended you.

Very sincerely your friend and well-wisher,

Samuel Catlin.

Myrtle threw herself face downwards on the sofa.

The answer came next day.

My Dear Mr. Catlin.—I hasten to say that your apology is sincerely accepted. I must also ask you to forgive my outburst of temper.

It is incomprehensible to me how you can have found out the answer to your question by accident. Your brother, Mr. Catlin, I believe, and your mother, I think, both know the story of what they have taken a delight in calling "my ghost." It happened more than a month ago, when you were ill in Manchester.

Mrs. Catlin is quite at liberty to tell you all you wish to know about it——

That was as far as Sam read. He went and demanded an explanation of his mother.

"Why, Sam," Mrs. Catlin laughed. "I should have thought Myrtle would have told you about that herself. I know she scared the wits out of me at the time—sending round here at ten o'clock at night to ask if I had any news of you. You go and ask her. She'll tell you."

"Then it isn't Welby?"

His mother laughed, and Sam, in his impetuous way, rushed to Myrtle's home and found her in the garden.

"You deserve to be told not a word," she said, very severely. "You made such a donkey of yourself. Sam—you were ill—up there—and one night, when I was sitting playing the piano, I thought I heard you whistle that part where the nightingale comes in—just as you used to"—sobs here. "And just then Gyp gave one of his little sudden barks"—more sobs. "And I thought you were standing behind me"—sobs and confusion and kisses.

"Then I'm your ghost, darling?"

Myrtle's face was smothered against as solid a chest as any ghost could reasonably envy.

"Now, Myrtle, don't call me an idiot all the rest of my life. I thought it was your cousin Welby. He is so pale, you know, dear."

And incontinently, the merriest kind of laughter broke in upon the sobs.

Charles Stone.

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THE GLADIATOR.

A Tale of the Eastern Empire.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE THIRD.

"Through the Meshes of the Net."

CHAPTER I.

The Pirates.

Of the life that Rhesus led in the galley, it ever irked him to tell afterwards, so seared was his soul with the horror of it. Yet it is needful for the proper progress of this strange story that something be said of those evil days. How long he pulled the oar in that reeking hold, amid its dirt and darkness and infamy, he could never quite recall, but it must have taken at least five of the best years out of his life; taken them out, had almost been written, as though they had never been. But the memory of them remained ever with Rhesus, hanging over his mind as the shadow of a thick cloud on a sunny day, and who shall say how many years were missing at his life's end?

Some time in the next day—or it may have been the next but one—the breeze failed, and the master roused the convicts to their work by a gentle application of his scourge. They were creeping down the pleasant waters of the Hellespont then, having just left Propontis behind, and now and then, as he bent and strained to the oar, Rhesus caught a glimpse through the narrow opening of the heights of Thrace. Mount Olympus, clothed in its eternal snow, he could have seen, had he been free; and many another well-known spot, rich in memories and in legends of the vivid past, along those fertile and historic shores.

Down the Hellespont they pulled the heavy craft, with much blasphemy and sweating of blood, and passing the historic hill of Ida, came out into the Egean. The rest of the day they toiled through the heat and the dampness, naked save for a loin-cloth, each one of them consumed with thirst and madness, like chained beasts; and when night came, on a choppy sea, they lay down in their fetters, and in that stifling ship, fœtid with the breathing of a hundred wretched compeers in crime and misery, must sleep.

Each day thereafter was like that; sometimes, when the sea was steady and the heat not so intense, a little more endurable; sometimes, when she lay becalmed, and the sun baked them as in a pitiless furnace, a little worse. Rhesus' hair grew grey in streaks, and all unkempt, his skin was drawn and puckered as an old man's; those few years put twenty to his age. Even the slave-sailors who worked the galley had some pity upon him and were less harsh to him than to the others—though that was an ill turn after all, so bitterly galley-rowers hate each other for a preference—and once or twice the captain had him brought on deck when he swooned away.

But Rhesus was a pagan, under the ban alike of Church and State, so the captain fingered his ivory crucifix and swore by his favourite saints and sent the prisoner back, thanking God that the law allowed neither Jew nor Heathen to own a Christian slave, and having thus stifled the generous impulse within him, went to his wine.

So the weary years passed on, as a evil nightmare long prolonged, until a break came in the monotony and found Rhesus a fresher and a lighter, if a worse fate. They had traded long between Berytus and Athens and Byzantium, and long escaped the prowling pirates who infested the sea, but in an evil hour for him the captain pointed his prow for further afield and ran for Alexandria. On that voyage his luck failed; he came away with a heavy loss and many goods on his hands; and one stormy evening, as they ran, bare-poled, before a strong gale, a pirate vessel loomed across their track.

There was scant mercy shown to merchants who resisted, and but that he was in an angry mood he would have yielded and so saved his skin. But he chose to flee, and all through the dark hours the toilers in the hold heard the hurried stamping on the deck, and felt upon their sore hides the frequent sting of the lash.

At dawn the captain finding escape impossible, these had a spell of peace as the ships closed and the robbers boarded. There was a moment of suspense, in which flashes of hope shot across the dark horizon; and then, as a dozen pirates came down the hatch and severed their chains and put knives into their hands, a moment of frenzy that turned the ship into a living Hades.

For those rowers were mad with the sudden liberty, eager as wild animals for the blood of their late masters, and bursting upon the latter as they stood at bay in the bow, pulled them down and tore them limb from limb, exulting in their savage strength; and not one was spared, not one was left alive. Then, reckless, insane with the lust of freedom and revenge, they turned to the pirates and rushed at them, a frantic, howling mob. But these were tougher fellows and used to such work, and defending themselves calmly until their assailants had spent their spasm of fury, punished them thereafter so that most crept back, cowed and beaten, to the hold. But Rhesus did not go below. He stood, knife in hand, near the mast, and threatened to slay the first that touched him, vowing that nothing would make him go down again.

"He fought well, certainly," said the chief of the pirates to his men. "It would perhaps pay us better to take him as one of us, instead of wasting a man or two to be rid of him. What say you, slave?"

"Anything but the oars!" cried Rhesus. "Though it likes me not to join such villains, I consent!"

"He has some courage, I vow!" cried the chief. "He shall go with us."

So Rhesus became a pirate, a freebooter, a despoiler of merchants, a scourge of the sea, and added another to the several avocations that had occupied his life.

Having scuttled the captive ship with the miserable rowers aboard, they put off from the scene of evil success and sped swiftly westward before the impulse of the still high gale. The rest of that day and the following night, despite his weakness from the strife and long captivity, they put Rhesus through the rounds of work that each aboard must do in turn. What matter that his eyes were drowsy and his head swam and his knees trembled under him? What matter that the ship pitched and tossed on the storm-shaken sea, and out of the blackness of the wild night came a deluge of rain? He had bought his life and freedom at a price, and must pay the penalty; and when at last the wind abated somewhat and the heavy cloud-banks drifted away before the red onset of the rising sun, he dropped from sheer fatigue, and on the bare deck, his back to the bulwark, fell asleep and passed into a land of hideous dreams

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The rough work and evil deeds the pirates committed thereafter sorted ill with the better nature of Rhesus, but the memory of wilful Eutasia kept his protests back, and made the wealth he got so wrongly seem sacred in his eyes. Surely none of the crew thought of him as less scrupulous than themselves. As daring, as careless; as ready for fray or frolic, for friend or foe, he assuredly was; so none suspected his secret loathing, none his secret desire—a desire, he began to fear, that would never be gratified.

But time in its circling course brings all things round, and in a manner he least expected, out of what he thought a dire misfortune, a way was made for Rhesus to the goal of his longing, a way that once begun seemed to lead straight thereto, as though carved through the thicket of circumstance by the sweeping axe of a god.

He kept wide-open ears to the floating gossip of the sea and the littoral towns, and heard much of matters in Constantinople—of the genius of Belisarius and his thankless treatment at the hands of Justinian and Theodora—and worst of all, at the hands of Antonina, his faithless wife—of his Persian victories; of his splendid triumphs in Africa, where he had captured Carthage and taken Gelimer prisoner, and so added a Vandal kingdom to the empire in one campaign; and of the new task that the greedy despots set him—the reconquering of Rome.

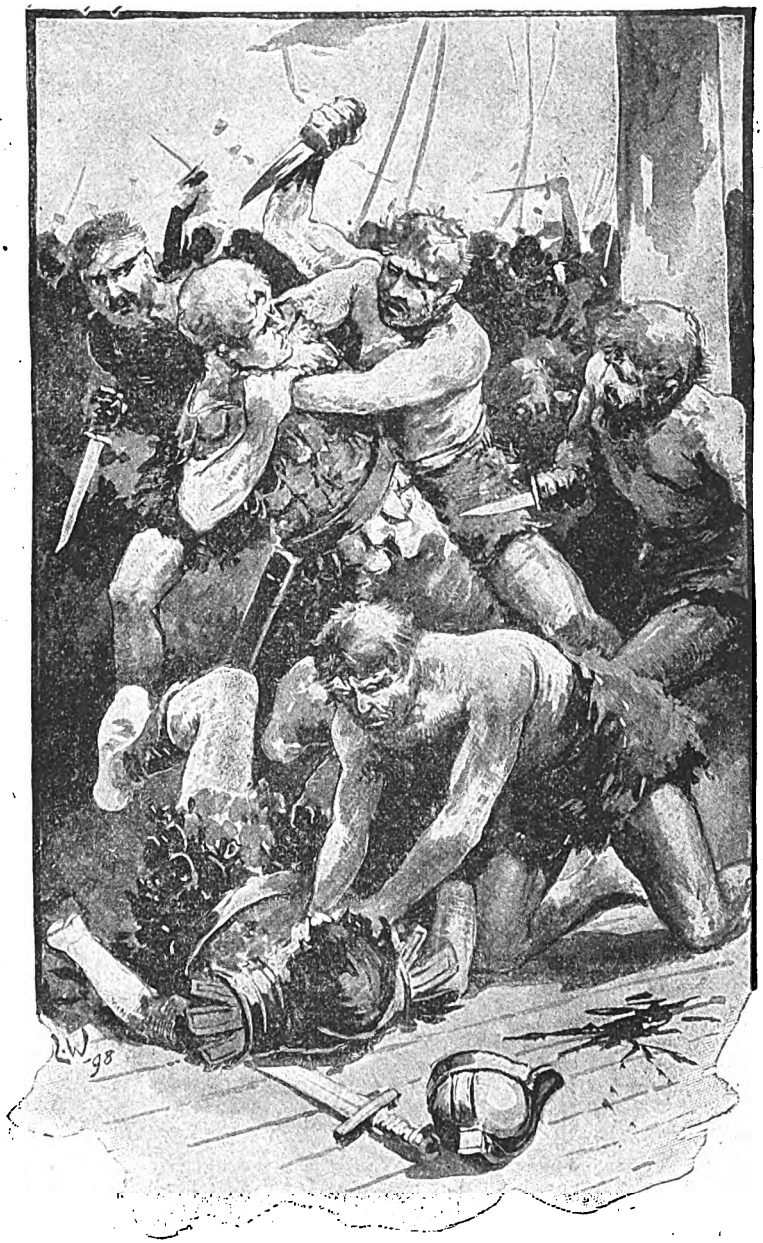
Had the pirates been equally attentive to this last news, or known the energy of Belisarius as Rhesus knew it, they would not have lingered amongst the isles of Greece so long that warm season. As it was, they crept out from the sheltering lee of a high bluff one day to find themselves right in the path of the great Byzantine fleet, and being discovered by the look-out of one of the brigantines, knew that the end of their roving days had come. They ran for it at first, but the light ships went three leagues to their two, and seven of them coming in pursuit, caught them easily. Then the robbers let down their anchors and prepared to die.

The enemy closed round warily, knowing their desperation, demanded their object in flight, and asked if they would surrender and go before the general.

"Tell your general," roared the pirate chief, with an imprecation in the names of all the saints, "that we please ourselves where and when we come to bay. We will go before him, without further parley—when we are all slain! We are not yet ready for the dungeons of the capital or the rowing holds of your ships!"

With that the seven ships closed in, and the fight began. As for Rhesus, a wild hope had risen and taken hold of him, and whilst they fought he held back and leant upon the mast, his sword in its sheath and his arms folded. The wild sea-dogs gave a good report of themselves ere they finished, and the manner of their ending evoked in Rhesus an admiration that their living could not; but they were only a handful to the troops that ship after ship sent on board, and presently it was over, and Rhesus alone was left.

The victors, surprised at his inactivity, asked grimly if he preferred a slow and ignoble death to a swift and hot one; whether he would go before the general as one who had not even the courage of his wickedness, or whether he would be ended as he stood. He replied that he would go before Belisarius.



They pulled them down and tore them limb from limb.

CHAPTER II.

Rome Roman Once More.

The great soldier sat under an awning on the deck of his flagship and received Rhesus with an ironical smile on his leonine face.

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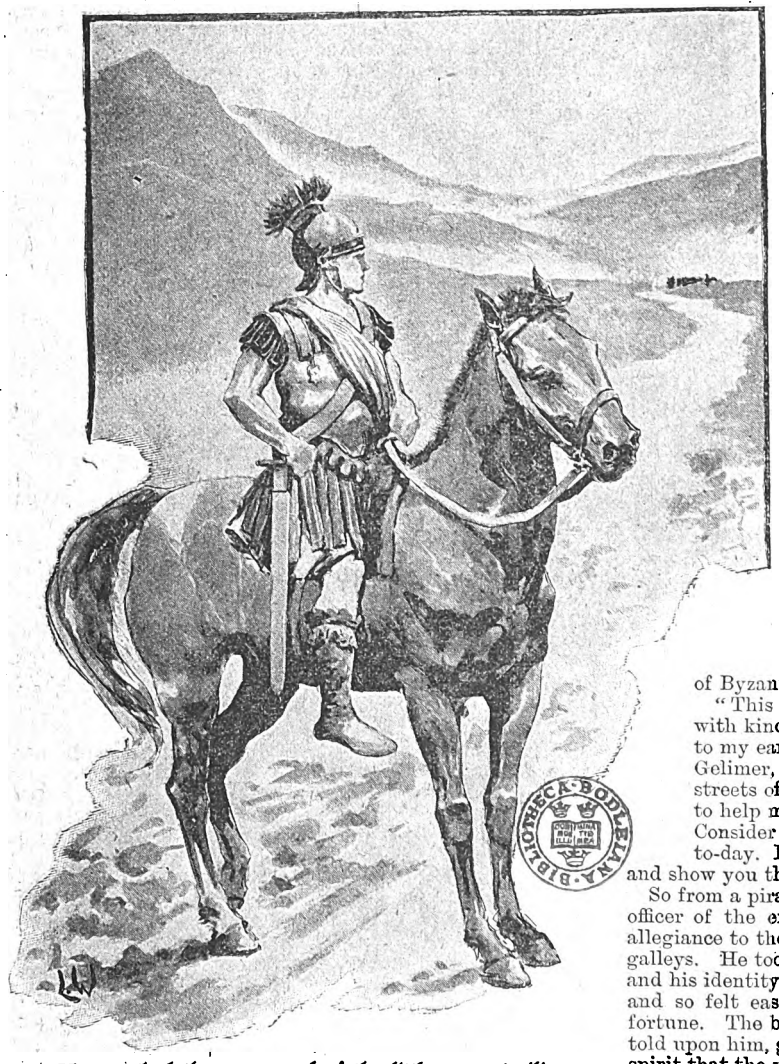
"You know, Sir Pirate, how we deal with those—without exception—who prey upon the commerce of the empire?"

"Yes," answered Rhesus. "You deal with them as they merit, as I should deal with them were I in your place. But you will not so deal with me when you know how I come to be in this plight."


BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

He watched the rear-guard of the little army trailing round the bend of the hills.

"I can but judge a man by his friends," said the soldier; yet there was an awakening interest in his eyes and a perplexing air of half-recognition in his face, so Rhesus took fresh heart and told somewhat of his story.

"If a man should fall among thieves, and be forced to act as a thief to keep a whole skin; and should be so in love that he prefer life with dishonour—and hope—to death, what then?" he asked.

"What then?" repeated the general. "Why, I should say it was a hard case, but not sufficient excuse for one with so smooth a tongue, even as yours! But don't give way yet, man; Belisarius loves justice above all things, and there is something familiar in your face. Here, Procopius; perchance you have a better memory than I. Where have we seen this fine fellow before?"

The learned secretary and companion of the general eyed the prisoner a moment, nonplussed by his dress and altered appearance, then the light of recognition broke through the clouds of his perplexity.

"You see so many faces, general, or you would remember him well. Mind you not young Rhesus—Rhesus the Roman—who was the best charioteer in the capital, albeit he wore the green badge; whom they sentenced to the galleys?"

"That I do now," cried Belisarius, who came himself of a family of charioteers, "I recollect him well, and have wished he had worn the blue." Then he turned to Rhesus again, smiling. "I can believe your tale now, though it seemed but a coward's plea at first. I cannot help but spare your life now, Rhesus, come what may of it at Court, where I have many enemies. Will you wear the blue and enter into my service in this coming campaign in Italy before you venture back to the capital? I have need of resolute men such as you, to lead these ill-paid mercenaries."

He looked at the prisoner keenly as he spoke, and the latter felt that fascination for him that made him so liked by his soldiers, seize him all on the sudden. He had admired his loyalty and martial skill before; he was now enamoured of the man.

"I will put on the azure band to-day," he cried, grateful and enthusiastic, "and you can make me what you will, so long as I get to Rome and see the banners of Byzantium flying from her walls!"

"This is a man's talk!" answered Belisarius, with kindling eyes. "I never heard sound sweeter to my ears than that, even when I paced the Vandal, Gelimer, in his purple robe, through the crowded streets of Constantinople! Had I a dozen such men to help me I should feel more secure in my successes. Consider yourself officer of a thousand, Rhesus, from to-day. Procopius will attend to your wants to-night, and show you the men."

So from a pirate Rhesus was transformed suddenly to an officer of the expedition to Rome, sworn to loyalty and allegiance to the Emperor who had sentenced him to the galleys. He took care, however, that the tale of his life, and his identity was not bruited about among the sailors, and so felt easy as to the ultimate outcome of his good fortune. The better food and easier mind he gained soon told upon him, giving him back, in some part, the healthy spirit that the years of toil and vice had stolen.

The future once more began to have a brighter tinge, and the image of Eutasia, floating through his dreams and daylight visions, held out to him a beckoning hand. He remembered now her intercession more than her girlish caprice, and though he feared Marcen's cunning, there ever came, as the end of his confusing thought, a strange, dim sense of ultimate success—a foreknowing, as it might be, that she would be true to him through all; that to keep her first vow she would break a thousand others. Whence came this feeling he knew not—who should tell him? The world of life is surely greater than we see with these wondrous orbs of ours, and who shall say what messages, what influences, are passed from one to another of us through that larger part of existence that is to us unseen?

Surely Lucretius was in error—surely there are other things in nature than the ever-falling atoms? But such

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matters as these, Rhesus, are best left to the scattered students of your old academies!

The soldiers told him much of recent history, as the keels of the light ships cut the sparkling waters of the pleasant sea, and he made himself a favourite with all in those hours of ease snatched from the constant care of governing; those hours spent in the cool, fresh mornings, and the langourous, darkening eves, when the vessel slipped sibilant through the slight curl-spray, and the sun in his rising or setting was attended by sundry stars.

He heard of the ambitions of King Amalasontha, whose dream of a United Gothic Italy was so roughly nipped in its budding by the hired assassins of Theodatus; how the latter, too, was deposed and slain at Capua, after enduring a twenty days' seige that was terminated by General Vitiges entering the town through the aqueduct; how Vitiges was made king in his place.

It were needless to weary the reader here with the campaign that now followed—how Belisarius enticed Vitiges away from the capital, and sailing up the Tiber in his absence, laid siege to the ancient City of Seven Hills; how aged Lenderis and the garrison gave in and were allowed to go free. That is all in the history books. But long after, Rhesus remembered seeing the old man and his scanty troop marching out along the broad Flaminian Way; and he thought that after all, those Goths were not so barbarous as their eastern compeers, that the Holy City might have been in worse hands than theirs.

The Roman triumph was not long unchallenged. Vitiges gathered his force together, profiting much by the ill support Belisarius received from the east, and the brave general found himself at last with 5,000 men only, besides the inhabitants of the city—whose old traditions yet lingered, called upon to defend Rome for more than a year against an overwhelming army of revengeful Goths.

For a year and nine days Rhesus marked by day their steely ring drawn close, and saw by night the twinkling curve of their bivouac fires. Often, in that long siege, his heart sank and his hope dulled, but as often the depression passed, charmed away by the romance of the place. The very streets he trod, the houses he lived in, the walls he defended were holy ground to him, the fallen shrine of the old beliefs he cherished so fervently; and who fights so well in the darkest hour as one who fights to guard the relics of his faith from infidel hands?

Along the wall that stretched from the Pincian to the Flaminian gate, the fiercest fights befel, and there Rhesus was apportioned; and though he strove his hardest, giving his soldiers scant time for rest or sleep, himself less, the fierce Goths wrecked much of the old glory he sought to save.

The old Mole of Hadrian, covered with the white marble of Paros, was partially destroyed, and though those huge bows, the balistæ, and those huge slings, the onagri, were worked almost continually, the foe often gained footing within the lines long enough to do irremediable mischief. Some of the matchless statues chiselled by Praxiteles and Lysippus were thrown down and broken in their charges—work that would have been immortal destroyed in the frenzy of an hour.

But the garrison never lost faith in Belisarius, and darind them to a pitched attack on the tenth day of the secong year, repulsed the Goths and drove them out over the Milvian Bridge, slaying some 30,000 in the rout, besides the many who fell into the Tiber and the Father River swept away in his vengeance.

And then, had the promised reinforcements been sent to Belisarius from Constantinople, Rome would have been made Roman for certainty, would never have had other than a Roman master again. But the jealousy of Justinian lost the golden opportunity, allowing the enemy time to regather their forces. It is true that the troops followed Vitiges and defeated him in Ravenna, his last stronghold, and made themselves popular with the peaceful, law-abiding people—for Belisarius allowed neither rapine nor plunder on his marches;—it is true that winter and disease wasted away the army that Theodebert the Frank was hastening southward with, and delayed the preparations of Totila, the clever young leader of the Goths; but in the midst of it all the enemies of the General at Constantinople prevailed, and he was recalled to once more prove his loyalty to an unworthy ruler.

He left as many men as he dare to guard Rome until his return, and set out with unmoved fortitude to meet his traducers. There is surely no more pathetic spectacle in history than that of this brave and skilful soldier, true beyond corruption and loyal passing belief, accepting so calmly the suspicion cast upon him; never swerving from the course of unquestioning duty, though his steadfastness was ever to his own loss.

He left Rhesus, with a picked band of men, at a lonely village just within sight of the Great Aqueduct that in old time carried the water of the hills into Rome, and bidding him guard his line of retreat, struck out across the country to the east coast, where the fleet lay.

"If I cannot come back within the year all will indeed be lost," he said at parting, "and then, Rhesus—or before, if all be lost sooner—you will best serve your country by saving your skin and making for home. I will bear you a message to this love of yours, as you have asked, and if her answer be as you think, will dispatch you word by a trusty slave. And so, Rhesus, farewell."

Thus mindful of an underling's welfare in the midst of his own misfortune and anxiety, he bade Rhesus good-speed, and the latter saw him not again. He watched the rear guard of the little army trailing round the bend of the hills until the last man vanished behind the dim edge of the fertile slope, and as the white mists of evening began to rise from the sun-baked valley, turned his horse's nose back to his temporary home. A soldier's lot is hard at times, when the glamour of victory is taken away and the heat of battle is gone!

But Rhesus had soon other things to occupy his mind than solitude and sadness. The dark past, with its culminating night of horror, thrust itself before his memory again, compelling him to begin the struggle anew, reminding him that he was still in the toils of treachery, and must in some way cut himself loose from the meshes of the clinging net. It happened thuswise.

(To be continued.)

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THE MIRACLE THAT WAS NOT PERFORMED.

THERE was once a learned doctor who had studied long and hard, but in Cucuguano, where he had settled, no one had faith in him. Meeting him always with a book in his hand, the Cucuguanese said:

"That doctor knows nothing—he is always studying. If he studies so much, it means he needs to learn; if he needs to learn, it means he does not know; if he does not know, he is an ignoramus."

A doctor without patients is like a lamp without oil. Without other resources, forced therefore to earn a living by hook or by crook, up to this time the poor man had not been able to pay even for the water he drank.

He decided that there must be a change. So one day he managed to spread abroad through all Cucuguano the report that his science was so sublime and all-powerful that not only could he heal the sick—mere child's play—but raise the dead as well. This miracle he promised to perform openly in broad daylight in the multitude.

Few gave credence to the report. Yet even the incredulous said:

"We will let him attempt it, anyhow. Let's see him at work—the proof of the pudding is the eating. He may succeed—he reads so much, and nowadays such wonderful discoveries are being made."

Finally it was settled that on the following Saturday, at the stroke of noon in the cemetery of Cucuguano the doctor would raise a man from the dead—nine or ten, some old women went so far as to say.

There was a crowd of people in the cemetery that morning, and, true to his word, on the second stroke of the bell the doctor appeared. He bowed to the crowd and began:

"My dear friends, I have promised to bring one of your dead back to life. I intend to keep my word. Be silent and hearken to me.

"It will cost me absolutely no effort to raise from the tomb Giacomo or Giovanni, Nannina or Betta, Amadeo or Simone. Shall I raise Simone? Simone—what was his last name? Simone Capannaro, who died of pleurisy a year ago."

"Excuse me, signor dottore," said Caterina, poor Simone's widow. "Certainly he was a fine fellow: he made me very happy, and I shall mourn him as long as I have eyes for tears. But, pray, do not bring him back; for, you see, towards the end of the month I'm to put off mourning, and, to please my family, I'm to marry Pasqualone."

"You did well to tell me, Caterina. Then I will raise Nina Carota, who died on Candlemas Day."

"For heaven's sake, signor dottore!" cried Giacomo Carota, "Nina was my wife; we lived together ten years—ten years of misery, as all Cucuguano knows. Let her rest where she is, for her sake and mine. Such a temper, doctor! Obstinate as a mule, lazy, and quarrelsome. And that is not all. But that's better left unsaid."

"Yet, my dear fellow——"

"Excuse me for interrupting, signor dottore. Nina left me three children, and, as I could not manage them alone, I have married again—so you see, it is useless."

"Well and good. I can conceive it would be martyrdom to have two wives in the house. Then whom shall I restore to you, my dear people? I must find some one. How about Master Pietro?"

"Ah, my poor father!" cried a voice. "May he rest in peace! A good man was he! But don't bring him back, pray, doctor! He who wished so much to see us a united family would be heartbroken to find our affairs in such a muddle. After a dozen law suits, the six of us—four sons and two daughters—have finally divided the property into six little strips. Each of us has a swarm of children; each of us has to shift for himself. There is not one of us who has anything to spare."

"So it cannot be?"

"No; if you should bring him back we would have to make up a little income for him among us all. But the times are so hard, doctor, you know. And the taxes are heavy——"

"Enough, we will let Master Pietro sleep on. But I have not come here for nothing. Tell me whom to raise."

"Ghita—bring back Ghita, my Ghita!" cried a poor old woman, weeping.

"No, no, doctor; do not wake her," interrupted a girl. "Oh, no, pretty creature; it's all well she died. We dressed her in white and put a wreath on her hair till she looked like a bride. Leave her in holy ground; the man she loved was killed."

"Poor Ghita! But you must admit you are making it hard for me. To put an end to it all, I will bring back Gringaletto, who was choked to death while eating dinner not a month ago."

"You must not—you must not," cried Lina Paparero, wringing her hands. "He sold me that vineyard of his on the instalment plan. For ten long years I've been paying in hard coin far more than its value, and now would you have me go on? He charged exorbitant interest. It's not fair, signor dottore."

"What's to be done? I'll try someone else. I see over there a little white wooden cross; the harebells seem trying to hide it; the tall grass is almost on a level with it. You can read that that narrow grave holds a ten-months-old baby. True, it seems half a pity to bring the tender soul back to this world to bear—what you have all been bearing. Still, if you wish him raised, say but the word, and I will display my power."

"Signor dottore," whispered a wrinkled crone, "that little one is ours, alas! I am the grandmother. My daughter had not yet weaned him; he was just cutting his teeth when suddenly he died. But God took him from us. God's will be done! Now there is another babe. God knows what He is doing. What he takes with one hand He gives back with the other. We are poor."

At this the doctor burst out:

"Enough for to-day, if not too much, indeed! Since you won't have the miracle now, I will perform it on another occasion. Only I beg of you to agree beforehand on the person to be brought to life."

And he strode away.

From that memorable day our cunning doctor has done wonders in Cucuguano. It is true he does not raise the dead, but he saves the lives of those who are ill. The Cucuguanese, now fully trusting him, say:

"If he did not fulfill his promise, to tell the truth, it was not his fault—it was ours."

D. CIAMPALI.

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This Camera is being specially made for *Short Stories* by one of the largest camera manufacturers in Great Britain. This camera is listed by the makers at 10s. 6d. each, and our readers, by special arrangements, are going to be supplied with it at 4/6, together with a supply of Dry Plates, Chemicals, and a Book of Instructions enabling anyone without previous knowledge to take a photo with the greatest of ease. A Competition List will be sent with each camera. 6d. extra will be charged for parcel post, 5s. in all. This camera has a powerful lens, double dark slide, focussing screen, shutter for time and snap-shot photos. A well-made and neat camera.

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RULES.—All persons sending must mark on the left-hand top-corner of the envelope the words "*Short Stories* Camera," and send it along with postal order for amount to the manufacturers,

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NOTICE.—No person will be supplied with more than one Camera.

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Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vescicle tissues generally."

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

SWIMMER.—Some medical authorities assert that most of the supposed cases of drowning through "cramp" are not due to that cause at all. Many swimmers, if seized with cramp, could turn over on their backs and float for a time with the chance of being rescued. These authorities say that death results from a perforation of the drum of the ear, the pressure of the water causing vertigo and unconsciousness.

U. G. D.—Admirals and generals are of equal rank, but the former take the precedence in cases where two officers belonging to each grade meet together, the Navy being considered the most distinguished service.

QUERIST writes: "Is there any place in the heart of London where a watchman calls the hours of the night, as the old 'Charley' used to do? I have heard so."——Yes; in Ely Place, Holborn Circus. When the gates of this little street are closed, the watchman reigns supreme; the police have no legal right to enter; and the watchman must call the hours from eleven at night till five in the morning. An old charter gives the watchman the right to act in all respects as a policeman. Ely Place is governed by commissioners, the present Chief Commissioner being the well-known solicitor, Sir George Lewis.

R. B.—The Boers are descended from the Huguenots who left France under the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, and from the Hollanders who emigrated at various times in search of civil and religious liberty.

G. W.—Wolves' skins make the best banjo drums.

T. S. would like to know why Santiago is sometimes called "Santiago de Cuba."——Because there are other places of that name, the Spaniards almost always (in ordinary circumstances) add the words "de Cuba." The three places best known by that name are, Santiago de Compostella, in Spain, which city claims to have relics of the Apostle St. James—Sant Iago, as the Spaniards call him. The Apostle is said to have founded the city. The other two are the Cuban stronghold and the capital of Chili.

L. E. N.—Yes, corsets have been found on the waists of Egyptian mummies.

W. R. G.—Practically, a judge cannot be removed from his office, as to do this it is necessary to obtain the intervention of the Sovereign on an address presented by both Houses of Parliament. Such a proceeding is very rarely necessary, as judges are generally more willing to resign than to be deprived from any cause of their official robes.

MY readers will observe this week that we have begun "The Final War" in *Short Stories*, and I most strongly recommend everyone to read the opening chapters. It is without doubt one of the finest war stories ever written, and dealing, as it does, with places and persons the names of whom you are well acquainted it is of special interest. Another series of stories under the heading "Untold Stories of the Indian Mutiny" starts in this number, and I may say in connection with this series that all the facts are absolutely correct. The author is thoroughly acquainted with every phase of Hindoo life, and has heard the stories mostly from the lips of those who were actually through the Mutiny.

T. B. T. writes to ask what quadruped is the most numerous all the world over.——Without a doubt, the rat. Every continent of the world has its variety of rat. It has been found in most of the South Sea and Indian Ocean islands, and the remote rocks of Ascension and St. Helena have long been its home.

W. H. wants to know if the artificial incubation of eggs is a modern invention.——Far from it. It was practised by the Chinese and the ancient Egyptians. Diodorus, who wrote forty years B.C., tells us "that the Egyptians, with their own hands, bring eggs to maturity, and the chickens thus produced are not inferior to those hatched in the ordinary manner."

H. G.—Counterfeit sovereigns and shillings are usually made of electro-plated iron. The false coins will not bend, and, standing any of the ordinary tests, are successfully passed in considerable numbers.

GREETING.—No, the shake of the hands has not always been the common form of greeting in England. Down to the reign of Charles II. the kiss was the common form of greeting for friends and strangers alike, and shaking hands was a mark of close intimacy or high favour. Anne, Countess of Pembroke, one of those ladies whose diaries have been made public property, used to note in her diary the persons with whom she had shaken hands, as though it were something out of the ordinary to greet anyone in that fashion.

W. T.—Russia has 650,000 hereditary nobles, and 380,000 whose nobility expires with them. A nobleman has few, if any, privileges as such. He must enter the army or civil service to obtain precedence in Society.

A. P. L.—The Chinese prefix "Ah" to a person's name is an endearing diminutive, equivalent to Tom-my, Sam-my, John-ny in the English language.

H. R.—No, clergymen are not allowed to enter trade of any description. This was not always so. In olden times it was not at all an uncommon thing for clergy, who were very badly paid, to eke out a living by trade dealings. The Abbot of St. Albans, in the time of Henry III., might be seen behind his stall selling Yarmouth bloaters, and those who wished to obtain foreign goods cheaply in the time of Henry VI. had but to apply to a couple of Iceland bishops, who had received a license from the King for smuggling.

L. H. G.—Napoleon Bonaparte was never wounded. Wellington was once, but only very slightly.

HUSSAR.—There are several explanations of the origin of this name, but the most probable is that it is derived from the Magyar word, *houtsar*—"twentieth." In 1445 it was found necessary to take important steps for the preservation of Hungarian territory, and a law was passed compelling the peasants to supply one man out of every twenty to serve as a soldier—and that man must be a horseman. The first hussars were from the plains, and at the present time the Hungarian hussars are the best light cavalry in the world.

T. R. H.—The entire service of trains is re-organised twice a year—in the spring to provide for the summer months, when the passenger traffic is heavy and the goods and coal traffic light; and again in the autumn, with a view to the winter months, when the passenger traffic is light and the goods and coal traffic heavy.

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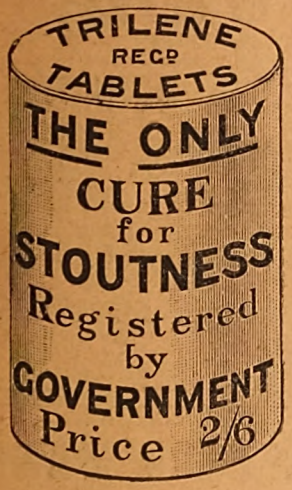

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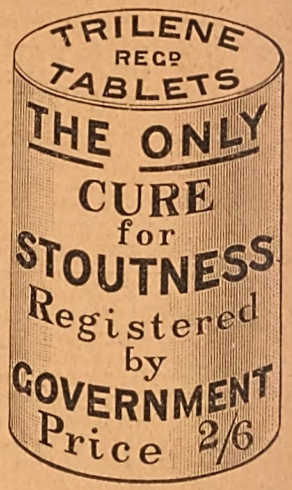

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

25 Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.

Miss M. FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

A. BROWN, of 25 Edwin Street, High Pallion, Sunderland, says: "You have no idea what a most wonderful effect the Tablets had. I am a great deal thinner, and better in health."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me.

"Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.

Mr. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

L. LUDDRINGTON, "Sunnyside," Station Road, Sidcup, says: "I have benefited greatly, and have lost a stone."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Miss A. ATKINS, 329 Southdown Road, Liverpool, writes: "I lost nearly a stone from taking one box."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

Mrs. WOODS, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets deserve every success."

Mrs. O'CONNOR, 2 Kensington Square Mansions, London, writes: "I am much less stout for taking them."

Surgeon Colonel E. S. BRANDER writes from Ihansi, India, in September, 1897: "Your Tablets in my own experience form an excellent remedy for reducing weight."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

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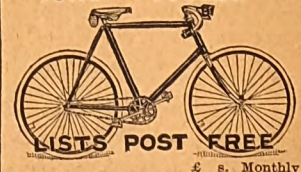

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 502. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 13TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 502. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 13th, 1898.

The Neglected Grave.

"I DON'T think it is fair," said Sophie, as she gave the pebbles at her feet a vindictive shove.

"I don't either," said Otto, as resolutely. "Old Fritz was a soldier just as much as anybody, wasn't he? A soldier's a soldier, isn't he, even if he does get old and die very poor and ragged?"

"Course he is!" chimed in Herman, stopping a moment in his play. "He went to the war, one of the very first one's, and all through it. I heard father say so."

"And he's buried in the churchyard and among the poor graves," exclaimed Sophie, "and no one takes any notice of him, or decorates his grave, or anything!"

Herman shook his head.

"Well, I don't think it's fair," she repeated again.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Herman, piling up two sticks.

"He's the only soldier here, and people didn't trouble about him."

"But why didn't they?" asked Sophie, exasperated. "In Berlin and other places they have a great time, don't they, and decorate the men's graves that haven't been braver than old Fritz?"

"Yes, they do," Otto spoke up after a thoughtful silence, "and everybody's going to Berlin at the end of this week to bury a soldier. I heard father say so."

"They always do, and its going to be extra this time, 'cause they've got a big man, a general or somebody, who was in the war, to speak to 'em, and they've got a lot of money and going to do things fine, band and speeches, and people will go from ever so far."

Sophie's eyes glowed.

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"I'd like to be there," she cried, clasping her hands.

"You want to be in things just the same as everybody else does. You're blaming them for not decorating old Fritz's grave and now you want to go yourself, just the same's the others," said Otto.

Sophie was silent for a moment.

"Supposing we decorate that grave ourselves?" she said slowly.

Otto stared.

"And have a procession and everything," continued the girl gravely.

"I don't suppose it makes much difference who decorates, seeing its' done, and I think our flowers would look just as good as anybody s."

"And you, Otto, and Herman"—a bit uncertain—"and perhaps Maria and Heinrich can have a nice procession and go there, and it'll be just as good as if the regular people did it."

"That would do splefididly," assented Otto, "but flags cost such a lot."

"Do you have to have flags?"

Herman nodded.

"It wouldn't be decorating without one," he decided. "You have to have one, at least, to stick into the grave, so's to tell he was a soldier. It doesn't have to be very big, but you've got to have one."

"I don't see what we can do," said Otto, discouraged. "It's only three days off, and we can't any of us go over to Müllheim to buy one, and then we haven't got the money."

"I'll make one," said Sophie.

"Oh, yes, I can!" as the boys looked at her doubtfully.

"I don't suppose it will be very good, but it'll be a flag all right, so why shouldn't it do?"

"We've got some carpet cuttings upstairs and I know I can find some pieces, 'cause my old red dress is there, and there's lots of blue calico. Only Herman will have to draw the picture on the flag; I couldn't do that."

Herman thought he could do that, and the children went back at once to begin.

* * * * *

A solitary rider on horseback rode down the country lane.

He glanced sharply to the right, then dismounting, opened a gate and turned into the faint path which led across the fields to the little church and cemetery.

He threw the reins over his horse's head and let him graze at will. Then he wandered into the little graveyard.

He had scarce reached the spot when, approaching from another direction, came a little procession of five children, laden with flowers.

A boy led the way, beating now and then on a battered drum.

The man slipped behind a tree.

The little procession passed through the gate, and, marching solemnly onward, paused beside a neglected grave.

"We must plant the flag now, Sophie," said the biggest boy.

She handed it to him.

The man leant forward. The flag was a curious affair and made him smile.

The boy took it gravely and stuck it firmly into the soft ground at the head of the grave.

"We must sing," he announced.

Five young voices in five different keys struggled bravely through "Die Wacht am Rhein."

The man drew nearer.

"Now, we must pray," said Sophie, glancing down at the paper in her hands. The five children knelt about the grave. The boys removed their caps.

"Our Father," began Sophie in a tremulous voice. The others joined her. Then Maria said a simple prayer. The rest listened in silence, but joined in "Amen."

The eyes of the looker-on filled with tears.

"Now we must put on the flowers."

Quickly but tenderly the straggling grass-grown grave was covered with flowers. They were of all colours.

"Now I'll read you a few words from the Bible about the soldier's armour," said Herman, and slowly the familiar words fell from his boyish lips.

Just then Maria's roving eye caught sight of a man, who was close beside them now. She gave a little jump.

"I will tell you the story of comrade Fritz, here," he began abruptly, but with a pleasant smile. He stood at the head of the grave bareheaded, with the sun shining on his grey hair.

They drew about him. Then he told them of Fritz's courage in war, and what the war was about and how it should teach them to be true and brave, and the children listened with scarce a breath for fear of losing a single word.

"And I had come here to-day to do honour to my fallen comrade," he added. "But I find that you have done it already—more than I could do."

He glanced at the rough flag. There were tears in his eyes.

The silk one in his hand fell to the ground.

Otto picked it up and would have planted it on the grave.

"No," said the man; "keep it. Yours alone shall do honour to-day."

And after a few more words the little procession marched away, while the general—for he was a noted general—stood watching them with head uncovered until they had vanished from sight.

Then, with a farewell glance at the flower-strewn grave with its homely flag fluttering in the soft May breeze, he rode rapidly away.

* * * * *

"And it was you, children?" Sophie's mother said the next day.

"The general told us all about it in his speech last night, and he said we must emulate your example."

She looked very proud and happy as she kissed the children.

"We'll do it every year," said Herman, looking at the new silk flag hanging on the wall.

"Of course we will," said the others.

James Hartley.

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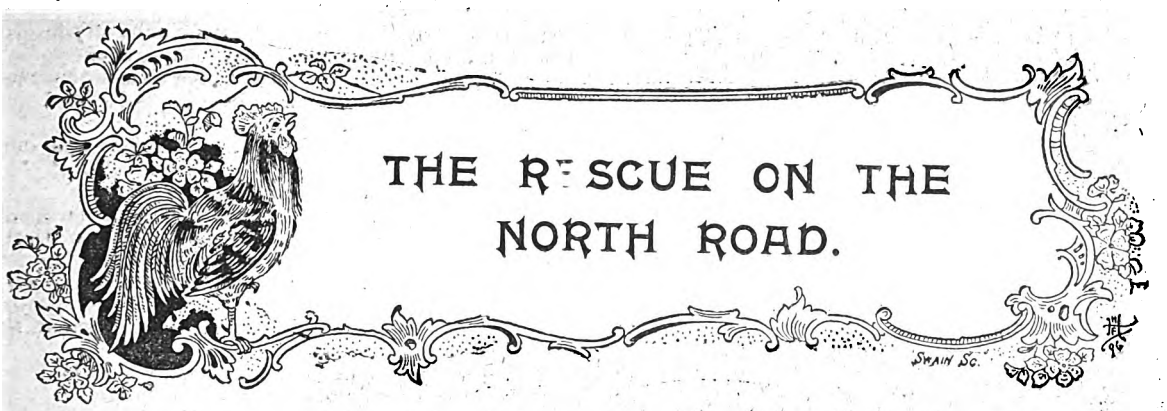

THE RESCUE ON THE NORTH ROAD.

I WAS ever a careless, hot-headed fellow; one of those whom a slight injustice will quickly drive to the bad, yet withal easily drawn back to the good by a loving hand. That were a sign of weakness, perhaps; yet I had enough strength—in the way of obstinacy and courage—to satisfy the most exacting.

Thus it happened that when my father — whose memory I still revere—blamed me for a fault that was not mine, my anger blazed up at the injustice, I shook the dust of the family mansion from my feet, saddled my good mare, and turned her head in the direction of far-off London, where I hoped by good luck to find favour with the King.

But, alack! like many another, I was disappointed; and smarting under the sense of the wrong done to me at home—now rendered more keen by the failure of my hopes—I rapidly drifted into what my dear mother used to call the crooked path.

Ask me not how I came to be dubbed a swashbuckler before I had been many months in the capital; question me not concerning the evil repute that accrued to my name; let me tell of my last adventure in that capacity, and what it led to.

I was seated at a table in the parlour of the "Black Boar" one evening. My fortunes were at a low ebb; I had had but one gold piece left when I arose that morning, and I fear that I must confess that I had spent most of the change in an endeavour to drown my sorrows. I suppose I must have fallen into a drunken slumber, for I mind me that someone shook me heavily.

I lifted my head from my chest and gazed with stupid solemnity at the figure before me; and when my muddled brain became a little clearer, I recognised Sir Reginald Wenbow, who was known to me by sight and by repute.

"Zounds!" quoth he, as he seated himself in a chair at the opposite side of the table. "I have had some trouble to find you, Master Sellon, and almost as much difficulty in waking you. You might have chosen a less evil-looking and foul-smelling place than this. And when your addled brain is——"

But I permitted him to go no farther with his insolence.

"You were under no necessity to seek me," I retorted fiercely, "and now that you have found me, let your speech be civil!" And I put my hand upon the hilt of my sword.

"Tut, tut! Keep your spleen for others. I have work for you to do."

"An' it pleases me to do it," I replied quietly.

"You are good as a fencer, I have heard," he went on, pretending not to notice my remark, though I knew by his face that he did not relish my freedom of speech, "and have had some experience of brawls."

"You forget that I am hotheaded!" I said warningly. For though I had earned the character, I liked not to be told of it; I had some good left in me.

"I am Sir Reginald Wenbow," he said.

"A name as well-known as my own," I replied with much significance. For there were some pretty stories afloat about him.

He sprang up with an oath, and half drew his blade. I quickly followed his example. Then he burst into a mirthless laugh, and sat down again.

"We cannot afford to quarrel," he said. "I want the services of a man such as you, and you want money. Let us proceed to business. We can talk freely here, as we have the room to ourselves."

It was true that I wanted money; did I not get some soon, I should have to turn common robber on the highway.

"To-morrow evening I have a little venture on hand. A lady will be in danger along the North Road beyond Islington, as she is coming into London. I have heard of the plot and I intend to save her. I want your help."

"You shall have it!" I exclaimed heartily, for a woman in distress was always sure of the succour of Master Sellon. "I want no pay for that."

"It is *my* affair," he said, "and I ask your help; so I pay for it. Seeing that you are willing to go with me, meet me to-morrow evening at six of the clock, mounted and ready at the 'Red Calf,' near the lower end of the North Road—you know it?"

"Aye," responded I, "but the mount? I have had to sell my mare."

He put some money down on the table, and, after a few more words, he left me.

I was punctual at the appointed place on the following evening, mounted upon my own mare, which I had been fortunate enough to buy back from the man to whom I had sold it. I was greatly pleased thereat, for a man feels more sure of himself on a nag whose tricks and qualities are known to him. Sir Reginald came up soon afterwards, and we set out on our—or his—venture.

It was towards autumn, and a most uncomfortable season. The wind blew chilly across the heath, and we were glad to skirt the highway and keep as much under the shelter of the trees as 'twas possible to do. Moreover, that course suited Sir Reginald's plans.

I marvelled somewhat at this venture. It seemed to

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me that had Sir Reginald been the assailant instead of the rescuer 'twould have better befitted his character.

We had ridden some distance when we came to a rise in the ground just overlooking a bend in the road. Standing in a clump of trees we should be hidden from those travelling on the road.

"We will await their arrival here," said Wenbow.

It was dusk, and the moon was covered by clouds. It was not a pleasant thing to wait there, and I began quickly to tire.

"How do you know that there is danger?" I asked after a few moments.

"Because I make it," he replied coolly.

"Mayhap, you will be good enough to explain, gentle sir," I remarked, curbing my temper. "I am no hand at riddles."

"I create the danger from which I rescue the fair lady," he went on. "I seek to win her favour, but hitherto I have met with but little success." I could well believe it if the lady had heard the stories that had come to my ears. "This is a little plot to win my way into her good graces and those of her respected guardian."

He then unfolded the course of action, which I was fain to admit was by no means a bad one.

A little more waiting, then my ears were gladdened by the sounds of travellers approaching us. Two minutes later a coach came in sight round the bend in the road.

Touching my mare with the spur, I made her jump into the path; at the same time I cried in a loud voice for the driver to pull up, and fired one pistol in the air. The object was to create the idea that several men were attacking the coach, and there was no manner of doubt that the object was attained. The driver pulled up and shouted, the horses, terrified, reared and plunged, and the man who was riding outside fired his pistol at me, slightly wounding me in the left arm.

Such a scene of confusion was rarely seen on any similar spot in His Majesty's dominions, I ween. In the midst of it up dashed Wenbow with more cries. There was a pistol shot from him, another from a man on the coach, a scream from a woman in the coach, and oaths in a man's voice from the interior of the vehicle, and then, as I dashed off—to return again as one of the rescuers in a brief space—I heard another shot and a cry of anguish from the driver.

As soon as I got to the trees I made a terrible noise as of men fighting, and then turned my mare—who had behaved as I knew she would—back to the road and returned to the coach, crying out that the villains had fled.

I was just in time to prevent the horses from running off with the coach and its occupants. Both the driver and the other man were nowhere to be seen, nor could I understand whither my companion had disappeared. Having quieted the animals, I attached the reins to a tree and was about to open the door to reassure the lady and gentleman, when I heard Wenbow groaning near by.

I found him on the ground, badly bruised; his horse had stumbled, thrown him heavily, and then bolted. I dismounted, picked him up, and carried him to the door of the coach.

"There is no further cause for alarm," I said, doffing my hat to the invisible occupants. "We have driven off the assailants, but my friend is hurt and has lost his horse, so I beg that you will take him in with you, and I will drive you to your destination."

There was no response, so, after vainly trying to penetrate the obscurity and gain a glimpse of the young and pretty maid within—I knew by her scream that she was young, and I judged her to be pretty—I opened the door.

"Are they gone? Where are our driver and our guard?" asked a gruff voice. But, in spite of his gruffness, he could not hide a tremor in his tones.

"By my faith, I know not where they are, good sir," said I, answering the last inquiry first. "But you are safe, and if you will take care of my friend, who risked his life to save you, and tell me your destination, I will drive you there."

"Why, it is none other than Sir Reginald Wenbow!" exclaimed the old gentleman.

And I heard an exclamation from the maid that methought was not quite expressive of pleasure.

However, they took him in, and the old gentleman thanked me and told me where to go; and, after vainly trying to catch a glimpse of the lady, I attached my mare to the side and prepared to mount the coach.

I thought I would give another look round for the driver. I found him stretched on the ground, dead. Wenbow must have shot him. The guard had fled.

As I walked back to the coach, I caught a glimpse of the face that I had been trying to see. In an instant it was gone in the darkness of the interior, but the features I had seen by the light of the moon, which was shining now, set my blood to leaping in my veins and my mind to pondering. Where had I seen that face? How pretty it was!

By the time we reached the mansion near the river to which the old gentleman had directed me, Wenbow had sufficiently recovered to take his venture in hand again. He dismissed me somewhat curtly, saying that he would see me on the morrow; and I, ashamed of my part in the affair, though I could not explain why, was glad to get away before that pretty damsel could see me. That was not my usual disposition.

On the morrow Wenbow called upon me, true to his word, and paid me several gold pieces, which I was fain to accept for the reason that I was without one single coin after having paid my just debts to my host of the "Black Boar." I thought that that was the last of the affair on the North Road. But I was mistaken.

Two days passed; it was the third day after the so-called rescue. I was sauntering along without purpose, and found myself passing the mansion to which I had driven the coach. I cast my eyes up at it as I went by, and then moodily continued my walk. I had proceeded some distance when I felt a touch upon my shoulder. Turning, I saw a lacquey holding a note.

"I am commissioned to give this to you and ask you to read it, Master Sellon," he said with a bow.

"How in the——," I began. But I cut my words and opened the note, even while I wondered how he knew my name and who had sent him.

"I will follow you," I told him when I had spelled out the few lines. My face flushed when I read the name at the foot of the writing, and the rascal of a lacquey noticed it—confound him!

She! How——? What——? My head was full of confused thoughts as I followed him back to the mansion which I had gazed at so wonderingly. I but dimly recall what passed until I found myself face to face with the maid of the coach!

"So I have found you at last, Master Sellon!" she cried, her pretty face all aglow with pleasure, her hand outstretched. "To think that *you* should have been

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one of our deliverers, and I should not have recognised you!"

I bent low over her hand and kissed it, to hide my shame and confusion.

"I have changed since the time we played together as children in our happy country home," I summoned courage to reply. "It is so long since you left us, and you, too, are changed, Lady Mary. I was not aware that you were in London."

"I have not been here long," she replied. "I heard Sir Reginald Wenbow call you 'Master Sellon' that night, but before I could be sure that it was you, you had disappeared. I tried to find you, and——" She paused, and then went on again in some confusion. "I saw you pass a while ago and sent after you."

I caught the glance in her eye, and I felt that in trying to find me, she had heard of my evil reputation. Despite my efforts, I blushed to the roots of my hair for very shame I should have fallen so low and that my boyhood's playmate should learn of my unworthy doings. Then my anger rose, and I felt defiant. Was it not all due to the unjust accusation brought against me?

"You have heard evil things of me," I cried, looking her boldly in the face.

"I have—many," was her response in a low voice, "but I do not believe them! My childhood's friend could not act thus!"

Heavens! How those words, uttered in that soft tone by that sweet maiden, cut me to the heart! My defiant attitude was upset, and my head fell upon my breast as I answered:

"They are true!"

"Master Sellon!" The voice was softer than ever.

My arm trembled as I felt the touch of her hand upon it. I looked up and tried to meet her eyes boldly. We thus stood for a second; and then I burst forth.

"My father drove me to it by his injustice. He accused me and slurred my honour for a sin that was not mine. I left his house and came here. But fate was against me—and——"

I stopped. The excuse seemed so pitiful, and the flush deepened on my cheeks.

"Your father has found out the truth and will gladly welcome you home," she said. "I saw him but recently." There was no chiding in her voice and I blessed her for her goodness. "Promise me," she went on, "that you will not again use your sword in unseemly brawls, and let me thank you for your bravery three nights ago."

I promised her, and asked myself whether I should tell her the truth of that adventure. As I again raised her hand to my lips, the door was flung open and in strode Sir Reginald Wenbow.

"What are you doing here, brawler?" he demanded in braggart tones. "Begone from this lady's presence!"

"What right have you to ask that question and issue that command?" I retorted. "And if I have been a brawler, you have been glad of my services. Have you told the lady the story of the rescue?"

Lady Mary looked curiously from him to me and from me to him. He became furious, and drew his sword.

"You knave!" he cried hoarsely. "I will chastise you as you deserve, and put it out of your power to tell false tales!"

"I would make you eat your words and chastise you for unseemly conduct in a lady's presence," I responded hotly, "were it not that I have promised——"

"Oh, defend yourself, Master Sellon!" screamed Lady Mary, in terror, as she saw him rush towards me with drawn sword.

I waited for nothing else. My blade leapt from its sheath, and in an instant we were fiercely engaged, while my sweet guiding angel cowered, fearful, in a corner.

The fight was a desperate one. We were both skilled in the use of the weapon, but he was the more skilful. He pinked me in the shoulder and in the arm, but try as I might I could not touch him. He laughed at me and I lunged furiously. That act of imprudence nearly cost me my life, but luckily I was quick enough to parry the thrust.

Then my turn came. His success made him careless; he gave me an opening and I took it. My blade went through him, he sank to the floor with a moan, and I leant against the wall and wept that all this should have happened before *her*, and that I should be such a brawler.

I was aroused by two things; the sound of voices and footsteps, and a cry from Mary—Lady Mary. I turned to find myself confronted by some of the King's troops.

I threw down my sword and held out my hands. I imagined that I was to be arrested for killing Sir Reginald, who—despite his character—had powerful friends. But the captain, after casting a glance at the motionless body, shook his head.

"I came for *him*," he said. "He has been found out at last in his plots against the King. You have afforded him a more honourable death than he would otherwise have had."

Then I swooned like a silly wench!

Sweet Mary! Poor Wenbow! I have to thank him and bless her for bringing me back to an honourable career. By the influence of her guardian I received an appointment in the King's service, and when my father next saw me he had reason to be proud, instead of ashamed, of me.

Lady Mary became *my* Mary three years later, after I had received the honour of knighthood at the King's hands, and has ever been my guiding angel.

Why do I say that I have to thank Wenbow in part for my good fortune? Because that good fortune resulted from my participation in the "Rescue on the North Road."

G. MERRIAM.

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Untold Tales of the Indian Mutiny.

By H. HUNTER.

II.—"AN UNCLASSIFIED QUADRUPED."

Captain Dowsett glanced up quickly from the paper on which he was writing. The orderly was bringing a man into the tent. The man, who was wearing the khaki uniform then authorised for service in the field, acknowledged the Captain's glance by bringing the two forefingers of his right hand to a level with his eyebrow, and suddenly letting his arm drop motionless to his side. He stood thus, in the military attitude of attention, till the pen ceased to travel over the paper, and Captain Dowsett, looking up again, said:

"Well, Smithers, anything fresh? I'm just closing my report."

Dowsett was the officer in command of the picket on outpost duty between Jalalabad and Sir James Outram's camp at the back of the Alambágh—the Garden of the World—which lay on the Cawnpore road about two miles from the royal city of Lucknow. Colonel Berkeley, chief of the staff, going his morning rounds, would visit the picket in due course, and Captain Dowsett was busy with his report.

"I've seen him agin, sir," replied the man.

Captain Dowsett balanced his pen on his forefinger for a couple of minutes, evidently puzzled by the statement of Private Smithers.

"It's a funny sort of story, Smithers," he said at last, throwing himself back in his cane chair and looking hard at the man, "but I suppose I ought to make a note of it. You've spoken to your right and left hand men?"

"Yus, sir."

"And what do they say?"

"They see nothin'."

"And you've seen him now, three times in as many weeks?"

"Yus, sir, reg'lar."

"But not on the same night of the week?"

"No, sir, diff'ren' nights."

"And each time he comes from the same direction, takes the same course, and disappears at the same place?"

"Yus, sir."

Captain Dowsett bent over the camp-table and recommenced writing; but presently stopped.

"Do you remember exactly when it was you saw him first?" he inquired.

"T wo days before the Pandis tried to cut off our rear at Gaili."

"Yes, and the next? Just go over the story again, Smithers, will you? I'll put it in my report for the Colonel. It's a curious sort of tale certainly, but at least it will show the Headquarter Staff that we keep our eyes open out here, and if anything comes of it I'll see that you get the corporal's stripes."

"Well, sir," began Smithers, a little awkwardly—he didn't relish having to "yarn" to the Captain—"it was the week before Chris'mas, yer know, when I went on at the batt'ry what the Engineers is makin' up there between the camp and the fort. An' one night, leastways it was dark, there was no moon, but the sky was clear with a fair sprinkle o' stars, an' I reckoned it was about two or three a.m. Well, I see somethin' come out o' that there mango tope—you know the patch, sir——"

The Captain nodded.

"An' creep along in the shadder, close to the groun', till it was opposite the garden wall of the mosque that's between us and the villages down by the canal.

"I see it leap over the wall, slip roun' the mosque, and then disappear."

"Yes," from the Captain.

"'What the dickens is that now?' says I. 'Tain't a man, I'll bet my life; an' there's no hanimals as I knows of in that mango tope.'

"Then I pinched meself to make sure as I wasn't dreamin'. It was a fair buster, Capt'in. Whatever it might be, it was a dark objec' that went on four legs. It got over the groun' pretty fast, and seemed to go with a hop, step, an' a run.

"The queerest part o' the bis'ness to my thinkin' was that it should slink along just outside the trees but well inside the shadder, as if afraid o' showin' its ugly mug in the open, never stoppin' for a look roun' or to smell at nothin', as you'd naturally expec' any proper sort of hanimal would do; but keepin' on with a shamblin' sort o' trot straight for the old mosque what we drove the Pandis out of last October.

"'There ain't nothin' to eat there, mister,' thinks I; and then Sharland, my left-hand man, challenging: 'All's well,' and everythin' being quiet in front, I jest put it at the back o' me mind, till I gets another chance with him.

"That, sir, come on New Year's night. It was jest sich another night as before. The moon went down about twelve, an' save for a han'ful o' stars the sky was as black as ink.

"Every time I came abreast o' that mango tope I watched it with all my eyes.

"By and bye, I see something moving slowly along the edge—it was goin' stealthy-like, an' I watched it for all I knew. It wasn't a walk, it wasn't a run. It was on all fours, with its nose to the groun', goin' between a creep and a crawl, its legs gathered up under it; like no hanimal as I ever see, in field or forest.

"'You're a rum un,' says I, 'whatever breed you belong to: an' if I on'y had the loan o' the Captain's glass for one five minutes, I guess I'd put a name to your old carkiss, and maybe a bullet thro' your black old hide.'

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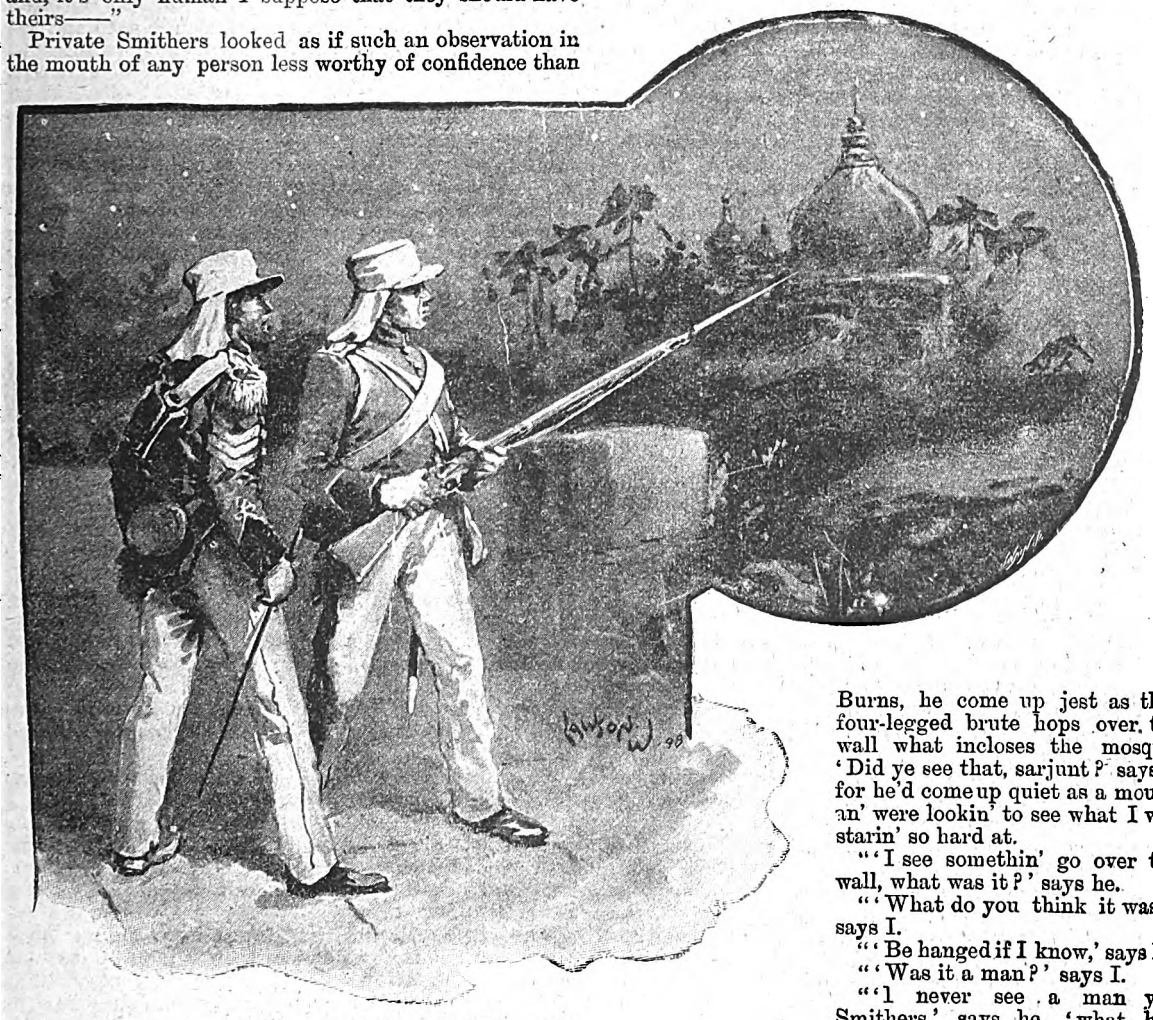
"I minds, sir, all of a suddent, what Cun'nel Barkley said after the scrimmage at Gaili. 'Them rascals,' says he, 'have got somebody who's supplyin' 'em with information. They couldn't ha' gone straight for the key o' the whole position by 'appy haccident.' You remember, sir?"

"Yes," said Dowsett, "I remember. There's no doubt information is conveyed. We've got our spies: and, it's only human I suppose that they should have theirs——"

Private Smithers looked as if such an observation in the mouth of any person less worthy of confidence than Captain Dowsett would have brought down upon the head of the unfortunate offender a perfect avalanche of barrack-room expletives and stable-yard objurgations.



"'Did ye see that, sarjunt?' says I."

"And that we," continued the Captain, catching sight of Smithers' face and amused at the look of supreme disgust that was plainly expressed there, "that we should catch them and hand them over to the tender mercies of the Military Commission. So you imagine this unclassified quadruped to be a spy—eh?"

For the moment, Private Smithers was brought up "all standing." His own vocabulary was limited. The unfamiliar words made use of by his officer in describing the "hanimal," sounded in his ears uncommonly like laughing at *him*; and not being quite able to gather their exact meaning, he was dumb.

The Captain came to his man's assistance.

"And this time of sighting him, you spoke to the sergeant?"

"Yus, sir," said Smithers. The question started him again on the main track of his narrative. "Sarjunt Burns, he come up jest as that four-legged brute hops over the wall what incloses the mosque. 'Did ye see that, sarjunt?' says I, for he'd come up quiet as a mouse, an' were lookin' to see what I was starin' so hard at.

"'I see somethin' go over the wall, what was it?' says he.

"'What do you think it was?' says I.

"'Be hanged if I know,' says he.

"'Was it a man?' says I.

"'I never see a man yet, Smithers,' says he, 'what had four legs to his share, and that brute, I'll swear had got four of 'em, an' a tail as long as a cow's behind 'em.'

"'It come out o' that mango tope,' says I, 'went all along there by the fringe o' trees, slunk thro' the high crop, shuffled across the bit o' scrub yonder; then popp'd over the wall, slipped roun' the side o' the mosque and went down by the bamboo huts to the canal.'

"'Gone for a drink, p'raps,' says the sarjunt. 'Drink be hanged,' says I.

"'Jack Pandi ho'ds all that groun' over there, don't he? He's in the villages on the canal, ain't he? How came he to go straight for our right centre at Gaili? That four-legged beggar give 'im the tip. How else, eh?'

"'There ain't no beasts in that mango tope that we

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knows of, sarjunt, is there? An' beasts, I reckin, can't do with on'y one drink a week mor'n men.'

"'This ain't the fust time I've seen this 'ere beast,' says I. 'I didn't make any report, no. 'Cos why? Well, you see, I'd on'y got half a tale to tell, an' the ripple o' laughter isn't a pleasant soun' to hear when the laugh's agin yerself, sarjunt. What do you think?'

"'He come out o' the mango tope—this brute, beast or devil—two nights before gaili; and went thro' jest the same performance then, that he's gone thro' now; an' tho' I watched till me eyes fair stood out o' me head wi' strainin', I couldn't make up my mind what name to give him. I couldn't get a fair look at him no-how, any more than I've done to-night.'

"'But I'll bet he ain't one o' the beasts what went into the Ark—leastways not on four legs. None o' Noah's beasts would ha' been so mighty par'ticlar abart keepin' his carkiss close in the shadder, or so uncommon careful to choose the darkest hour o' night, the nearest spot to the garden wall, an' jest the very place to come out on, where he's least exposed to observation from the picket. It's only from this one point,' says I, 'as we're standin' on, sarjunt, that you can see both the corner of the grove and the wall of the mosque; an' it's bad seein' at the best in this light.'

"'I b'lieve you're right, Smithers,' says Sarjunt Burns. 'He didn't jump like a beast, did he now?"

"'No,' says I, 'not like a nat'ral sort o' beast. An' he didn't jump like a man either. These black scum keep all sorts o' gods an devils in their heathen temples. Why shouldn't it be some monstrosity without a name, eh? One o' Satan's own fathering, you understan'.'

"'I don't know why it shouldn't,' says he, 'but I'll speak to the Captain.'

"Yes," interjected that officer, who, having got all the facts he wanted, was anxious to close his report, "and I asked you to report to me, Smithers, if you saw the beast again."

"Yus, sir."

"And you have seen him again?"

"Yus, sir."

Smithers, thankful the "yarning" was over, answered the direct questions of his captain with military brevity.

"But you can't say now, positively, what it is?"

"No, sir. 'Taint a beast as was ever born in a jungle."

"The same actions were repeated on this occasion as on the former?"

"There was no difference, sir, as I could see. He always appears and vanishes at the same points. I never see anythin' of him after he whips roun' the side o' that old mosque. He never comes back, sir—after he's had his drink," added Private Smithers slily.

Captain Dowsett laughed.

"You may go now, but I'll come and keep watch with you at the battery to-night."

"An' see nothin' for your pains," muttered Smithers to himself, as he left the captain's tent. "That devil's dog don't venture out of his hole, wherever he hides, any too often, I reckon. He ain't gone across the canal for nothin' this time, I guess.

"Them Pandis have been a deuced sight too quiet, since we give 'em pepper at Gaili not to mean mischief. There's trouble a brewin'—an' be hanged to 'em, more widders, an' orphins in the old country.

"Praise the Lord, Bob Smithers, that ye're not a married man."

II.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon of the 15th of January, 1858.

Captain Dowsett was enjoying a cigar. He had watched with Private Smithers at the unfinished battery on the Cawnpoor road every night for best part of a week; but, as Smithers had anticipated, without being gratified with a sight of "the beast."

He had briefly noticed the matter in his daily report after his interview with his man, and Colonel Berkeley had brought it before the General; but nothing had followed, and the Captain was very much inclined to think that the Indian night and Smithers' imagination were responsible for the apparition.

At that very moment an Englishman—a member of the Uncovenanted Service—disguised as a native swashbuckler; wearing tight silk trousers, tight fitting muslin shirt and short silk jacket of brilliant yellow, his face stained with lamp black and oil, and his feet encased in scarlet slippers with curled uppers and pointed toes was detailing to Sir James Outram and Colonel Berkeley the exact position of affairs in the city.

So closely in his dress and appearance did he resemble one of the *Budmashis*, whose garb he had adopted, that he was fired on twice by the picket before he got safely inside the British lines and declared himself. He had run the double risk of discovery by the rebels and death from the bullet of an English sentry.

He brought word that for the past fortnight Ahmad Shah, the famous Moulvie of Faizabad had been preaching a holy war against the English, and working up the rebels, both Hindoostanis and Mussulmans, to a pitch of fanatical frenzy by declaring that the god Hanumán had visited the city and disclosed to the Chief Brúhmin the weakness of the British position.

There was, said the Moulvie, over a hundred thousand armed men in Lucknow and less than four thousand white faces outside; and of these, five hundred had been detached to convoy supplies on the way from Cawnpore.

Sir James looked at Colonel Berkeley and the Colonel looked back at Sir James. There was no need for speech.

The look they exchanged said plain as spoken words: "Someone is playing traitor."

Hanúmán, so ran the narrative delivered by the speaker, had directed the attack to be made between the 12th and 16th of the month. They were favourable days, and he had promised, himself, to lead his followers to the assault.

Victory, the Moulvie had urged upon the men, was certain. The new batteries were without guns, the battery near the fort was unfinished, only half a Company was on duty there; and Hanúmán would be with his people in the fight, to show them where to strike the decisive blow.

"The Moulvie," added the informant, "left the city with a considerable force on the previous night, his objective being Banni."

"Exactly," remarked the General quietly. "With intent to cut off the convoy, of whose approach he has had warning. Then he must have turned our camp, Berkeley, and taken up position on the Cawnpore Road."

"By the way, Mr. Rollinson," he continued, addressing the gay looking individual in silk jacket and cream coloured turban. "What you tell us about Hanúmán is welcome news. It clears up a little matter concerning which there's been much speculation and a good deal of

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mystery. That's the beast, Colonel, which figures in Dowsett's report," he said, turning to Colonel Berkeley. "The four legged nondescript which his man saw come out of the mango tope. The man could swear to four legs and a tail but wouldn't go beyond that," and, in spite of the serious nature of the information he had just lis ened to, Sir James laughed heartily at Smithers' description of the "hanimal."

"We must get that fellow," said he, "alive if possible; strip off his monkey's hide and see what's the true colour of his skin. But black or white, he'll get a short shrift if we lay hands on him.

"Offer a reward, Colonel, of five hundred rupees to the man who takes him, and I hope it may be Private Smithers."

III.

When darkness came down on the British camp outside Lucknow on the night of the 15th January, 1858, each man gripped his weapon tighter as he swore to bring in "Hanúmán," and made ready to answer the call whenever it should come. Eyes and ears on the strain, nerves tingling for the fight, hearts beating high and fast, brains throbbing and pulses thrilling; alive and alert to the finger tips, they peered through the darkness and listened for every sound. Few perhaps, but fit; less than four thousand in all, but every file and every rank, black as well as white—for there are black faces too amongst that gallant four thousand—animated by the single desire to avenge the ruthless slaughter of helpless women and innocent children.

The General's offer of five hundred rupees for Hanúmán, the spy who was masquerading as the monkey-god, and the chances of capturing him were discussed at every camp fire with much zest and eagerness, alternating with the equally interesting question of the particular point where the attack would be delivered.

But the night wore away and no alarm had been given.

Olpherts had gone out along the Banni Road with two guns and a detachment of horse; and subsequently the rest of the battery and the 90th regiment were sent to support him.

But at the camp profound stillness reigned.

Towards three in the morning the convoy came in with the supplies.

At eight breakfast was called. The men broke off, grumbling and disappointed. They had been kept under arms all night for nothing.

"Hanúmán," had broken faith. "His courage," said they, "had oozed out at his tail, and 500 rupees had gone with it."

Suddenly the sound of firing was heard in the direction of the uncompleted battery on the right. The picket was driven in, and with loud yells the mutineers swarmed to the entrenchments. The men rushed to arms. The rebels were in force and the fight for the battery began in grim earnest.

"Eighty-fourth, to the front," shouted Captain Dowsett, springing forward and waving his sword aloft. At the same moment catching sight of a queer figure brandishing a heavy tulwar, and urging his fellows to the attack.

"Hanúmán! Hanúmán, the spy!" he cried, pointing to the strange looking figure which was 'made up' to represent the monkey-god of Benares. "Take him men! Take him *alive!*"

The cry was taken up by Brasyer's Sikhs, it spread to Mande's Riflemen and Down's Fusiliers.

Presently the entire British right was yelling like demons possessed, "Hanúmán! Hanúmán!! Take him alive!"

The suddeness and savageness of the cry, coming as it did from so many hundreds of British throats, seemed to strike a panic into the hearts of the rebels. They wavered.

Dowsett with three companies of the 84th, and Brasyer with his detachment of loyal Sikhs, held the post of honour. Eagerly watching for chances, and as eagerly supported by their fellows, they saw the opportunity and embraced it.

In a very few minutes the rebels were driven from the entrenchments. The battery they held longer. Finding however, that they were making no progress on the left which had been attacked simultaneously with the right they began to retire.

Up to this point, "Hanúmán" had managed to "cheat the devil," but now a desperate attempt was made to capture him.

It became a struggle between Brasyer's Sikhs and the men of the 84th. With these it was not simply a question of rupees. They felt their honour touched. The spy belonged to their man; and the 84th determined not to be robbed of what was their lawful prey.

The rebels on their part, stuck bravely to their monkey-god or his representative, and lost heavily for their allegiance. To them, ignorant of the order of the British General, the fact that "Hanúmán" remained unharmed amidst the hail of balls and rain of blows was proof convincing of his divinity. So they fell where they stood, and their bodies made a wall round Hanúmán.

But the end came at last.

"Smithers! Where's Smithers?" shouted Captain Dowsett.

The rebels were in full retreat. The Queen's colours were waving above the battery, and a queer object was squatting on the ground surrounded by a crowd of curious white faces.

Smithers had gone down only a minute before, with a sabre cut across the forehead. But the rivalry was generous.

Not a man there, but felt that the honour of capture belonged fairly to Bob Smithers. It was he who started the "hare," and had stuck to his story through joke and jest, even when the captain seemed inclined to desert him.

They helped him to his feet, bound his head round with a handkerchief and led him to the spot where the spy cowered against the low parapet. There, Private Smithers formally handed over "Hanúmán" to the custody of Captain Dowsett.

The man was a native officer, a member of the Order of British India, and in the enjoyment of a pension from the British Government. He was blown away from a gun the same evening.

The five hundred rupees were divided between Smithers and the two men who were the actual captors, the money carrying a sergeant's stripes in the one case, and a corporal's in the other.

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The Tell-Tale Handkerchief.

Philip Waring walked along with a quick, nervous tread. His mouth was set determinedly, and a deep flush of red dyed each cheek. Philip had a guilty feeling that everyone he passed knew that his engagement with Gladys Lawton was broken, and that there reposed in his left-hand pocket, to be returned to their owner, one dozen little notes on heavy white paper, monogram G.L., and in his right-hand pocket a diamond scarf pin and six dainty handkerchiefs, with fluffy boarders, essentially feminine. Why Philip defied custom in returning these articles in person the little god of Love alone knows.

A far more imposing array of gifts and love tokens was being collected at the other end of the line, for Phil was a generous soul, and his lady-love most chary of her favours. Letter writing she detested, and the answers to his daily notes were, to his disgust, few and far between. As to the handkerchiefs—thereby hangs a tale, for Gladys was one of those most unfortunate beings—a girl without a pocket—and could be traced anywhere by the dainty squares of cambric and lace she left behind her.

Phil's hand involuntarily tightened over the packet which aroused such bitter-sweet remembrances. One of these dainty articles he pilfered the day they became engaged, and was sacred in Phil's sight, for it had wiped away two happy tears from Gladys' big blue eyes. Another had been put in his pocket for safe keeping one evening, as they were going to see a famous tragedian.

"Keep it for me Phil, for I know I shall cry," said Gladys, fully conscious of her weaknesses.

It was not needed, for the play proved more glad than sad, and Philip added the bit of cambric to his rapidly-growing collection.

Another of Phil's souvenirs had been used one happy night to bandage a finger he had bruised in raising a window.

He smiled to himself as he remembered how many times he had heard an agonised whisper: "Please lend me your handkerchief, Phil; I can't think what has become of mine." This common occurrence had caused Phil, in making his toilet, to invariably add one extra for Gladys and her emergencies.

Phil heaved a sigh that would have been a credit to the stagiest lover, and his honest heart thumped vigorously as he walked up the steps of Mrs. Lawton's house.

"Ah, well, Gladys is the only girl in the world for me, but our first quarrel is to be our last, for she does not care for me, that's evident, fool that I was!"

And he pulled the bell so savagely that Polly, the maid, fairly flew to the door. Phil's eyes dropped as he met the beaming gaze of the maid. Polly, who had opened the door so sympathisingly through all the stages of his courtship; she, at least, would be sorry there was to be no wedding, and Phil's voice faltered a trifle as he asked for Miss Lawton.

"She is in her boudoir, sir," Polly said in her usual encouraging tones.

Phil hesitated to enter her private sanctum, where Gladys received only her intimate friends. He felt that it would be a hard matter to end his engagement in that room.

"I think I will wait in here," he said, going towards the drawing-room.

"Oh, sir, Mrs. Lawton has some callers in there!" said Polly, and led the way to the sacred precincts so familiar to him of late. No one was there, and Waring sat down in a remote corner, feeling ill at ease with these surroundings.

It was a quaint apartment, so full of Gladys' fads and fancies that you felt that you had been taken into her confidence the moment you entered the room. Miniature gardens grew in the windows, the glass bowl on the table was overflowing with roses, and dainty bric-à-brac of every description, such as girls love, were lavishly scattered everywhere.

A fantastic little clock ticked away merrily on the mantle-piece. It had never been known to tell the right time, and Philip had learnt to love it for its happy faculty of insisting it was only ten o'clock, when well-regulated timepieces were mildly hinting it was nearly twelve.

Gladys was studying Greek history and sculpture, and the usual pictures in the room had been removed to give place to her attic treasures. The Parthenon had the place of honour over the piano, and the gods and goddesses were assembled on the walls in almost as great numbers as in the days of old when they had gathered on Mount Olympus.

Phil grew uneasy as a flood of associations rolled over him, and he moved restlessly about. There on the desk was that mummy hand paper-weight which old Marsden had sent to Gladys at Christmas. How jealous he had been of Marsden for the pleasure his present had given! He remembered how cuttingly he had remarked that it was just like his meanness to offer her some other fellow's hand!

On the table was the novel they had been reading together. Phil had used his scarf-pin as a book-mark, and it had been left undisturbed.

Glancing up at the chandelier above his head, he remembered how, that last Christmas eve, it had been adorned with mistletoe, and, as he had stood in this same spot, Gladys—shy, reserved, undemonstrative Gladys—had softly stolen up behind him, and actually——

Phil shook himself impatiently, put his hands in his pockets, and turned towards the window. Yes, Gladys had evidently just left the room—fled, he supposed, when she heard his voice. Drawn up in front of the open window was her favourite lounge-chair, in which she curled herself comfortably, like a cat.

In the depths of the chair a small white object attracted Phil's attention. Mechanically, from pure force of habit, he stooped to pick it up, and a wretched little specimen of a handkerchief it was. It looked as if Telemachus had wept abundantly upon it, and Niobe added her ceaseless tears. It was as damp as a cobweb left out overnight in the dew.

A glad light came into Phil's eyes. Gladys crying—Gladys unhappy! Rapturous thought—she must care for him, after all. Philip drew a long breath that sounded like a sob. There was a light step on the stair, a rustle of drapery in the hall, and she entered.

"Gladys," said Phil, pocketing the tell-tale treasure, "I came to tell you—how much I love you!"

L. P. Wilson.

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Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskda e's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

CHAPTER III.

The Scene in the House.

Early the following morning it was known throughout London that something unusual was happening.

The lynx-eyed chroniclers of Ministerial movements brought to Fleet Street the intelligence that the Foreign Office had been thrown into unwonted commotion, as soon as it was opened, by the arrival from Paris of a young officer who sent in an urgent demand to see Lord Salisbury or the Under-Secretary.

The Prime Minister was away, but after the messenger had been closeted with the Under-Secretary for ten minutes, a telegram was dispatched to Hatfield, and special communications were sent to the residences of all the Cabinet Ministers summoning them to an immediate meeting. Meanwhile, the Under-Secretary had driven over to the War Office, where, in a short time, he was in close conference with Lord Lansdowne, the Duke of Devonshire, and the Commander-in-Chief.

Wild rumours of every description were soon rife in the city, but the mood of the p blic generally, was one of incredulity. In the absence of certain information it was felt that the importance of these incidents had been unduly exaggerated.

Never had the political horizon been more serene, or the sense of public security more strong. Still, curiosity was sufficiently roused to draw a large number of spectators to the assembling of the House of Commons at midday.

But the aspect of the House was not one calculated to allay anxiety. Its members, as if constrained by a common impulse, had gathered from far and near in full numbers. There was no vestige of the carelessness which is generally to be discerned on days usually set apart for private business. Scattered about the precincts of the House in groups, they were earnestly discussing the occurrences of the morning, oppressed with vague forebodings that presaged a crisis.

Within the Chamber itself the scene was still less reassuring. The front Ministerial bench was absolutely unoccupied, and none but lieutenants kept watch and ward. Even the Opposition leaders were missing, save in two instances, and it was noticed with surprise and consternation that these gentlemen were summoned away almost as soon as they arrived. Excitement grew to a high pitch of tension when it was learnt that a joint meeting of party leaders was then being held in the apartments of the Leader of the House, and that a courier had been dispatched by special train to Windsor.

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Alone, amid all this bewilderment, one small body of men sat, grim and unmoved, as if disturbed by no passions but their own, and with minds firm set upon a common purpose. It was the Irish party, who had been fortunate enough to secure first place in the ballot for precedence upon this day, and were seeking to convince their fellow members of the urgent importance of an Act to secure self-government for the county of Cork. Whilst the gravest statements were flying about the corridors of the House, and Liberals and Conservatives alike were thrilled with the sense of a common peril, the Irishmen did not swerve for a moment from their purpose.

The debate had commenced in an acrimonious manner; it had now become tragic. Finding no Cabinet Minister to assail, the Irish members consoled themselves by assailing each other. Mr. Healy had denounced Mr. Justin McCarthy, Mr. Sexton had denounced Mr. Healy, and Mr. Redmond had fallen on all three. The speeches disclosed a remarkable versatility in terms of abuse which reached its height when Mr. Dillon observed, amidst loud applause, that "the British Lion would have his wings clipped unless he washed his hands in the flames of repentance," and added that "Mr. Balfour had been for five years the hereditary enemy of the Irish."

Conspicuous amongst all was Dr. Tanner, whose crude and elementary style seemed born of the rude shocks of Parliamentary adversity. Twice had he sought to stretch the rules of the House as far as he might without breaking them, and twice had the Speaker called him to order and threatened to name him. The debate had already lasted three hours. Dr. Tanner had got to the length of shaking his fist under the nose of a mild and inoffensive brother who had unfortunately cheered him at the wrong moment, and the Speaker was on the point of rising to fulfil the usual painful duty of bidding him withdraw, when, from behind Mr. Gully's chair, Mr. Arthur Balfour appeared, followed by every occupant of the Treasury Bench, whilst the Opposition leaders also quietly took their places. Upon each face there was an air of gravity which not even the severest issues had hitherto called forth.

A swift movement passed over the House, and in a moment—as though its members had learnt the arrival of Ministers by intuition—every seat was occupied. Rarely had the Second Chamber been so crowded. Excitement grew when it was noticed that Lord Salisbury had entered the Peers' Gallery, and with him the Cabinet Ministers who belonged to the Upper House. There was a dead silence—the oppressive stillness that is less a calm than the momentary pause in the fury of a tempest. Dr. Tanner sat down abruptly, awed by the solemnity of the moment.

Without delay, and amidst a general hush, the Leader of the House rose to his feet. As he advanced to the table it was noticed that he had no longer the languid manner commonly ascribed to him. He stood upright, pale, stern, determined, with an air of resolute pride and the dignity befitting a supreme occasion. There was no need for him to claim, in formal language, the indulgence of the House for interrupting its proceedings on a matter of State of pressing importance. Every eye was directed to him, every ear was strained to catch his opening words.

"There devolves upon me, sir," he began, turning for a moment to the Speaker, and not without a trace of emotion in his voice, "a grave and responsible duty. I have to inform the House that a crisis has arrived more serious and more pressing than any which has hitherto occurred in the history of this country. Without warning and without just cause, whilst enjoying prosperity at home and in apparent peace with all the world, in the fulness of that content and happiness which have marked the reign of a wise and beneficient Sovereign to whom we draw still closer in loyalty and affection at a moment of common trial, we are faced with a danger which calls for all our courage and all our patriotism. Three hours ago there was placed in the hands of Her Majesty's Government a declaration of war from France and Germany."

These words, spoken slowly and distinctly, as if he felt that each syllable was a winged messenger of fate laden with woe and misery unutterable, fell upon the ears of the House in a deathlike stillness. For a moment its members seemed stunned. Mr. Balfour's statement was difficult to credit, hard to understand, and, in the solemn stillness which followed, the House seemed groping in amazement to discover the sense of the phrases they had heard, to realise the terrible import that they bore.

And then a thrill swept through the Chamber—a thrill of horror, of indignation, but not of fear. The House of Commons never looked more dignified, and impressive than when, after its first impulse of surprise, it sat rigid and impassive to hear the full story of this catastrophe.

"When I tell you, sir," continued Mr. Balfour, "that by the terms of this declaration we have not merely to anticipate the attack of two powerful enemies, but that we may expect it now, at this very moment—that, in fact, hostilities have already commenced—this House will realise that the present is not a time for lengthy explanation. It will be enough for me to say that, without previous negotiations, demands have suddenly been made of Her Majesty's Government—demands which were shameful to receive, and shameful to repeat in this House. Our enemies, whom yesterday we deemed our friends, asked nothing less than the dismemberment of the British Empire, and I need not say that it was in consequence of the immediate and scornful rejection of this ultimatum that the declarations of war, signed by the heads of the two combined nations, were handed to us. We," and here Mr. Balfour drew himself up to his full height and turned upon the House, "we needed not the formality of a conference with the Parliament of England to indignantly cast aside the terms of peace, such as they were. We knew that you stood, in equal scorn and unanimity, behind us."

He paused, and in a moment a ringing cheer went up. The House had regained its composure, if it had lost nothing of its excitement, and a wave of passionate emotion passed over it, fusing all parties into one—the party that stood behind all differences and made the English nation.

The Leader of the House then explained in greater detail, how the two Ambassadors had called upon Lord Salisbury, and how the terms they asked had been peremptorily rejected. They had then handed in the formal declarations of war, which dated from midday. Free passage from England had been demanded and granted, and the representatives of France and Germany were no longer on our shores. There was redoubled excitement when he described the prompt action of the Government.

"At such a juncture," he continued, "when England is face to face with two of the strongest nations of Europe—and Heaven grant that this be all!—it is no time for the accentuation of party differences. Two allied countries should at least be faced by a united people. We deemed we should be best showing the indomitable strength and single patriotism of our beloved land if for purposes of national defence, the line of political difference should entirely disappear. It was with this idea foremost, and, secondly, to ally with ourselves the best intellect, and resource of England, that Her Majesty's Government sent for the leaders of the Liberal Party and asked them to assist in forming a Council of National Safety.

"It is, I am aware," he went on, amid enthusiastic cheers, "an unusual course, but our danger is also unusual. It is no time to stand by the shibboleths of form or precedent. It would be almost an insult to add that such assistance was given as soon as asked, and that a Council has been formed by mutual agreement which includes all that is most wise and most experienced in English statesmanship.

"If our enemies have counted upon the acerbities of party warfare as an evidence of a disunited nation, they

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will learn, bitterly and to their cost, that the tumult of political strife can never disturb, however slightly or remotely, the deep and eternal love that we all bear alike to our native land. They will come to realise that jealousy and rivalry pass away before the dangers that threaten us, and that we stand before the foe one race, one empire, one people, one party."

Mr. Balfour sat down amid a scene of extraordinary enthusiasm. He had struck, nobly and well, the one note common to all Englishmen.

There was a moment's pause, and then Sir William Harcourt rose. His voice was broken with emotion as in brief words he thanked the Leader of the House for giving utterance with fervour so intense to the feelings of all parties. "Sir," he concluded, turning full upon the Speaker, "from this moment there is no Opposition. The very term ceases to exist in the hour that our shores are threatened by a foreign foe. The Government has no supporters more warm than those who in time of peace have been compelled by conviction to oppose its policy."

The nerves of the House were so overwrought that it was perhaps well there should have occurred something in the nature of an anti-climax. The Irish party had given no sign of the feelings that actuated them when Mr. Joseph Chamberlain rose to continue the discussion with a few incisive words. He recalled to the memory of the House some recent utterances of M. Constans in the French Senate.

"That statesman," he observed, "has not refrained from hinting at disunion on our own shores. He has plainly told us that a foreign enemy might look for help from Ireland, but"—and the right honourable gentleman glanced fixedly at the Irish benches—"he went on to say that if the French Government had to deal with similar threats of disloyalty from any essential member of the Republic, they would speedily settle insubordination by sending the ringleaders to New Caledonia."

He was continuing when, to the amazement of the House, Dr. Tanner leapt to his feet, evidently under the stress of ungovernable excitement. Advancing several steps along the floor of the House between the crowded benches of startled members and hastily unbuttoning his frock coat, he exclaimed fiercely;

"Did he say that?"

Then tearing one arm out and exposing a white shirt sleeve, he cried out to Mr. Chamberlain:

"Tell him what *I* say. Tell him that if he dares to set his dirty foot in this country I'll fight him and his bottle-holders single-handed myself!"

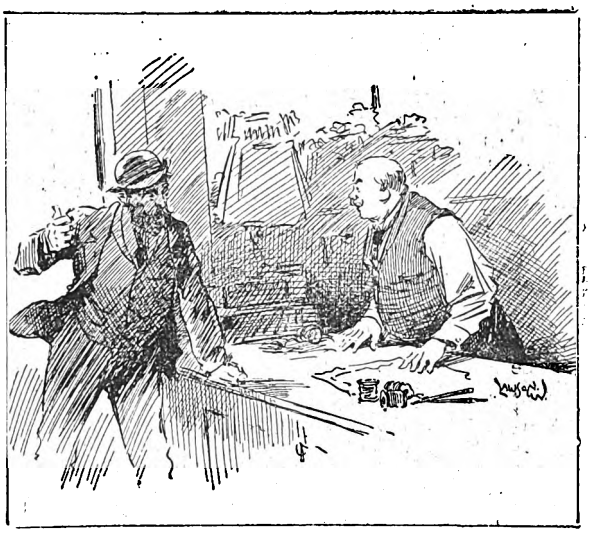
So saying, he flung off his coat into the middle of the gangway and, to the amazement of all and the consternation of those near him, squared up his fists as if he were then and there desirous of tackling M. Constans and bringing him to book in the very presence of the august Chamber.

The re-action had come. Mr. Chamberlain hastily sat down, and the House, in relief after its pent-up excitement, first shrieked with laughter and then exhausted itself in wild applause.

For the first time in his parliamentary career, Dr. Tanner had violated a strict law of the House and remained unrebuked.

It needed but the moment and it had arrived. The Irish party rose by a common impulse, and, standing upon their benches, cheered and cheered to the echo the utterances of their comrade, who, with the feelings of a hero, modestly resumed his seat, half awed by the unusual spectacle of an indulgent House. It was noted afterwards, as a significant fact, that it was Mr. Chamberlain himself who had succeeded in rousing this splendid burst of patriotism from the Irish members.

But the House quickly regained its ordinary gravity when Mr. Balfour again addressed it. He begged members to consider ways and means. They must not imagine that however great the surprise, the country was unprepared. Even at that moment the War Office was in close consultation with the Admiralty and with the authorities at the Horse Guards. He asked them, however, to pass a Bill granting



He was busy behind the counter when the strange tidings reached him.

the Government fifty million pounds for war purposes, and he suggested that the Bill might be read a third time and become law that day.

Mr. Balfour passed on, and informed the House that the Government had resolved to reduce the charges on Consols as recommended, thus freeing their hands for further loans, and had already closed the Stock Exchange to prevent a financial panic. Government brokers would be appointed for the transaction of necessary business. "As an evidence of the gravity of the situation," he added, "I may state that during the progress of this debate, I have learnt that every British cable has been cut since midday, and our enemies have only left us in telegraphic communication with the United States, as to cut the Atlantic cable would be an act of war with the American nation."

There was no need for further discussion. Within ten minutes after the reading of the brief Bill which granted the Government fifty millions, it had been passed a third time. Dr Tanner once more found himself popular by his willingness to disencumber the House of business.

"Let it not be said, sir," he declared, "that Ireland is not willing to make sacrifices at a time of peril. We will withdraw the County of Cork Self-Government Bill for six months, and in saying this, I know that the people of Cork are at my back. (Loud cheers from the Irish Benches.) We are the more ready to take this step, sir, because we see before us the prospects of a holy row worthy even of the best energies of the Irish party At such a moment, Cork is in the van" (Renewed applause.)

The House rose at five o'clock. In two hours it had received the announcement of war and had made every preparation in its power to meet the enemy. The Briton is perhaps rightly accused of being stolid. It is certain that the members of Parliament left Westminster with as much *sang froid* as if they had just given their sanction to a new railway bill, or had resolved to add a shilling to the dog-tax.

But the news had long since spread through London and been flashed to the remotest districts of the United Kingdom. The public at first received the thrilling intelligence with

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incredulity, but as their doubts were dispersed, an intense desire to be up and doing made itself felt throughout the country and in the Metropolis. Business in London was at a standstill. The streets were crowded with what, at another time, might be regarded as a mob, but was now clearly recognisable as a national gathering animated with one thought one purpose, one enthusiasm.

There needed some outlet for the high-wrought feeling that prevailed. It was fortunately provided by the statement that Her Majesty the Queen had left Windsor, and was on her way to Buckingham Palace to take up her residence in the Capital during the time of war, so as to be near her people and her Ministers.

There was a mighty rush of the excited multitude to Hyde Park, and as the Queen passed through in an open carriage, though the days were still cold, a wild, vociferous

"I'm not dead yet, lads!"

tumult of inextinguishable cheering rose from the vast throng. It was a nation voicing its own patriotism to its visible head.

When Her Majesty reached the Palace, the Mall and Buckingham Palace Road were crammed tumultuously. Distinctions of rank had faded with differences of political conviction, and, without waiting for solicitation, the Queen appeared upon the balcony leaning on the arm of her eldest son.

There she remained several minutes, firm, proud, and erect, whilst her people raised cheer after cheer to assure her of their confidence, their loyalty, and their invincible courage.

The enthusiasm of the citizens of London was no idle boast, for in that memorable hour the citizen army of England was giving its heart's blood for the defence of the country.

CHAPTER IV.

How Major Perkins Won the V.C.

At five o'clock that afternoon, Wednesday, May 3rd 1898, the chief coastguard officer at Worthing telegraphed to London, Portsmouth and Dover: "A vast fleet of ships of the line, apparently French and German, are standing in for the shore. They are now about ten miles out at sea. S.W. by S."

Half-an-hour later he wired again: "Fleet distant five miles. Advancing in four lines abreast. Six cables length between each line. Outer lines thirty-six armour-clads. Inner lines forty troopers, Messageries Maritimes and North German Lloyd steamers. Big flotilla of gunboats and torpedo boats ten miles out. Possibly one hundred. Weather calm."

At 6.15 p.m. he sent this message: "Presume this is enemy announced by telegraph from London. Fleet anchored in same formation two miles out. Troopships and liners crowded with troops. Have counted 109 smaller craft. Preparations for landing being made. What shall I do?"

To which the answer was given: "Go to telephone office. Wire is switched on to Horse Guards. Send constant advice of progress of events."

And the first message which was received by Lord Wolseley at the Horse Guards was to the following effect: "A number of flat-bottomed boats, or floats, each containing some two hundred men, have put off from the troopers; and the Volunteers are lining the beach."

The Commander-in-Chief could not help smiling as an aide-de-camp repeated the concluding words to him, but anxious lines appeared in his face as he glanced at his watch, and saw it was only five minutes past seven.

"I hope the Brighton and South-coast people have kept their words, Brabazon," he said to a staff officer who was standing near the fireplace.

"Well, sir, the traffic-manager meant what he said," was the reply. "I heard him tell the driver of the first train, which left Victoria with the Guards at 6.10, that if he got to Worthing within the hour he drew £50 to-morrow, but if he didn't he got the sack."

"What is the exact disposition at this moment?"

"Fourteen South-Western trains, each containing one thousand men, were ready at Aldershot at 5.30, waiting our telephonic orders, and they have since left at regular intervals of five minutes between each, the first starting at 6 p.m. The London, Brighton and South Coast Company are dispatching trains with regulars and volunteers from Victoria, London Bridge, and Clapham Junction as fast as they can fill them. By eight o'clock we should have ten thousand men there, by nine o'clock twenty, and in the early hours of the morning seventy, with two hundred guns."

"I think we estimated that fifty Maxims would be in position on the sea front by 7.30 p.m.?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well," said the Commander-in-Chief, "we can now look into the Commissariat and field transport arrangements. Every man has a day's cooked rations with him, but we must be prepared for developments at that particular locality, although I fail to see how the enemy can possibly effect a landing if the fleet creates a timely diversion."

At that moment the Channel Squadron, under the command of Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, was steaming east from Spithead at the rate of ten knots per hour. The Admiral's pennant was hoisted on board the *Magnificent*, whilst the other vessels under his command were the *Royal Sovereign*, *Blenheim*, *Empress of India*, *Endymion*, *Repulse*, *Resolution*, *Achilles*, and *Agamemnon*. These, with twenty-two torpedo boats and the gunboat *Speedy*, were all the available force at his disposal for immediate action, so skilfully had the enemy planned the time and manner of his attack upon our shores.

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With the exception of one, or possibly three, the most powerful ships in our Navy were in the Mediterranean, in China, in North America, in Australasia, at the Cape—anywhere on the face of the broad waters save in the English Channel. Lord Charles Beresford had received by semaphore the second of the coastguard's telegrams before he gave the signal for departure, and he knew that he had nine warships to oppose thirty-six of equal or superior class, whilst he realised that the proportion of the enemy's smaller craft to those under his command was equally appalling in the mere point of view of numbers.

But hesitation or doubt in his actions or in his heart there was none. No sooner was the fleet under way than another signal was made from the Admiral's ship, and when the words "Remember Nelson" were deciphered, even the strict discipline of the British Navy could not prevent a great cheer bursting forth from every ship in the line.

These things were noted by the anxious watchers on the shore, and when Sir Evely Wood arrived at Worthing at 7.30 p.m. to take command of the defending forces, he found a telegram awaiting him from Lord Wolseley to inform him that naval assistance might be expected shortly after eleven o'clock. The Admiralty officials who made this calculation could not, of course, know what Lord Charles Beresford's exact plans were, but of one thing they were quite certain—he would attack the enemy as soon as ever he could reach them.

When the combined French and German fleets first hove in sight, the quiet little town of Worthing was naturally thrown into a state of intense excitement. The head constable informed the Mayor, and the Mayor sought the advice of the Town Clerk, who recommended that the fire-bell should be rung. This was promptly done, with the result that in ten minutes every soul in Worthing knew that the town was likely to be bombarded forthwith. The man in charge of the fire-engine got steam up, evidently labouring under the impression that he must do something—and in the result he had his salary increased for the act, as the first shell from the enemy's flag-ship struck and fired the Town Hall, which must inevitably have been burnt down were it not for the prompt arrival of the engine.

The local volunteers, to the number of 211, spontaneously gathered with their arms and accoutrements in the principal thoroughfare, and the resident Major, a most worthy and stout linendraper, placed himself at their head, mounted upon a horse that served admirably for the dual purpose of parade and parcels delivery.

He was busy behind his counter when the strange tidings of imminent invasion reached him. His cheek blanched and his heart beat tumultuously when he rushed upstairs to tell his wife, and that good lady suggested the immediate closing of the shop and a hasty retreat to her father's residence in the country.

But the Major was stout of heart as of body. In a state of high nervous exaltation he sought for his sword and cross belts, saying, as he donned them: "No, Margaret; my place is here. It will be a poor day for England when the first volunteer officer who is called upon to do his duty flinches from the consequences. "Kiss me, my dear. I cannot bear to meet the children, but, God willing, we will all come together again in peace and happiness." And he hurried forth to see to the secure girthing of his horse.

Fortunately there was a very large supply of ammunition on hand with the sergeant-instructor, as the corps was engaged upon its annual target practice, and the men rapidly stuffed their pockets with cartridges until they had over one hundred rounds each.

They then fell in, in two companies, and the Major, Perkins by name, thought it his duty to make a speech, as the circumstances were such as did not, to his knowledge, come within the purview of the Volunteer Regulations.

"Comrades," he said, "our worthy Mayor has informed me that war has been declared against us by France and Germany, and we now know that Worthing has been singled out for attack. Whoa, boy, whoa then," for a shell screamed through the air, passed into the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, and burst there with a terrific report, and the Major's mount was tolerably fresh, as Saturday was his hardest day. The Major managed to retain his sword, observing *sotto voce*: "I never *can* sit a horse with a drawn sword in my hand," and continued aloud, "these Frenchmen and Germans are here in their hundreds of thousands, and they do not demand ransom from Worthing, but seek to destroy our town at once. They are worse than highway robbers, as they ask for both our money and our lives. It is our duty, comrades, to resist them to death." (Loud cheers from the crowd, an interlude which the drill instructor utilised to squint down the front rank of one company to see if the dressing was all right). "I am not much good at tactics myself," went on Major Perkins, "but I know what to do here. We must line the shore and let no foreigner set a foot on English soil until he steps over our dead bodies. Companies, form fours—left. By your right, quick march!"

The enemy dropped like swathes of grass.

Arrived on the Marine Parade, the Major and his little host found that six of the enemy's battleships had approached to within a mile and a half of low water mark. They were on the western side of the pier, which they scrupulously refrained from damaging by their subsequent fire, as they expected to find it extremely useful when the active work of disembarkation began. An occasional shot was leisurely fired at the town, not so much by way of serious bombardment as to demonstrate that they were in earnest and would stand no nonsense.

The plan of the allies was now quite apparent. It was their intention to rapidly land sufficient troops and machine guns to hold the outlying portions of Worthing against any possible counter demonstration by the British, until three complete army corps, numbering 150,000 men all told, were concentrated in the locality. This number of troops actually accompanied the expedition.

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A murderous fire of shrapnel and small arms rained upon the defenders.

They carried a fortnight's store with them, and by the time a forward movement on London could be undertaken, the French and German commanders estimated that reinforcements of three times the number of the expeditionary force would be at hand, whilst their fighting power would be enormously enhanced by a vast quantity of field ordnance.

Major Perkins extended his men on the beach in single rank with two paces interval. He told them to lie down, to sight their rifles at 400 yards, to aim low, and to concentrate their fire, by order of their section commanders, on particular boats. These dispositions were hardly made before half-a-dozen launches appeared from the seaward side of the six warships, and rapidly steamed, or were rowed, towards the shore, in such fashion as led the onlookers to believe that the occupants expected no resistance.

They were soon b tterly undeceived. Volunteers are, as a rule, excellent marksmen, and bullets poured into the advancing boats at such a rate that the commander of the enemy's advance guard thought it best to retire until the sea front had been vigorously shelled by the batt eships.

At this momentary repulse of the enemy the little defending force set up a great yell of delight, and the stout Major rode up and down the shingle inciting his men to keep up the reputation of Worthing, as though the quiet little watering-place was accustomed to similar murderous proceedings as part of the season's routine.

So far, not an Englishman had been injured, as the fire from the troops in the floats had been uncertain and ineffectual. But now the game was to assume a more desperate character. A perfect tornado of shells swept the sea-front, wrecking every house facing the Channel, and killing and wounding a great number of people of all ages and both sexes, whose curiosity had caused them to watch the progress of events rather than seek safety in flight.

Special attempts were made by the enemy to clear the beach of the unexpected line of defence which had proved its powers so unpleasantly, but it was far from easy to hit men lying down at the water's edge, and the only real living target was the Major on his horse. Both man and animal were in a perfect frenzy of excitement, and appeared to have charmed lives. More than once a time-fuse shrapnel burst right in front of them, but the zone of fire covered by the missiles in the shell left the space round them inviolate, and although appealed to by his subordinate officers to dismount, the Major would not listen to the suggestion.

From his elevated position he could see that a very much larger number of flat-bottomed boats and launches were now gathered behind the ironclads, and when the cannonading ceased, something like 2,000 troops were swiftly ferried towards the shore, with the evident determination to make good their landing this time. Whilst a few of the flotilla made straight for the beach the majority headed towards the pier, and the *feu d'enfer* kept up between the belligerents on the sea-shore prevented the defenders from noting the undisturbed occupation of the pier-head by the enemy.

A volley from the leading boat brought down Major Perkins and his charger, but the Major arose from a cloud of dust, drew his sword, and shrieked in a shrill falsetto, for his natural voice had gone long since: "I'm not dead yet, lads. Give it to 'em."

But the end was seemingly close at hand.

More than half of the Worthing volunteers were killed or wounded, and the survivors were now firing blindly and ineffectively, being mad with the battle fever and dazed with the singing of bullets and the smash of the projectiles against the stones on the beach.

Already some hundreds of Frenchmen had gained the platform of the pier and were forming up to advance into the town, whilst the leading launch was within a few feet of ramming her nose into the gravel beach, when the Major devoted all his remaining energies to one last yell:

"Fix bayonets! Centre cl se! Double!" and he jumped into the surf, brandishing his sword like a maniac. A big German officer leapt from the bow of the boat to meet him, but his heel turned on an uneven boulder, his lunge missed, and the Major hit him such a hearty whack with the flat of his sword that the German fell stunned into the sea, and was quietly but speedily drowned.

But now a fierce roar of many voices came from behind the straggling group of volunteers. Ere anyone had realised what was happening, two companies of the Grenadiers Guards flung themselves into three of the enemy's launches and gutted them with the bayonet as terriers might clear out rats under like conditions.

Two more companies deployed to left and right of the pier on the Marine Parade, and poured a hailstorm of lead into the advancing French column and their comrades in the boats, and, when the ornamental ironwork gates at the entrance of the pier had been smashed down, a couple of Maxims were run into position, with the result that the enemy dropped like swathes of grass before the sweep of a scythe.

A second time had the attack failed, utterly and disastrously.

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Sir Evelyn Wood had now arrived and assumed control of affairs. The 1st Battalion of the Grenadier Guards had been conveyed from Victoria to Worthing, fifty-nine and a half miles, in fifty-eight minutes, and one of the Tommies accurately expressed the feelings of himself and his comrades when he said subsequently that he would sooner "stand and be blazed at for a month of Sundays by forty thousand bloomin' Frenchmen than do that little trip again."

The driver of the train described the journey as "a toss up between fifty quid and Kingdom Come," while the guard, a sober, steady man, was responsible for the statement that he only once in his life wished he was drunk—"when we was crossin' them facin' points at Keymer Junction."

Five minutes later the General and staff, with the 4th Battalion of the King's Royal Rifle Corps, better known as the 60th, reached the station from Aldershot. Sir Evelyn Wood, by galloping bare-backed on a cab-horse to the parade, gained the scene of action in time to witness Major Perkins' last gallant attempt to hurl back the tide of invasion.

During the momentary lull that followed the retreat of the second flotilla, he sent for the Major and said: "If we are both alive to-morrow I shall recommend you for the Victoria Cross, and shall ask the Commander-in-Chief to gazette you as a full Colonel in her Majesty's regular forces. You have behaved most gallantly."

But Perkins could make no answer. He had quite lost his voice. He bowed respectfully, and two great tears coursed down his cheeks.

Twelve-pounders, machine guns, and relays of troops were now pouring through the town from the station, and night had commenced to close in. It took the discomforted enemy some time to gain the shelter of the warship's guns, and the General seized the welcome respite to plant the Maxims and field artillery on the shingle, whilst he ordered the lamps on the parade to be lighted in order to mislead the enemy's gunners. Electric searchlights lit up the scene from the ironclads, many buildings in the town were in flames, and when the shell-fire recommenced it was seen that the men-of-war had widened their intervals considerably in order to concentrate their fire-zone, and several gunboats had approached much nearer the shore than the big ships dared to venture, pouring in a perfectly demoniacal hail of lead.

Considering its volume and intensity, it did not do such wholesale damage to the defenders as might have been expected. The low position of our artillery and Maxims, added to the uncertainty of the electric beams, brilliant though they were, served to disconcert the aim of the gunners, who were themselves the object of a terrific fire belching forth from a very wide expanse of the seashore.

Our losses were heavy, but they were more than made up by the constant accessions of strength in guns, men, and ammunition. The station-master afterwards received a decoration from the Queen for the masterly way in which he kept his station clear of empty trains, using both platforms and goods sidings for debarkation, and returning the empties along the up and down lines respectively towards Brighton and Goring.

At ten o'clock another attempt to effect a landing was made, but the reception given was so warm that the attacking boats were never closer than three hundred yards from the beach. Sir Evelyn Wood took advantage of the retreating tide to move his guns and men lower down and thus again upset the enemy's range.

This third failure induced a further change of tactics on the part of the combined squadron. The fire on both sides slackened off until near eleven o'clock, when the ball was again opened by twenty ironclads, and something like sixty gunboats and torpedo boats. The smaller craft boldly steamed in until they were barely two cables' length from the shore, and forthwith a murderous fire of shrapnel and small arms rained upon the defenders. The reply on our side was undaunted, but it naturally became more uncertain. Every second man in the fighting line was hit in a few minutes, guns were dismounted, Maxims smashed into fragments, and stones and *débris* hurled in showers over the whole of the Parade.

The General did not dare to weaken his extended front by withdrawing the men to seek shelter, as it was evident that a tremendous attack would shortly be delivered from the numerous flotilla of boats now gathering behind the vessels.

Fiercer and fiercer grew the fusillade, shells hurled through the air screaming like lost spirits, bullets clanged in masses against the ruined houses, and some ten thousand troops crowded into an innumerable company of boats of all shapes and sizes, were about to make a determined dash for the shore, when a sudden outburst of big guns from the sea, a series of tremendous crashes and explosions, and a rapid diversion of the electric search lights towards the south, caused an immediate cessation of fire from both parties.

The British Fleet had arrived upon the scene.

(To be continued.)

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The Evening Bell.

HARK! Do you hear that bell? It is *las animas*, the bell of souls. Every evening it rings, and it tears my soul! You see this white hair, these worn features? They have not been blanched and chiselled by age, for I am not yet old. They are the hieroglyphics of a terror, an agony too profound for words. Yet listen. I will try to tell you.

A little time ago, I was a happy wife and mother. We lived near Aguasdulces.

We had a little land, and we were the parents of three children, two fine boys and a girl—my darling, beautiful fifteen-year-old Teresita. Yes, we were very happy.

Then came this lamentable rebellion. My husband used to shake his head as he sat smoking in the verandah in the evening, and say:

"Never will I raise my hand against the king."

We heard the echo of the clash of arms from afar. We knew of plantations devastated and villages laid waste, but we had little fear in our neutral ground.

One day some of the negroes came running up, excitedly, crying out that a detachment of troops had suddenly appeared before the mill belonging to Don Fulgencio Casilda, and were attacking it.

Later, the steward of the estate, followed by several negroes, appeared at our door. They were wild with fright. They said the troops had murdered the señores and ransacked the place. They had destroyed everything they could lay hands upon, and were now setting fire to the fields and buildings.

My husband gave them food, but he entreated them to fly farther up the hills lest the presence of our premises should bring us into danger, and they did so. A panic of terror was upon me. I entreated my husband to take our children and fly to the forests, but he refused.

The event bore out my apprehensions. About dark a small party of cavalry appeared coming up the road towards our house. My husband went out with extended hands to greet them. He was met by a line of lifted rifle muzzles.

"Do not shoot!" he cried out. "I am a neutral!"

The only answer was a crackling volley. Without a cry he fell forward upon his face.

The next moments are a hideous confusion in my mind. Moved with the instinct for concealment—flight was now impossible—I hurried my children in to a small rear chamber and locked the door. There we cowered, trembling.

Soon there was a knocking at the door and a cry of "Open!" Then, as we did not stir, the lock was burst in, and the captain, with several men, jumped into the apartment.

"*Hola!*" he shouted grimly. "Some more rebels! Give them their medicine too."

I had shrunk into the farthest corner, but as I saw the flash of bayonets over my little boys' heads I sprang forward screaming:

"Would you slay my innocent children?"

The captain faced me with a brutal laugh He was about to address me insultingly when he caught sight of Teresita cowering behind me.

"*Caramba!* What is this? Bring that creature out to the light. She is a veritable houri. Let her alone. She is for me. As for the old one——" He shrugged his shoulders.

But Teresita sprang suddenly and clasped me about the neck.

"If you kill mamma you will have to kill me first."

"Oh, well, never mind," he retorted with a villainous laugh, "let them be. There is plenty of time. Just now I am dying of hunger. See what there is to be found to eat in this miserable hole."

They dragged my boys away, and I never saw them again.

They left us for a brief space, but posted a sentry outside. We could hear his measured pacing to and fro. For a time terror deprived me of all power of thought, but as the moments passed a ray of hope sprang up within me.

We could hear the shouts of the men in the kitchen, and knew they were eating and carousing. The pacing of the sentry had ceased, and instead we heard a raucous noise, by which we divined that he might have fallen asleep. Furthermore, the night had fallen, and it had grown very dark.

There was a window in our room which looked upon a little back yard by the stables. Here all was quiet. Moving with the footfalls of cats, we took the sheets from the bed, knotted them together and secured one end to a ring in the window jam used for an awning.

Teresita slipped out first and slid down. Then I climbed out, I know not how, and followed her.

Up at the back of the plantation there was a grove, the edge, in fact, of a little forest which covered the top of the ridge. We gained this, and when we found ourselves among the tree trunks, we dared to breathe once more. There was an obscure little path over the ridge into the valley beyond, and, striking this presently, we travelled it all night.

Daybreak found us on the farther edge, footsore, exhausted—for women in Cuba are no walkers—but with hearts full of thankfulness for our comparative safety. Below us we could see occasional houses and the dusty trail of a road winding amid the verdure. A sudden idea came to me.

"We will go to San Niceto, my darling," I said. "Your father has an old uncle there, a tobacconist. He will help us."

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Teresita was softly crying.

We ate some bananas which were growing wild in that place, and then we lay down among the trees to sleep. Sleep greatly refreshed us, and in the evening we started once more, and thus we went down into San Niceto.

The town was full of soldiers, which much disquieted me, but I need not have been alarmed, for we were both so worn, so dirty, and so tattered that few would have looked at us twice.

We were, however, taken before the authorities, and required to give an account of ourselves. I dared not tell my true story, but represented myself as a widow living beyond the hills who had come to the town to visit an uncle, and they let us go.

But a fresh disappointment awaited us. When we hunted up my husband's uncle, the tobacconist, we found he was dead. Señora Antonia, the old woman who had acted as his housekeeper, told us that he had been carried off a short time before very suddenly by a pneumonia. She was a very talkative, wheedling, sympathetic old soul, and presently offered us a room. As we knew not where to go we took it.

I tried to obtain work, but there was little to be had. I had a few poor little rings, which I sold for a trifle, and we managed to exist.

Señora Antonia was very sociable—too sociable, indeed—for she dropped in frequently for a chat, and was never weary of asking us questions. I only learnt too late that all she cared for was money.

The town was always stirring with soldiers coming and going, full of noise and insolent ways. I kept my Teresita at home by day, and only allowed her to go out of an evening with me.

One day when I was not feeling well, I let her go with old Señora Antonia. The old woman professed a great friendship for my child and was always petting and cajoling her. I do not know why I was so foolish as to trust her, but after the anguish and weariness we had suffered I was glad to lean a little upon this friendship, the only one offered me.

Teresita returned from church excited and distraught.

"*Mamaita*!" she exclaimed, "I have seen him!"

"Him? Who?"

"That man, that devil, the captain who drove us from our home."

My heart seemed to stand still.

"Are you sure?" I questioned.

"Oh, yes. Sure! I felt his bold, bad eyes upon me as we were passing through the door, and I ran, ran, all the way home."

"You will stay at home night and day," I declared. I could not sleep at all that night. A thousand apprehensions tormented me.

Very early the next morning I went down to the market to get some vegetables. As I entered I beheld a man far off talking with a woman, and I perceived the glitter of money which passed between them. The woman was our hostess, Señora Antonia; the man was the big Captain.

Sick at heart, almost staggering, I crept home to my child, and clasping her to me, wept over her. We spent the day devising plans of flight, but none was feasible.

Several times we heard Señora Antonia rap at the door, but we made no reply, and she went away. Late in the evening she came again.

"Open, dear Señora," she said, coaxingly. "I have here a beautiful supper for the child."

Hunger is a great compeller. My child was exhausted with agitation and want of food, and so was I. I crept to the door and opened it a crack.

Instantly it was pushed wide, and two soldiers roughly entered. One of them seized me, clapped a hand over my mouth to smother my screams, while the other dragged my child hastily away.

I cannot remember clearly what followed. I struggled, I bit, I tore at my tormentor, but he overcame me, bound and gagged me, and, leaving me prone, quitted the room, locking the door behind him. My bonds were not tight, and after a time I loosened them sufficiently to crawl to the door and beat upon it with my hands, calling incessantly upon my child and upon Señora Antonia.

I must have sunk down at last senseless, for the next I knew I was lying upon my bed and Señora Antonia was pouring something down my throat. I used my first consciousness to revile and to drive her from me.

All day I lay upon that couch, exhausted and benumbed. I slept much, too, for my lacerated spirit seemed wrenched to a point where a sort of coma supervenes. I seemed to feel nothing acutely, but only hoped I might soon die.

Later I arose and ate a little food, for I began to reflect that I must rouse myself to go and find my child, although I knew not where. Somehow a little fresh courage came to me, and I lay down more easily to sleep.

In the night I was roused by someone pushing open the door and rushing into the apartment. The moon, which was streaming in through the window, revealed the figure of my child.

"Teresita!" I exclaimed, mad with joy, and flung myself upon her, but she pushed me frantically away.

"Do not touch me!" she gasped in hoarse, strange tones. "Do not touch me!"

I drew back in consternation and contemplated her.

Her eyes were bloodshot and staring, her visage pale and fixed into such an expression of hideous and ferocious horror as surely no girl's countenance ever wore before. I thought her mad.

"*Angel mia*!" I faltered.

"I have killed him," she said, still in the same unnatural voice. "He was a demon, and I have killed him."

Then I perceived that her hands and her garments were dripping with fresh blood. Involuntarily I recoiled, but she seemed not to care. Desperation had hardened her and changed her nature.

"Let me sleep," she continued. "I must sleep. I am dropping from fatigue."

She flung herself upon the bed whence I had just risen and, strange to say, sank at once into a heavy slumber, while I stood in a petrification of despair and watched her.

Ah, well! There is little more to relate. Of course they came and apprehended her at once. There was no trial. Indeed none was needed, for she did not deny what she had done. They did not even give her time for shriving, but took her at once to the plaza, stripped her and hanged her to the irons of a lamp, just as the bell was ringing out *las animas*!

"She must be made an example of," the commandant declared.

Ah, Heaven! Are there no others of whom an example should be made, no pitiless scourgers of the land, no brutes masquerading in the shape of men and making a mockery of the names of law and justice?

EDWARD MOORE.

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The Wooden Case.

Edward Richardson, the explorer, was my life-long friend, college chum, and now my honoured guest.

At college, Ned went in for dead and hidden things, archæology, and all that: and, after absorbing all that the best schools of this country and other countries could teach on those lines, he started in, digging here, prodding there, until he had punctured holes in the earth's crust in nearly every country on the globe.

Now, after years of this sort of thing, he was back to his native city, with a hat full of medals and decorations, and his fame as an explorer and an archæologist established throughout civilisation.

We had just returned from a dinner given in his honour by a scientific body, and had adjourned to the library for a smoke and a chat before retiring.

Our talk so far had referred to his little speech concerning his latest and most important discoveries in Egypt, and to the effect it had produced upon his hearers.

And now, to my great surprise, he acknowledged that he had intentionally omitted facts of importance bearing upon his work! To put it mildly, it was an eye-opener, and I could only look the astonishment I felt.

After a few thoughtful puffs, Ned said:

"Frank, what really did happen is so strange, so inconceivable, that were I to tell the story to the world, I should be laughed at and told that I lied, or was crazy.

"Look here," he exclaimed, throwing off coat and collar and uncovering the upper portion of his brawny chest and shoulders: "here's a bit of evidence of the truth of my tale, that I always carry with me."

I looked, and on his throat, underneath the heavy beard, I beheld a lot of scars which extending downward, spread out into rows that covered every inch of the body exposed to view. It looked as if some sharp-toothed instrument, like a rake, had gouged out the flesh, or as though the man had been seared by hot irons.

"Good heavens!" I cried. "What beast or thing did that?"

"Aye, you may well put it that way," replied Ned, resuming his garments and seat; "it was a Thing, the most horrible that ever existed on this earth.

"I told you this evening," he went on, "that I had set out to investigate a small pyramid which stood in the desert, a mile or two from the oasis that had been my base of operations while exploring in that part of Egypt. I explained how we spent weeks digging and sounding before success rewarded us; how we finally broke into the tomb underneath the pyramid, and discovered the mummies, and the stores of jewels and ornaments, which proved that the bodies had lain there, undisturbed by mortal hand, since the days they were buried—six thousand years before. All these things occurred precisely as I stated. There was nothing here to conceal.

"You also heard of the attempt made to steal some of our treasures from the building in which they were temporarily stored; how one of my men on guard at the time was murdered, and how I, while seeking traces of the murderer in the camp of a band of roving Arabs, was attacked in the tent of the sheik, and forced to kill that individual to save my own life. That part of the story was true enough, so far as it went, but the most important facts were omitted. What actually did occur was this:

"After working for weeks on the job, and gaining nothing but hard labour for our pains, I became discouraged, and one evening I announced to the men that if the next day or two brought no better luck I would abandon the undertaking.

"I also told them that, in order to be in good trim for what might be our last attempt, they should do no work next day, and suggested that they should go to headquarters at once and take a rest. They were glad enough to have a holiday, after working as they had done.

"Soon all hands were on their way to the oasis, whence my party, with the exception of the native labourers, put up when off duty.

"I remained in camp, and early next morning made a tour of the diggings. I examined every hole and sounding, made careful measurements, and tried to think out some new plan of operation that would yield tangible results. Finally I returned to my tent and was about to make a personal search in front of it, when I happened to see far out on the desert what my field-glass showed me was a caravan. It was a small affair—a dozen camels, loaded, and as many horsemen. It was headed for the oasis, and would come no nearer to the pyramid.

"As I stood watching the travellers, a horseman, riding ahead, left the column, and followed closely by what seemed, at that distance, a child, also mounted

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rode rapidly towards me, the rest continuing on their way. When they got within several rods of me the pair pulled up, and the man, dismounting, stood quietly while his little companion proceeded to the pyramid and passed behind out of sight, followed by the riderless horse.

"Then the stranger walked forward until but a few yards separated us, when he stopped, and, instead of the usual salaam, made a profound bow. He uttered not a word, but stood with arms folded, as if waiting for me to address him. He was very tall, straight as a spear, and wore the ordinary long white garments of the desert tribes.

"Irritated by the man's silence, I finally cried out, in Arabic: 'Who are you, and what do you want?'

"At this my visitor came up close to me, replying as he did so: 'Who I am matters little; what I want, you will give me in return for the service I shall render you.'

"I was astonished, but ere I could speak, he continued: 'I know you are Edward Richardson, the explorer. I know what you expect to find here, and how you have worked, without avail, until you have become discouraged. How I know these things, concern me alone. What concerns you is the fact that I, and I alone, can show you how to enter the tomb, which is here, as you surmise, and I will do so, provided you give me my choice of what you may find in it.'

"Although amazed at the man's knowledge of me and my movements, and distrusting him instinctively, I determined to force his hand, if possible, and to find out his demands and what he proposed to do.

"Inviting him to sit down on a block of stone at my side, I said:

"'You seem to know so much, and to be so powerful, why haven't you opened this tomb yourself?'

"'Because,' he replied, 'to do so requires engineering skill and mechanical appliances, which it is impossible for me to obtain hereabouts.'

"'What do you require in payment for your services?' was my next query.

"'A mummy,' he replied.

"'Why, these are the things I am most anxious to find myself, and you may demand what is of the greatest value to me,' I said.

"'Listen,' said the man, 'you will find bodies of kings and queens who lived at a time of which man has no record. These shall be yours, together with all the jewels and ornaments buried with them. You will also discover a case in which is a body, but no treasure. This case and contents are all I ask, and I swear there is nothing in them that would be of value to you. As a guarantee that I am not trifling or trying to deceive you, take these.' Saying which, he drew out a small pouch, from which he poured into my hands a dozen or more of the finest diamonds I ever saw. 'If I fail you in any way,' he continued, 'or you do not find everything as I say, these shall be yours.'

"To be brief, I agreed to the proposal, the Arab accepting my verbal promise to fulfil the contract.

"'Now,' said he, when the preliminaries were settled—and here is where the incomprehensible part of the affair begins—'I will fulfill my part of the agreement.'

"With this he gave a shrill whistle, following upon which the little fellow came out from behind the pyramid, and, with the other horse by his side, rode up to us and dismounted. Making a low bow to me, he stepped in front of the other and gazed, without a word, into his face, as if awaiting a command.

"I now saw that, instead of being a child, the newcomer was a dwarf, twenty years old, or thereabouts. He was a handsome, dark-eyed little fellow, with a red fez and zouave-like outfit that became him well. That he was uncommonly active and powerful, I had reason to thank my stars later on.

"At a word in some strange dialect, the dwarf detached from the Arab's saddle, and handed to him a scimitar, the hilt and scabbard of which were covered with some scaly material that I afterwards found to be the skin of a snake.

"Another word or two in the same unknown tongue, and the little man drew back and faced the big one. As he did so, I caught a look of aversion on his face, and his eyes gleamed as if with hatred or defiance. The Arab noticed the look and returned it with a ugly scowl and a growl that sounded like a threat.

"Rising from his seat, he unsheathed the blade, and the next moment the dwarf seemed to be standing in the midst of a rain of fire. The Arab was laying about him with his weapons, and such sword play, I'm free to say, I never saw before, and never shall again while I live.

"The exhibition ceased as suddenly as it began. The dwarf stood with arms folded, and a queer, far-away look in his eyes. The Arab gazed at him a moment, and then, tearing the covering from the hilt, held that part of the scimitar to his face.

"The hilt was of gold, beautifully chased and set with gems. On the end was an immense diamond that blazed in the sunlight like flame, and this was waved slowly before the dwarf's eyes until the lids dropped and he seemingly slept.

"As the Arab sheathed his sword and replaced the covering on the hilt, he said: 'Ali grows rebellious and objects to serving me; he must be disciplined.' Then, producing a sheet of paper and pencil, he laid them on the stone he had vacated, and, stepping in front of his subject, he gave what seemed to be a command in a loud, imperious tone, and in the same outlandish tongue he had used before.

"In a few moments the dwarf made a reply in a muffled voice that sounded as if it came from underground.

"Then, as though interpreting, the Arab said:

"'He tells me a great rock closes the entrance to the tunnel leading to the tomb, but he has passed through it.'

"For the next few minutes not a word was spoken. Then came a little cry from the dwarf, followed by a few sentences in a broken, gasping voice, as of one utterly exhausted.

"At another command, he staggered to the stone, and seizing the pencil, he rapidly drew on the paper what looked like the ground plan of a building. A lot of writing followed, and when this was completed the Arab handed me what turned out to be an accurate plan of the tomb and tunnel, with full directions for entering them.

"As Ali finished, he fell over in a dead faint; but a few drops from the vial, which the Arab held to his lips, soon restored him. Then the strange pair mounted and set off towards the oasis, and that was the last I saw of them for some days.

"In the evening I rode back to camp, where I learnt that the newcomers had pitched their tents on the outskirts of the oasis, and seemed a quiet, well disposed lot.

"I told my associates that the sheik had visited me

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and given me certain directions for finding and entering the tomb, for which, if they proved correct, he was to receive an ordinary mummy, in case any such were found.

"Not until we broke into the tomb and laid profane hands upon its contents, did the sheik put in an appearance at the workings.

"On that momentous day he came, bright and early, accompanied by four of his people, big, solemn-looking fellows. Seeking me out, he obtained permission to enter the tomb with me, and while there, no movement of ours, as we opened sarcophagi and took mummies, jewels, and what not, escaped his watchful eye.

"For a long time there was no sign of the wooden case, but when most of the things had been removed he called attention to a crack in the wall in front of him. A few blows of a pick disclosed a niche, the front of which had been walled up. Upright within stood a covered box, and in this we found, as the Arab had fore-told, the body of a dwarf.

"It was that of a man with immensely broad shoulders, and arms reaching nearly to his knees. The face was hideous, and a ferocious smile had drawn the thin lips apart, disclosing teeth sharp, and gleaming like those of a beast.

"Strange to say, the body was not swathed in bandages, as mummies always are, but was clothed in a loose garment of some peculiar stuff that bore our rough handling without a break.

"Great bunches of muscle covered the frame, and nowhere was there an opening, or, in fact, an indication that an internal organ had been removed, as is always done in the case of mummies.

"The body, with its stiffened limbs, was like that of one in a cataleptic fit or trance, and represented, as I supposed, some strange and wonderful process of embalming, of which this was the only specimen in existence.

"The head rested on an oblong block, covered with a piece of the same material of which the garment was made, and on this odd pillow the Arab's eyes were fastened with the most intense eagerness. Before I could lay a hand on it, he had replaced the lid of the box, saying as he did so:

"'I suppose I may take this now? You have seen how insignificant it is, and I desire to get it to my tent at once.'

"Reluctantly I gave my consent, and his own men carried the case to the surface and placed it in a cart I lent him to convey his prize to camp.

"An hour or two after they left, we found in the niche, under some rubbish, what I took to be a block of bronze. It was about twice the size of a common brick, quite heavy, and on every side of it was inlaid with gold in strange designs.

"I sent it up to be put with the other stuff in the storeroom, and shortly afterwards was told that the sheik was above, asking to see me privately. When, at my request, he joined me in the tomb, he was greatly excited, and his first words were:

"'I have lost a small bronze block belonging to that case; have you seen it about here?'

"'My friend,' I said, 'in return for your services I agreed to give you a certain case and contents. Have I fulfilled my promise?'

"'Yes,' he replied, 'but——'

"'All bronze blocks,' I put in, 'and everything else outside the case belong to me, and I shall keep them.'

"At this the sheik said not another word, but, with a murderous scowl on his face, turned and left the pit.

"Upon quitting work for that day, I went to the storeroom and hid the block of bronze under a pile of tools. Later, when my assistants had gone back to headquarters and the labourers had settled down for the night I called in Sam, my African servant, and one of the native labourers, an intelligent, trustworthy Arab, and arranged with them for guarding the storehouse during the night. I was to take the first and longest watch, Sam the next, and the native the last, which would end when the camp was astir in the morning.

"This plan was carried out, and nothing occurred while either myself or Sam was on duty. When the Arab took his post, I examined the building inside and out, but found the block in its place and everything in proper condition.

"Upon resuming my bunk, where I had slept like a top through Sam's watch, I found that sleep had deserted me, and for more than an hour I tossed about, unable to close my eyes. At last I dropped off into a doze, from which, a few minutes later, I woke with a start. Something had disturbed me, I knew not what, but a faint echo seemed to ring in my ears as of a voice calling for help.

"Jumping up, I made for the storehouse at the top of my speed.

"The moon had not gone down, so that objects near by were fairly visible.

"When close to the building, I saw what brought me up standing.

"The door stood wide open, and someone was moving about inside.

"Approaching close to the opening, I called out the man's name. There was no reply, and the noise within ceased.

"As I stood there, peering into the dark room, there was a sudden scrambling, a horrible, snarling cry, and out of the doorway came something on all fours which, leaping past me like a flash, was out of sight almost before I could move.

"Recovering my wits, which, I confess, were scared out of me for the moment, I was inside the room and at the hiding place with lantern at once.

"The block was gone!

"A hasty examination showed that nothing else was disturbed, and that the door had been forced by pressure from without; the broken lock, and screws torn from the wood, indicating that extraordinary force had been applied.

"Outside, lying on his back close to the building, I found the watchman. The poor fellow was dead. His neck was broken, his face distorted with fear and horror, and upon his throat were deep scratches, from which blood was still flowing.

"Arousing the camp, I had the body taken to the hospital tent, and explained to the men that their comrade had been murdered by a burglar who failed to secure anything of value.

"What it was that did the deed I could not imagine, but I felt assured that the sheik was the responsible party, and determined to visit him at an early hour.

"Soon after sunrise I was standing in front of my tent when, to my surprise, Ali, the dwarf, rode up at a furious gallop. Without dismounting or uttering a word, he thrust into my hand a folded paper and, turning, was off again like a shot. The paper contained these word:

"'The sheik sleeps, and I have stolen away. He has

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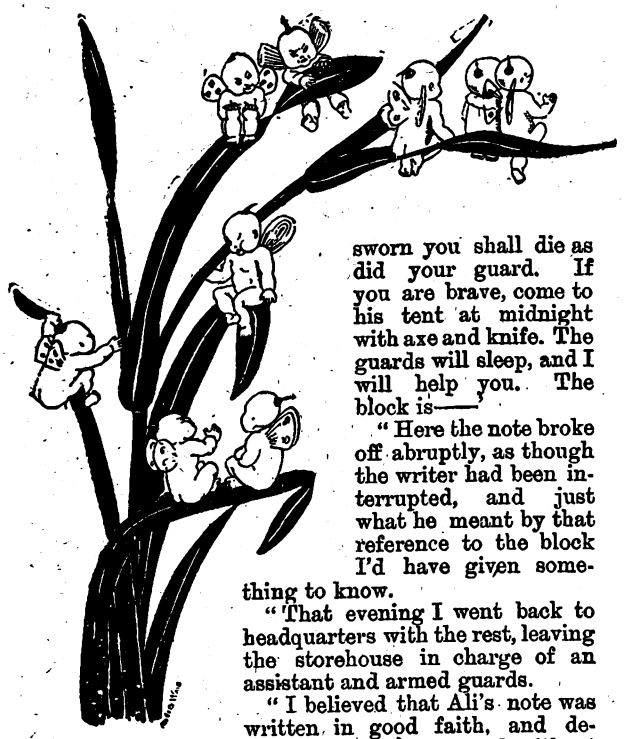

sworn you shall die as did your guard. If you are brave, come to his tent at midnight with axe and knife. The guards will sleep, and I will help you. The block is——'

"Here the note broke off abruptly, as though the writer had been interrupted, and just what he meant by that reference to the block I'd have given something to know.

"That evening I went back to headquarters with the rest, leaving the storehouse in charge of an assistant and armed guards.

"I believed that Ali's note was written in good faith, and determined to act as he advised, but alone, and without the knowledge of any of my people.

"Shortly before midnight I was in the vicinity of the Sheik's tent, which stood near the edge of the oasis, its entrance facing the desert.

"As I cautiously approached the door, the moonlight enabled me to see, stretched on the ground in front of it the body of a man, clasping a long gun. Already one of Ali's statements was verified. The guard slept, and soundly, too, I could see that.

"Just then the Sheik's voice rang out in a sort of wild chant, and I prepared for action.

"Securing the broad-bladed hatchet I had brought with me, to my wrist, by means of a leather loop on the handle, and carrying a stout hunting knife in the other hand, I stepped over the sleeper and peered into the tent.

"A tall screen in front of the door cut off my view completely. Then I crawled through the opening and stood behind the screen.

"Cutting a slit in this with my knife, I could see that rugs and skins covered the ground, and screens stood at the sides, and at the opposite end of the tent, which was large and oblong in shape. In the centre was a table, draped in black, and in front of this, with his back towards me, stood the Arab.

"He wore a black robe that reached from his neck to his heels, and in his right hand was a short, black rod, which he waved from side to side in unison with the chant.

"On the table I could see the bronze block, and beside it lay the beautiful scimitar, its hilt glittering in the rays of the lamp that hung from the top of the tent.

"Neither Ali nor the case was in sight, but I felt confident that the dwarf was near, ready to lend a hand if necessary.

"With weapons ready for instant use, I moved towards the table, and my hand was already on the block before the Arab knew I was there.

"A startled cry fell from his lips as he saw me. His hand flew to the sword, and, quicker than I can tell it, he aimed a blow which, had it reached me, would have split me to the shoulders.

"A leap aside, however, saved me, and before he could straighten himself, I dropped the hatchet and sent in a right-hander that nearly lifted him off his feet. He recovered himself, though, like a prize-fighter, and, with blood streaming from his nose and mouth, he sprang at me again.

"But just then a gleam of light flashed by me and I heard a dull, crunching sound. The Arab's rush was suddenly checked. His sword wavered an instant, and then fell to the ground. The hand that held it dropped and closed convulsively upon something that protruded from his breast. It was instantly withdrawn, and with it, the fingers already stiffening round the haft, came a long, broad-bladed knife, dripping with blood. A dark stream flowed and flowed over the long robe.

"The Arab swayed to and fro several times; then, with a gurgling sound, he fell to the ground, dead.

"As if in response to the cry, and before I could turn to see where the knife came from, I heard a savage snarl, and something sprang upon me from behind. A pair of long brown arms were clasped round my neck, and instantly my clothing was being torn to shreds and my flesh gashed by fingers that were more like claws of steel.

"So sudden and fierce was the attack that I staggered forward and would have fallen, had not my assailant's backward tug kept me on my feet.

"My throat seemed to be the point aimed at, and in its mad efforts to reach this, the beast, or whatever it was, soon had my shoulders laid bare and channels dug into my flesh, from which the blood ran in streams.

"I am a powerful man, as you know, Frank, but in the grasp of this fiend I was as helpless as a child. Try as I might, I could not shake him off, and my utmost exertions failed to prevent his inhuman gouging and tearing.

"I had dropped my knife when first attacked, and all I could do was to hold my head down to protect my throat, and make an occasional futile stroke with the hatchet.

"Soon I began to grow weak from loss of blood.

"I wondered vaguely what had become of Ali, and, in a voice scarcely audible, I called upon him for help.

"As I did so, my head went back with a jerk and the sharp claws sank into my throat.

"Death in a frightful form was very close to me when Ali's shout of encouragement reached my ears, and I felt rather than heard, quick blows falling upon the body of my assailant.

"The pressure on my throat relaxed, the terrible arms dropped from my shoulders, and I was free.

"I fell against the table gasping for breath, but still conscious that another struggle was going on near me and that Ali might be needing help as I had.

"Pulling myself together, I turned to take a hand, when, as I am a living man, Frank, I found myself gazing upon the mummy we had resurrected!

"There was no mistaking that powerful, stumpy body, or those features, now distorted with rage, and more horrible than ever.

Just now it was facing me, making short, savage rushes at Ali, who, knife in hand, eluded the attacks

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with wonderful agility, driving the blade into the Thing at its every attempt to reach him.

"Stiff with horror and unable to stir, I watched the fight until Ali, in avoiding a vicious rush, slipped, and, ere he could recover himself, was in the clutches of the monster.

"With one long arm it hugged the little fellow close to its body, and the free hand was already at his throat before the power to move returned to me.

"Then, staggering forward, I raised the heavy hatchet and, with all my strength in me, I brought it down squarely upon the top of the ugly head.

"I heard the crash and saw the blade eat its way through the skull to the neck, and then I fainted.

"The next thing I knew I was lying on a pile of rugs and Ali was busy patching me up. So potent were his remedies and treatment that in a little while I was on my feet nearly as strong as ever, and feeling only a trifling pain from the injuries.

"'Where is the mummy?' was my first query.

"'I killed the infernal thing and the men are now burying it,' Ali replied.

"'You and I this night have rid the world of two monsters,' I said.

"'How the Sheik put life into the Thing, I know not. He had strange powers. He knew yon tomb existed, and that in it was the body of one who, ages ago, had been high priest and mighty magician. He knew that with the priest were buried his profoundest secrets—those by which he controlled the elements and even life itself.

"'He knew, moreover,' continued Ali, 'by what dread means the priest had preserved his trance-like existence through all these centuries, and had acquired the formula by which life could be restored to the body.

"'Many of his mysteries he learnt through me by various unholy methods, one of which you witnessed; but his prying into things forbidden was hateful to me, and I often refused to aid him, until beaten into submission.

"'The Sheik was aware that the priest's secrets were contained in a bronze casket, and this, he believed, was in the case with the body. In the thing under the priest's head he was sure he beheld the object of his search, and when he found this to be nothing but a block of wood, he was mad with rage and disappointment. He knew, then, that the casket must be in your possession, and your refusal to give it to him did not tend to lessen his anger. So furious, indeed, was he, that he beat me cruelly, and swore he would get the casket if he had to kill you all.

"'I then swore that I would kill him for beating me.

"'At night the miracle was performed that let loose the evil one, whose first act was to murder your guard and bring back the box.

"'This night he would have opened it and disclosed its mysteries to the Sheik, who, once master of them, would have made the other his, else taken his life for good.

"'Here is the casket,' continued Ali, handing me what I had hitherto thought to be a block of bronze. 'Take it, but never dream of looking inside. The contents would make one who knew, able to secure and use the most powerful of all created beings; but woe to him who would handle them or even attempt to open the casket, without proper knowledge which is now lost for ever. I would bury the unholy thing where none would ever find it, were I not sure it would be safe with you.

"'Take this also, as a token of my regard and as a slight return for saving my life,' and he put into my hand the magnificent scimitar, sheathed, and it its snakes-skin covering.

"'The Sheik,' he went on, ignoring my objections to receiving so valuable a gift, 'claimed to be my father. He lied; but as I am recognised as his son by my tribe, I shall succeed him, and all his possessions are mine.'

"Here I endeavoured to force upon him the diamonds left by the Sheik as a pledge; but Ali refused them, saying that as the Sheik had broken his agreement, the jewels were rightfully mine.

"As to the death of the sheik, that had to be explained, he said, to his people as the result of an attempt of the Arab's to murder me; and having been a cruel task-master, his death caused great joy rather than grief.

"Already the body was being prepared for removal, and in a few hours, the boy explained, they would start for home.

"Where that home was, or how reached, however, Ali obstinately refused to tell me, and from the moment when I rode away from the door of his tent, where he stood motionless, watching me until he faded out of sight, I have never seen or heard from this saviour of my life.

"Such wounds as I was bound to show, I easily accounted for as the result of my fight with the Arab, my version of which was the more readily accepted as that night the strangers disappeared, leaving no trace behind them.

"Thanks to Ali's ointment, my injuries soon healed, and to this day, Frank, you are the only one to whom I have ever told their history.

"Do you wonder at my silence?"

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SAVING A LOVER.

It was very quiet, very tranquil, in the barracks that day, and from the deserted grounds, where only a solitary sentry or two paced up and down, none of the usual barrack-room talk, laughter, or singing could be heard. For every soldier, bandman, and officer had been called to the officers' police quarters, where a fellow soldier was being tried for his life by the court-martial.

It was during the revolutionary days, when power was vested in the hands of the military. They had the right to say whether or not Private Santiago Moreno was guilty of murder, and whether, in payment thereof, he should die.

No women were present in the grim, fortress-like quarters; only the soldiers who stood in silent, stern rows round the room. On the dais sat the colonel, the major and some lesser officers; fronting them, straight and erect, with shoulders thrown back, stood the prisoner, Santiago Moreno.

He was a good-looking fellow, and the star on his breast showed that he had received credit for bravery. Not a flicker of an eyelid, not a movement, showed what he felt; there was not even a tremour when the colonel, after long and grave discussion, at last stood up, with the other officers grouped about him, and pronounced the sentence of death.

"That on the morning of the following day, Private Santiago Moreno would be escorted to the plain of San Geronimo, and there be put to death by 'law of fire!'"

That was all. The prisoner drew himself up and saluted, his face no more concerned than that of the men about him, and was taken to his cell.

The soldiers melted away, group by group, some of them displaying sorrow, some unconcern, and others anger. For the slaying of his companion-in-arms by Private Moreno had been a very cold-blooded and more than usually wicked deed, even in a country where wicked deeds are not uncommon.

With deliberate intention, Moreno had waited for the other, after parting with his sweetheart, Panchita, and coolly and methodically bored a dagger straight to his heart. For this deed he had offered no excuse or defence, stating merely that the murdered soldier had "annoyed Panchita; that a caballero cannot allow such a thing as annoying his affianced bride."

In his small stone cell Private Moreno walked about, whistling a gay Mexican dance tune. He wanted pen, ink and paper, to write *adios* to his sweetheart, he stated lightly to the warder, who was eyeing him warily, one hand on his pistol. Though Moreno might not be armed, he was a man to be watched.

But at the prisoner's wish to write a note to Panchita, the warder's face relaxed, and he offered to find pencil and paper. For Panchita was his own cousin, and every one loved the gay, pretty girl, with her artless, innocent ways that had lured two men on to death.

Poor little Panchita!

Five minutes after the death sentence had been pronounced she knew of it, her door locked, was lying face downward on the cold stone floor, moaning and crying.

It had all been her fault, as she knew—through her two men had come by their death.

After a time she stood up, tottering and moved over to the window.

There was no one in sight; the hot sunshine poured down on the yellow sandy street and the gray adobe walls.

Out in the middle of the road some dogs and small children rolled and tumbled in the dust together in high glee.

It was all so ordinary, so everyday; and yet Santiago was to be shot to-morrow.

That is, unless she could think of a plan to save him.

There was a sudden clatter, and the children scattered rapidly, with many duckings and bobbings of their small, fat bodies, as good Padre Francisco, on his pacing mare, turned the corner and went rapidly down the street. Behind him rode a boy on a heavy horse.

Panchita thought dully that some one at the *hacienda* of San Juan must be very ill and wanted the Padre for confession. It would be a long ride for the good old man, because San Juan was many miles away. He would be absent from the town for over a day.

Pulling at the strings of his soutane, Padre Francisco rode on, his old black cloak flapping in the breeze.

As the girl watched the retreating figure of the priest, with the well-known shabby attire, a thought struck her

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and she drew back from the window with a gasp. For now she knew what to do, and Santiago should be saved.

At six o'clock that evening the soldier on guard before Santiago's door admitted without question the thin, stooping form of Padre Francisco, cloaked and hooded in his usual manner, and carrying prayer-book and rosary. The good father was silently telling his beads, and the soldier bowed humbly as he opened the door, speaking no word. For no Catholic is thus privileged to address a priest who is counting his rosary beads—it is a sign that silence is desired.

The cell door opened and closed silently after the Padre, and the watch outside heard a smothered, impatient ejaculation from Private Moreno who was smoking a cigarette and trying hard to write that *adios* to Panchita. Then the door was locked, for the Padre was going to confess the prisoner, and the guards retired laughing at the idea of confession for Santiago—the wickedest dog in the army of Mexico.

Lounging in the doorway, the soldiers speculated lazily as to what was going on in the condemned cell, it was so quiet. Not even a murmur could be heard, and finally the men agreed that the Padre was praying silently.

It was dark—quite dark—when Padre Francisco came out, with head bowed lower than ever, cloak wrapped disconsolately about him, and fingers still telling his beads. He had been there for an hour, and surely Santiago was either talked down or dead by this time.

"Shall we go and see?" asked a guard.

"No, *hombre;* let the poor brute alone," said another.

To the men who watched all night for fear that the prisoner might escape, it seemed a century before midnight gave way to the darkness that comes before dawn, and there was a sound of relief when at last the first bugle sounded; it was time to get the prisoner and march. Because a soldier is allowed two privileges—to be executed before dawn, and to be shot in his uniform.

In front of the prison drawn up into line, in the darkness, stood the squad of the Twenty-third (Private Moreno's own regiment), who were to attend to the "law of fire," and in the corridor waited impatiently the two guards who were detailed to walk on either side of him

The prisoner, however, was not ready; and deep disgust and scorn were shown on every face when the warder appeared and stated grimly that the prisoner was weeping like a child, and had begged one moment's grace.

Weeping, indeed! A pretty way for a soldier of the Twenty-third to die! And men who had thought privately that they would aim low in the "law of fire," hardened their hearts—a coward did not deserve such treatment.

That the prisoner, barely visible in the grey dawn, was perfectly calm and composed when he did appear made no difference to them; perhaps he had mustered up some courage, after his weeping, but he had played the coward for all that, and a coward's death was no loss.

Out on the bare, swampy plain of San Geronimo, just where Mount Ajusco rises up, bleak and rock-covered, was the place of execution. The walk was not long for the men, to the sound of the muffled march, but very dreary. As for the condemned man, though he might have played the part of a coward in the prison, there was no sign of fear now, so far as they could see in the semi-darkness.

Here was the spot. And with his back to Ajusco, his feet sinking into the damp ground, and the grey mist of the morning resting like a pall about him, and the prisoner was allowed to stand for a moment, while the Captain made a brief address, concluding with the statement that only because the prisoner was a soldier, the "law of fire" would be put into effect; when the word *uno* was pronounced he was to run for his life. On the craggy side of Ajusco he might find shelter, perhaps.

Uno—dos—tres would be counted; at *tres* the squad would fire. Therefore he would have to hasten—otherwise, Heaven have mercy on him.

"*Attençion!*"

The soldiers stood on guard.

"*Uno!*" was counted slowly.

The prisoner stood stock still, and the man nearest swore that there was a smile on his face.

"*Dos!*"

Was he paralysed, that he could not run, even to save his life?

"*Tres!*"

Motionless, horrified, the men had watched. Still the prisoner stood there, head up and shoulders back. At the sound of the *tres*, however, muskets were lowered, and every hammer pulled.

Out thundered the salute of bullets, a veritable hail of them, and the solitary, pathetic figure tottered, then reeled over, face downward, in the damp grass. Dead, of course—how could it be otherwise?

The captain should have looked to make sure, but he wanted his breakfast and some cognac. Merely glancing casually at the body, he gave the order, and with the march once more ringing out, the men tramped back through the light of the coming day to the barracks and breakfast, leaving the dead man alone on the plain.

The next day Private Santiago Moreno himself, whom we have seen shot and left dead on the San Geronimo plain was there at sunset, pale, mad with grief, and holding in his arms a dead body in the uniform of a soldier, but with the sweet, peaceful face of a woman who had offered up her life for a friend.

When the sun went down, his lifeless form remained, still clasping—even in death—the other body that had been thought his.

R. PALMER.

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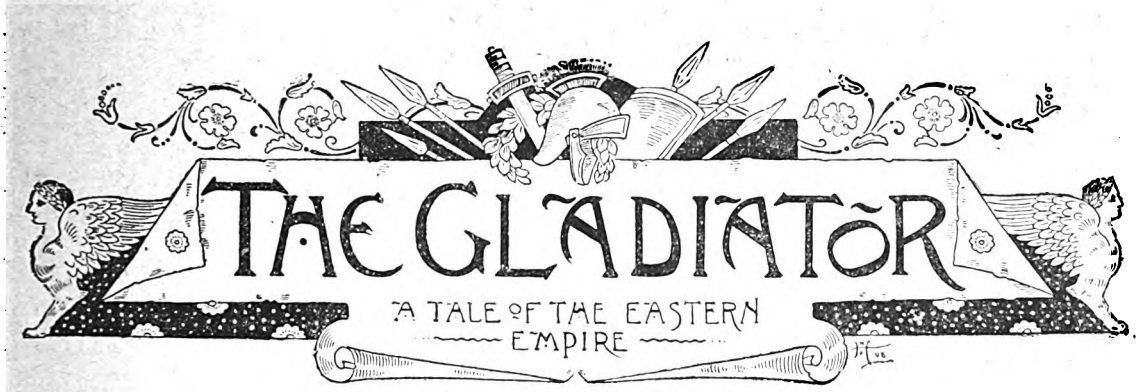

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART III.

CHAPTER III.

The Meeting with Marcen.

News came in thick and fast when the army had been gone some weeks, of the gathering of the Goths and their allies, and their uniform success in all parts of the country. Province by province and city by city Totila wrested back the conquests that the master-hand had gained, and at last word was brought into camp by a scared-faced Hun that the enemy was concentrating his force upon Rome. Rhesus' first thought, seeing how many men he had lost by desertion, was to give up the post and fall back towards the capital, but it was fated otherwise.

The country round was still tolerably peaceful, though many were flying before the coming storm, but having been much annoyed by the guerilla warfare of a band of robbers from the near hills ever since the departure of the general, Rhesus determined to march out and teach them a salutary lesson before retreating.

His Huns and Greeks were eager for action and adventure, so they sailed forth in high spirits, and pursuing a straggler, came upon the main body of the robbers before the evening of the same day. These, although nearly equal in number, took to flight. Keeping well in front, knowing the country better, they led the soldiers a long way beyond their first desire. But Rhesus was hot on the scent and in no mood to be shaken off. He flung discretion to the winds and went on recklessly. The chase went on for days, the fugitives heading towards Florence, by the side of the highway; but midway there, at the foot of the huge rock plateau whereon the Etruscan ruins of Urbs Vetus gleamed in the sun, they were run down.

They dismounted at the base of the steep slope, under the shadow of the great, embrasured wall, and there to the astonishment of Rhesus, threw down their weapons and yielded. As he galloped to the front and demanded the reason, their leader stepped out from the ranks and confronted him. The face that he saw under the broad-brimmed helmet was the face of Marcen—Marcen, his enemy!

With a cry of rage Rhesus leant over in his saddle, upraising his sword to strike. The agony of the years of toil and infamy, of long-cherished revenge, came darkening into the sunlight of his careless mood, and but that Marcen stood weaponless, helpless and seemingly neither surprised nor afraid, he would have struck without mercy.

"It was not your wont, Rhesus," said the other sadly, "to kill in cold blood. Least of all a man at your mercy as I am. Though I grant that you have just provocation."

"Why should I not make an end of you now, villain?" cried Rhesus furiously.

"Because I have repented of my past wrong-doing, Rhesus. Because I would make what recompense I can. Because I have saved your life."

"What mean you?" Rhesus asked, incredulous. Then scornfully: "What new treachery have you afoot that you dare to put yourself in my clutches?"

"The treachery is past and gone, Rhesus. You will understand my meaning better when I tell you that these men are merely adventurers in my pay. I have employed them merely for the purpose of bringing you out of the circle of death. You would never have escaped of your own will. This chase was merely a stratagem, long planned, to lure you away from Rome while there was time."

"And why should I be kept from Rome?"

"To save your life, as I have said. Already the vanguard of Totilla's Army will have passed your out-post. The ends of his crescent array will have penned the city in. If you had not been killed in the seige, Rhesus, nor beheaded at the Gothic triumph, there are still prisons in Rome. Dead, or in the lower chamber of the dark Tullianum where Vercingetorix died and the accomplices of Cataline perished, how would you see Eutasia again? Those who have gone down those 'Steps of Sighs,' friend, have seldom returned."

"And what is that to you, traitor?" Rhesus was yet angry, half-believing, half-doubting.

"Much," said the other. "Though she vowed to wed me if I spared you from death at the trial of Nika, she denied me when I claimed the promise. She was so good and gentle, yet so firm in her refusal, that I could not press my power. I came instead to regret my folly and sin. I promised to seek you out and bring you back. By chance I heard your name mentioned by a sick soldier who came home in the first week of the war, and set sail at once. I was delayed by various causes on the way, and seeing, on arrival, how Totila was advancing, devised this plan to bring you out of the struggle. It has not been without risk to myself, Rhesus, as you know. Do you still doubt my good-will?"

"In truth, yes," answered Rhesus bitterly. "I cannot forget the past so easily as you wish, knave. You were ever plausible. What have you done with the secret treasure—if, indeed, you have obtained it?"

A strange expression, an anxious fear, and a subtle smile intermixed, nearly betrayed Marcen, but he recovered in time, and replied:

"That I have not the treasure none should know better than yourself, Rhesus, who have the secret. I have hope that if I help you to gain it and to win Eutasia and to keep you from the notice of the Empress, you will share it with me. I have suffered much for it already. Theodora suspected me of treachery when I reported that it could not be found. She swore to pull down the remains of the

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burnt convent before she would be baulked. She even cast me into a dungeon because I refused to reveal its whereabouts. In the end, as I always meant, I feigned to give way, saying I had feared the vengeance of accomplices. I led her to the secret passage, to the great rock door—and of course we found the passage empty. She was mad with anger at first, but having had my house searched and my friends questioned to no purpose, let me go. Then it was that I sought Eutasia's hand secretly, faring as I have told. But you still doubt my word? Come with me."

The place was deserted, so bidding his men follow, Rhesus went with him up the steep rock and through the ruins, until they came to the great well of the fortress, near the old burial-ground of the past and gone Etruscans.

"Let me command my men a moment," said Marcen, "and I will prove my faith in you—and to you."

Wondering, beginning to believe, Rhesus consented. The other bade two of the men bind him to the cord that hung from the crude wallow and then lower him until his hands, at utmost stretch, could not reach the brink of the well. Then he spoke to the soldier.

"You have a sharp sword, Rhesus. You know how to use it. If you think I am still your foe, if you imagine that I am yet a traitor, strike at the taut cord with all your force and have your revenge! It is an easy thing to do, Rhesus; not dangerous to yourself at all. If I am indeed your enemy it will pay you well!"

"It is a coward's challenge!" cried Rhesus, relenting. "I cannot do it, though I cannot quite believe your honesty."

"Then strike!" came the voice from the well. "Strike hard and quick, so that it may be over! Surely you will never regret it!"

Rhesus said he believed him then, despite an undercurrent of suspicion, and sheathing his sword, bade the men draw Marcen out. Surely no common man, be he saint or sinner, would have so put himself in the power of one he had wronged unless his purpose was honest? He could not deny him after that!

"So you believe me at last?" he cried, when he came up, "You are hard to convince!"

His teeth chattered, his face was deathly pale.

"I must, and I suppose I must forego the revenge I have cherished through all these dark years," said Rhesus. "But it was a desperate hazard, man. My fingers itched on the sword-hilt! But you will find Rhesus the Roman as good a friend as he is a stern foe. I will go back with you to Constantinople now, since I cannot get to Rome, and if you will help me to gain Eutasia, why, one half the treasure is yours. That is, if we can come at it."

Marcen started, as with fright.

"If?" he repeated. "You speak in riddles. If you have not the key, you know its place. When I went down the passage after your trial I saw the writing on the rock."

Rhesus was surprised at this, and that he should talk so glibly of the key, when he ought not to know of its existence; but kept his countenance and said drily:

"If you tell me the words of the writing, I should have some proof of the truth of your story."

"It was but faintly scratched, and after I read it I chiselled it out, leaving no trace. It was simply '*The key is found.*'"

In spite of his self-control, Rhesus was visibly amazed at this, and Marcen seemed still more perplexed. But the former passed the matter off with a laugh at his own invincible scepticism, taking care not to mention it again afterwards.

"So!" he said. "If that is found, all is well. That it is in the capital is evident; where, you will find when we arrive—not till. Till then, we are friends and co-adventurers. Is it not so?"

"Nothing could be better," cried Marcen, well-pleased. "I am already finding the straight path of honesty more profitable than the way of deceit."

So they called the men together and put it to them whether they would go back to the east or remain and join the Goths, for mercenaries have no enduring loyalty or preference, save for the lightest pay—and some thought one way and some the other. In the end they rode away from Urbs Vetus with about a hundred sober fellows who had pleasant memories of home, and struck out for the coast. They met with no opposition, save from the villagers whose hoards they plundered for their daily needs, so thoroughly had Totila drained the country and massed his forces. Coming upon the Appian Way, they kept along it to Dyrrachium—from Rome, a full forty days' journey. There they got a small rowing vessel and put off with favourable weather; and to be brief, came without a mishap of a serious nature to the Golden Horn. They went ashore in the morning and sought out an unassuming inn to lodge at, and that being settled, parted until night.

Rhesus went out into the city as he had done the first time he landed. But this time he was alone. He was an outlaw walking amongst pitfalls and snares, albeit he was wearing the badge of blue instead of a band of green. He trod the familiar streets with an unfamiliar step; noting the familiar places. The new Church, the more numerous drinking-booths, the ruins of the convent where Proclus had fallen to save him, the silent arena, the deserted gladiatorial quarter—he marked them all; and as the past rushed over him, marvelled more and more at Marcen's repentance. The lingering doubt that his daring hazard had not quite dispelled took fresh hold of Rhesus. It grew in force, disquietening him with its persistency. He began to regret that he had not made an end of the traitor when he hung in the well.

Busy with these memories and thoughts, he ranged the city until nightfall. On his way back to the inn he came in sight of the spires and battlements of Theodora's palace by the shore of Propontis. He suddenly remembered how he had once ventured into the garden in search of Eutasia. He went cautiously down a narrow way by the side of it, and scaled the wall.

CHAPTER IV.

In the Garden—and the Chase.

The casements of the palace were luminous squares of light. The sound of many voices and soft laughter came floating to Rhesus through the groves as he dropped upon the ground and stole silently forward. He reached the shelter of a wide-branching aloe unperceived by the few courtiers and lackeys who strolled along the quiet walks. In the shade he crouched and waited, for what he scarcely knew. Some unexplained impulse had led him there; the same mysterious influence bade him stay and wait.

The love-makers mooned along in the gloaming, the guards made their rounds in easy confidence, all were oblivious of his presence. The air was wondrous still and pleasant, yet merry withal with the subdued murmur of thoughtless gaiety, the tingle and splash of fountains, the chirping of insects, the carillons of singing birds. The dusk deepened. In the pale sky shone some of the brighter stars. His vigil seemed purposeless. A little longer, and then that for which he waited came, and he had his reward.

She was one of a group of beautiful women, the fairest amongst them, who came laughing and talking low right under the shade of the tree behind which he was hidden. She stood so near to him that he could have touched her had he stretched his arm through the leafage, but he dared not. He listened to their idle chatter and feminine jests with ill patience, feasting his eyes the while on her beauty. A great longing, a maddening desire, arose within him. She was not a girl now, but a woman. A woman in every graceful curve of limb, and every flash of the sweet blue eyes. Older, truly, and with a shadow of sadness on her face that he had not seen before, but more

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lovely, not less, therefore. There is an added age that is but added charm. In everything on earth that is beautiful is the tracery of grief.

Presently the gay group passed on, leaving him alone. Rhesus thought he must be going, but she came back, solitary, and stood near him again, gazing in silence at the palace. He longed to speak, to move, but even when she sighed he could not break the spell. And while he hesitated some one came swiftly up and the two fell to earnest talk The newcomer was a man.

Rhesus could not see his face at first, nor recognize his voice, though it was strangely familiar to his ears. He listened intently to their conversation. It related, queerly enough, to himself. Yet that caused him no amaze compared with what he felt when the man turned, showing his features, and Eutasia pronounced his name.

"You are late in coming, friend," said she. "You have not yet told me what you discovered in your last search."

"Something of greater import has delayed me," said the man. "Something that makes it needless to tell you how I fared in the search. Cannot you think, Eutasia?"

"Have you learnt where Rhesus is?" she cried excitedly.

"Better than that, in one way; yet perchance worse in another. Rhesus is here, in this city. He landed this morning, in company with Marcen."

"And where is he now?" asked Eutasia. "where is he now, Proclus? Why don't you bring him here to me—or take me to him?"

"Because I cannot trace him far after the landing," said Proclus. That moment he turned his head so that Rhesus saw the profile of his face.

It was Proclus in very truth—Proclus, whom he had deemed dead those many years—Proclus, his cynical friend—Proclus, who had been left in the black Hall of Waters, under the falling walls of the blazing convent—Proclus in the flesh, strong, well, undeniable!

Rhesus forgot his caution. He gave a cry of wonder, missed his footing, slipped through the veil of leaves, and went stumbling before them. Eutasia stifled a shriek when she saw him, then ran into his outstretched arms with a sob of sudden joy. Proclus stole some distance away.

Rhesus pressed the dear form close. He showered the hoarded caresses of many hopeless days upon the sweet red lips. He looked into her tear-filled eyes and read there the charter of his full possession. The flattery of the Court, the favours of the Empress, the persecutions of Marcen, the fear that Rhesus was lost to her for ever, had not once impaired her affection. She was his now, his wholly, as she had been that far back day when first he kissed her saucy lips.

"The time is going, Rhesus," she said at last. "We must be careful here, and we have much to say. Come closer to the shade of the tree, and tell me how you have fared this long, weary time."

"It is a long story," said Rhesus. "I must be brief in my telling, but this is the pith of it."

And clasping her waist in the shadow he told her his adventures as well as he could. She wept for his miseries and laughed at his boldnesses, and smiled at his good-fortune until he came to the end. But when he spoke of Marcen her eyes lit up with an angry fire.

"You need say little more of him," she cried. "There lives no meaner, no cleverer, no more unscrupulous rogue! I believed in him long, deceived by his cunning words and ways. I sent you away from this very place with a sore heart because of him. For your sake I promised to become his wife, thinking him a friend. But I overheard him talking with the Empress one day not long after your exile, and I knew then how I was deceived, how I had wronged you. I refused to marry him, and when he threatened me with his revenge, I went to Theodora. She had some misgivings also, and sent him to the dungeons because he would not divulge the secret of the treasure, of which Proclus has told me. He was liberated shortly, however, and has persecuted me often, since, venturing as high in the palace circles as he dared after his debasement. A year ago he went away—it seems to get you in his clutches and wrest from you the key he believes you to possess."

"I see it all now!" cried Rhesus. "The consummate wretch! I see it all now. It was Proclus who wrote on the wall *"The key is found."* Proclus has the key now!"

"That he has, friend," said the cynic, coming rapidly towards them, "though you thought him stabbed to death and then drowned! The gods, you see, are loth to let those die who find no joy in living!"

"You are bitter as of yore against the Fates," said Rhesus. "But how came you to escape? It passes my comprehension. I surely saw you killed."

"Not surely, eh? It is very simple. That fellow's knife went into me, 'tis true, but it missed a vital part. As for the water, I am a good swimmer. When you had gone I crawled up the steps, and when the ruins had cooled down somewhat, got out into the city and found friends. Being thus to all good purpose dead to the world, I took a fresh name and became a courtier. Eutasia alone knew me again in the disguise I have since worn, and for her sake as well as my own I have sought you far and wide. I heard but this noon of your arrival in the city, and here, indeed, you are!

"But if I mistake not, we have yet a hard task before us. We must act quickly and strike ruthlessly if we are to circumvent this Marcen once and for all and get away with Eutasia and the treasure. For I take it, Rhesus, that you have done with your ambitions—that you will be glad to be back in fair Sicily, where society, if not so learned and besotted, is at least less rotten!"

"It is a cruel thrust, friend risen from the dead!" said Rhesus, "but I grant you the victory. I have done with this accursed city and all its people—save you two. But what is it? Why look so strangely at each other?"

"Tell him, Proclus," said Eutasia, averting her face. "I cannot."

"It is hard to say, friend," said Proclus, "but such things must come to all of us, I opine, and are best met and faced at once. In my journeyings in search of you I went to Sicily; to your home. The house was silent. The farmlands were untilled save a little patch round the herd's cottage. Your father was dead, Rhesus; buried beside your mother. Only the old servitors who tended the home lands and the flocks remained, strong in the faith that you would return. I left gold to ward off the avaricious offers of your neighbours, telling them that you would surely come back. I came away, leaving them well content. So you cannot go too soon."

The blow was heavy, and more so because unexpected. Rhesus stood awhile silent, looking away from his friends. Then he took Eutasia's hand and his eyes sought hers.

"It seems my home is waiting for me," he said, keeping back the tears. "Will you come and share it with me, dear, and leave this gay life? If we cannot give you equal wealth and flattery, our sunny land can give you peace and plenty, and smiling goodwill. Say, dear, shall we go together. . . .?"

She clasped his hand tightly, and raised it to her lips with a tenderness he had seen in no other woman, and that was new even to her, and said:

"Why ask me, Rhesus? Where would not I go with you?"

That was enough, and he turned to Proclus.

"And you, too, friend? Will you not come with us? The strain of your satire will temper our foolish young joy, perchance!"

"Perchance," answered he. "We shall see. But we must be going now. To-morrow we will arrange our plans."

"Till to-morrow, then," they said. Eutasia sped away down the garden path in the dim night glimmer like a fleeing shadow. The friends made for the portal in the wall, where the cynic's name got them through.

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No one was in sight in the narrow way as they emerged from the darkness of the arching stone, so they stood in converse awhile. Rhesus asked his friend two questions that had been on his lips a dozen times.

"Why did you not get the treasure for yourself when I was gone and you had the key," he said. "And where did you find that?"

"It was the first thing that my hands touched when I crept out of the water. You must have dropped it and trailed it along the ground with your foot as they took you away. It was red with blood. As to the other matter—why, Rhesus, for all my city veneer, I trust that I make a true friend. And I have given up the idea of securing it all. As much as we two can carry away in one journey will enrich us for life. Then we can throw the key away and let him get the rest who can."

"You are right," said the other. "I care not for too much, so that we get safely away. Why not go to-morrow?"

"It is not possible," said Proclus quickly. "If I go with you I have matters to arrange that cannot be settled until the day beyond. But on second thoughts, Rhesus, in case we should not see each other until late, these are my plans. In my name and character I have good influence and ample opportunity. A well-fitted galley, swift, and manned by a crew of stout fellows bribed to secrecy, will be waiting for us at the foot of the palace steps, where the imperial ship lay ready on the night of Nika. We must not fail in meeting there. You must go back to Marcen now, keeping up pretence of friendship and putting him off with various pretexts. But what noise was that? There is something moving in the shadow yonder! Quick, Rhesus, with your javelin; you used to be a good thrower."

The short shaft left his friend's hand as he spoke. It sang in a bright curve towards the moving form. The form leapt sideways into the semi-light, and the dart fell harmlessly. Then, as the friends unsheathed their swords, a dozen figures started into life along the wall. More barred the outlet of the way, and a group sprang up behind.

As they closed, with drawn weapons, Rhesus recognised in the face of one the passion-distorted visage of Marcen. The friends were caught in a trap.

As the hired accomplices of Marcen closed upon them—they were gladiators, hungry for all and any sort of work now the arena was closed—Rhesus felt the wild frenzy of deferred revenge leap up strong within him. He was fighting against the wall, for life and all that made life dear; and before him was the man whose cunning had been his ruin and whose fate he had had in his hands three times already and yet foolishly spared. He was roused.

"This time," he said to Proclus, as they hewed at the foe in unison, "the traitor shall not escape!"

Though outnumbered ten to one, they resisted stubbornly, and after the first rush, the ardour of the assassins cooled somewhat. Marcen drew them off, and tried to make terms. Rhesus would not have listened, but Proclus said why not rest awhile, and had his way.

"I thought you a man of your word, Rhesus," said Marcen. "When in fairness you promised me one half, I thought you meant it. But I deem it best to make sure of any man, so I followed you here. Growing suspicious, I made bold to learn your business with this fellow whom I thought we had done with long ago. I have heard your pretty scheme in detail. It was well that I came prepared for all emergencies. But to save further killing and unseemly riot, and to avoid the attention of the city guards I will make you a peaceable offer. I will give you one third of the treasure if you will put down your blades, come with me, and unlock the door."

Rhesus laughed disdainfully, telling him to make such terms with a coward or a fool.

"You are in my power," he replied sullenly.

"This is truly an amusing affair!" cried Proclus. "Here we are in his power, and he cringes to us for a secret! Come, let us be going home!"

"If I betray you to Theodora—what then?"

"Why, you would not be long after me to the galleys or the gibbet, man," laughed the cynic. "But make way, there, we are in haste!"

The mention of the galleys stirred up an evil memory in Rhesus, and together the friends dashed forward at the ruck, Rhesus making the traitor his mark. The blow caught him, but their attack was so sudden that he could not stay to make sure. The gladiators were taken by surprise, and hurling three to the ground, the friends got through and tore down the street, the others following in hot pursuit.

It was almost too dark to see their way. The dogs that snarled over the offal in the gutters came near tripping them often. But they both knew the city well, and down this alley and that, across this square and through that deserted arcade, they dodged and ran. Their lives hung on their speed, yet those behind dogged them stubbornly, and gradually gained. Rhesus found that he had lost the staying power of his younger days. The rowing hold had done its evil work too well. At last, in the middle of the long street before the great church, he began to flag, and bade Proclus go on.

"Save yourself!" he said. "I can run no farther."

"But you must come some way," cried Proclus. And he lifted the other to his shoulder with a strong effort. Sundry arrows flew past as he ran on again thus burdened, and the pursuers quickly drew up. This was not to Rhesus' liking, and he felt relieved when he heard the rumble of a chariot and Proclus set him down. The latter had almost run into the tardily-moving vehicle. They were not slow in taking advantage of its opportune appearance. A bishop, going home late from some synod or other drunken feast, sat alone in it, asleep. His charioteer had evidently left him to his own devices. His plump hands were locked on his fat paunch, his head thrown forward, his chin half buried in the wine-sodden folds of his costly robe. They had neither pity nor respect for him, and while Proclus held the horses, Rhesus roughly bundled the pious sot into the road. They sprang in and seized the reins; and as the pursuers came panting up, cracked the lash and shot away.

The startled steeds, cheated of their quiet amble, dashed forward furiously, and so, shouting defiance to the baffled foe, the friends tore on, rattling and plunging, through the dim and peaceful streets. Some of the folk, ever fearful, threw open their lattices and shrieked for the soldiery, others ran after them a little way, and once a group of night watchmen, emerging, reeling, from the friendly shelter of an illicit inn, tried to stop them. But they still held on madly. They heard behind a rolling rattle that was not the echo of their own swift-turning wheels, and knew that Marcen had found a friend in need and was not yet shaken off.

"We shall get out here—I know the place well," said Proclus, as he pulled up before a great, grim house. "I have long had this ready for emergencies."

Rhesus followed him, and left the chariot standing empty by the doorstone. As Marcen's car rolled into view, they lifted the latch and passed into the house, bolting the door on the inside. Passing through many rooms and long passages and strong doorways, they came to a stable facing the street beyond. Here a horse stood harnessed, with a light car bright and greased, and an attendant ready attired. A few seconds and they were in, and off again, flying swiftly and softly, like the wind. This time they were unpursued, they thought, and threading their way through many obscure alleys, made for the ruined convent of St. Conan, under which lay the gold so coveted, so hard to obtain.

(To be concluded.)

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RAPID METHOD
OF BANISHING
SUPERABUNDANT FAT.

Astounding Success in the Treatment of Obesity.

GOOD NEWS FOR STOUT PERSONS.

Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month, with the greatest posible benefit in health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight 11lb. or 21b. daily, as the weighing machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an undoubted success; and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring recorder. The treatment aims at the actual root of obesity, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that on sending three penny stamps a book, entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of Press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals—British and foreign—and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had, post free, from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

The following are extracts from other journals:

MARVELLOUS RESULTS IN CURING CORPULENCY.

We find a writer in a recent issue of that excellent publication the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, says: "The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month, with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive organs and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one or two pounds daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. The book, 'Corpulency, and the Cure' (256 pages), containing the 'recipe' can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, threepence."

We had the curiosity to send to this specialist, and found to our surprise that he had discovered a simple herbal remedy most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposed of the necessity of starving one's self if he wished to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions, reputed to be new medical discoveries, to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say 7lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only.—*Rochdale Star.*

TWO POUNDS OF FAT REMOVED IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderately lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispersing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2lb. to even 12lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any person can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing-machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body; but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetable knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful, but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation. But Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, 27 Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of "Corpulency, and the Cure," 256 pages, price threepence, stamps, post free), makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drunk as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for this book, which can be obtained at the address given above.—*Leeds Times*

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SHORT TRUTHS.

O. P. T.—Stout officers are unknown in the United States army, for the simple reason that no man weighing over one hundred and sixty pounds can join a cavalry regiment, while officers in the general service are likely to be retired for obesity.

T. C. has the misfortune to be cross-eyed, and wants me to tell him of a remedy.———If the squint is at all pronounced, I'm afraid there is nothing for it but the usual operation for squint. As he tells me he has worn glasses for two years, under medical advice, without effect, I am afraid nothing but this would meet his case. He had better consult his doctor as to the expediency of going to an eye hospital.

N. T.—No two birds fly in exactly the same manner. The style of their flight depends upon the texture and form of their wings, feathers, and tail.

W. A. D.—Yes, sardines are becoming alarmingly scarce, and this circumstance is most calamitous to the fishing population on the coast of the Bay of Biscay. It is supposed that the waters of the Bay have become colder, and that the sardines have, in consequence, migrated elsewhere. A very large proportion of the fish sold as sardines are, in reality, Cornish pilchards.

T. M.—All Ambassadors have the same rights and privileges at the Courts to which they are accredited, and precedence only follows the notified priority of arrival.

H. W. asks: "How is opium obtained from the poppy?"———By cutting the capsule of the flower with a notched iron instrument at sunrise. The next morning a drop or so of juice will have oozed out. It takes a great many poppies, however, to make a pound of opium, and it goes through a number of processes before it is ready for the market. In its liquid state it looks like dark strawberry jam.

R. D. S.—A locust is rather a dainty morsel to eat, especially the female, which tastes of green wheat. Both sexes are edible when fried in butter, or salted, or sun-dried, or "plain boiled." In parts of Beluchistan, they are munched raw.

Smythe asks: "Is it absolutely compulsory for every Britain to have a Christian name?"———Certainly not. There is no law to that effect. So long as Society is constituted as it is at present, however, you may be sure that human beings will be known by Christian names, whether they are bestowed upon them in the ordinary manner or not.

I am so often asked by my readers to tell them of a cure for stammering, that I am sure the following simple cure which has recently come under my notice will be of interest to many: The sufferer must fill his lungs by a strong inhalation before beginning to speak. This simple plan will often cure the most obstinate of cases.

K.—The Russian sceptre is of solid gold. It is three feet long, and among the precious stones with which it is studded are 268 diamonds.

C. P. T.—On the whole, asphalte paving wears better and lasts longer than either macadam or wood. It has been found that on a busy street macadam will wear at the rate of from five to six inches a year, while asphalte wears only one-fifth of an inch. Wood pavement will wear from five to six years in a busy street, and twice this length of time in less-frequented streets, while fifteen years on a granite road will not wear it more than two inches.

Ostler.—It is a mistake to suppose that a trotting horse has always one foot on the ground. Instantaneous photography has proved that a horse at full trot has all four feet in the air at certain points of its progress.

W.—Many people in this country believe that the kind of summer we shall have is forecasted by the weather on March 21st, and the winter by that of September 21st. In other words, those two days are miniatures of the summer and winter respectively. In Central and Eastern Switzerland the peasants pin their faith to "Gallus-Tag"—the festival day of their British apostle, St. Gall, October 16th. "As it is on St. Gall's Day, so it will be through the winter." "A dry Gallus-Tag foretells a dry summer next year." Those are two of the many sayings of the peasantry concerning the great day.

P. P.—The words put in italics in the Bible have been added by the translators in order to make clearer the meaning of the passages in which they occur.

"Do members of the Royal Family pay rates and taxes?" is the question put by Democrat.———Sometimes. It all depends. All their property which belongs directly to the Crown is exempt from taxation of any kind. For instance, all the royal estates and those lent by Her Majesty to her children are free; but they must pay for their private property in the same way as other people have to do.

Amateur—The green-room of a theatre was so-called because it was originally painted or decorated with green to relieve the eyes of the actors from the glare of the footlights.

D. H. W.—It takes three minutes for all the blood in the body to pass through the heart.

R. M.—The income of the Czar is two and a half millions a year.

Messenger.—The best carrier pigeon is the Antwerp or Belgian Voyageur, which can fly five hundred miles in twelve hours, if the weather be fine. One hundred miles is considered a long flight for London carriers; but the foreign flying matches are usually over distances varying between two hundred and five hundred miles.

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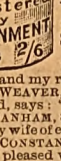

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 503. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 20TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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WE WILL PRESENT A BICYCLE FREE

to EACH PURCHASER of a bottle of PETROLINE, the New Remedy for the Hair, who fills in correctly the missing letters in the following sentences relating to our PETROLINE.

1. P- - - - - - - E P- - - - - - S P- - - - - E L- - - S
2. D- - - - - - - Y U- - - - - - - - - S
3. P- - - - - - - - - - Y R- - - - - - - - E
4. D- - - - - - - - - - Y I- - - - - - - - - - E
5. P- - - - - - - - Y I- - - - - - - - - - - E

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Promotes profuse Locks. Is directly uninjurious to the Hair, and its good qualities are particularly remarkable to all who use it. It is doubtlessly inirritative and perfectly indispensable to everybody. Is free from Odour, and invaluable for Dandruff, Scurff, etc.

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Do not delay but send AT ONCE for a bottle of **PETROLINE**, and grasp this opportunity to win one of these beautiful Cycles. Write your name and full address very distinctly, and put the name of this paper on the top of your letter. Keep the number of your Postal Order in case it goes astray. This Competition will close on September 30th, 1898. Prizes will be awarded and results posted during the following week.

YOU CAN HAVE THE BICYCLE AT ONCE

before the Competition closes; full particulars regarding this will be sent you when you receive the bottle of **PETROLINE.**

COPY OF RECEIPT. June 25th, 1898.

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(Signed) for the A.B. Cycle Co. Ltd. The Manager.

Please address The PETROLINE CO., 39 GROSVENOR RD., HIGHBURY, LONDON.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 503.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 20th, 1898.

IN THE DAYS OF NERO.

"GOOD day to you, signor."

I turned and saw my latest acquaintance, Father Ignatius, whom I had met under such interesting surroundings a few days before, when I had been in the same church.

"I was wondering when you would come and see me again," he remarked, when I had formally saluted him. "You promised to come and go through some of the old MSS. in the library. The invitation for you to do so was a real one."

I explained to him that I had been almost a prisoner owing to a slight attack of fever.

"Then why not have sent for me?" and he smiled.

"Oh, it was not so bad as that," I laughingly rejoined, but I could not for the life of me say whether his remark was in jest or earnest. "I am only too anxious to get at these MSS. of the past. This is my first day out, and as soon as I get into your delightful church, I see something to arrest my attention, and set my imagination to work."

"What is the mystery to-day, signor?"

"This," and I pointed to an inscription cut round the base of a marble pillar:

VALENSSACERDOSET. . . . . R.I.P.

Some name has evidently been erased; one can readily see that time has not been the eraser, but the hand of man. The remainder of the sentence is so distinctly cut into the stone."

"Well, signor, you have at once opened the way for the strangest of stories. For a long time that blank with the remains of letters puzzled me, for one can see, as you say, that the name has been deliberately obliterated which was meant to be commemorated together with that of Valens. I knew that tradition said that Valens was the first priest and founder of this church, and that before becoming a priest he had served with the colours under Suetonius—not unknown, I think in your own country," and he turned to me. "But come, take one more look at the inscription, if you care, and we will go into the sacristy, and you shall hear the story, if you wish."

I expressed my great pleasure, and he left me, returning quickly with a dusty bundle of parchments.

"Would you care to go through the MSS. yourself?" he asked, as he undid the tapes which bound them together.

"I would rather hear the story from you," I answered. The fact is, though I am a fairly good Latin scholar, I was not so sure about the abbreviations of monkish Latin. Another reason was, I knew my clerical friend sufficiently well to know that I should get the pith of the story and all that was worth hearing without the trouble of wading through superfluous matter. He was a critic, too, of no mean order, and would call my attention to doubtful parts.

"This," he said, "is not, of course, the handwriting of Valens, but it is the history of him written by one who had spoken to those who had talked with Valens. There is, I daresay, much that is exaggeration, but I am inclined to believe that the greater part contained here is genuine and authentic," and he turned over the parchments, evidently in search of some particular passage.

"Here is the part which refers to that inscription you noticed," and he read:

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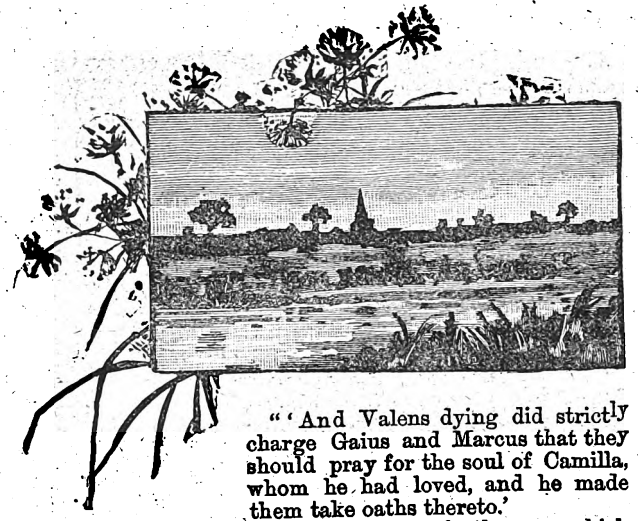


"'And Valens dying did strictly charge Gaius and Marcus that they should pray for the soul of Camilla, whom he had loved, and he made them take oaths thereto.'

"Then there is another passage, further on, which gives the very inscription:

"'So in accordance with the wish of Valens, Amicus, the stone worker, did inscribe VALENS SACERDOS ET CAMILLA R.I.P.'

"Once knowing the name, it is easy to see from the remains that the missing word in the church is Camilla. Did you notice the remains of some of the letters?"

"I was sure the first letter was C," I replied.

"Yes, this leaves no doubt. So I will begin the story. But first will you have some wine? No! Well then, smoke if you wish. I do not use tobacco myself, and therefore can offer you nothing, but I like to see other people enjoy it."

I thanked him, and lighted a cigar. "Now for Valens," I said, as I settled myself comfortably in the chair, and Father Ignatius sat up to the table with the MSS. and some notes of his own before him.

"Valens," he began, "was a young scion of one of the patrician families of the city in the days of the empire. As a child he was the intimate friend and playmate of Camilla, the only daughter of Servius Galba, who was then in charge of the legion of the Rhine provinces."

"Who afterwards became Emperor?" I interrupted.

"The same; but he came to the purple too late to help his daughter," he replied, and went on with the story.

"It was owing to the absence of the father that the mother of Valens received his little daughter into her own house on the death of the child's mother, and, being a widow, I suppose she looked forward to the little girl's company when Valens adopted the profession of a soldier. Not much is recorded of those early days, simply the dry facts. The luxury and elegance of the capital, and the manner of life of its nobles, apparently had no attractions for Valens, who, at a very early age, was placed in one of the military academies, and at the very earliest opportunity he was sent on into Gaul to serve under Suetonius, who, I believe, was related to him.

"Being a lad of good parts, and not spoilt by luxury, as were many of our youth at that period, and possessing a good constitution, the hardships endured in Gaul and Britain, where, for a time, he was with Aulus Plautius, were not long in making him a seasoned soldier. The bravery of his race was all there, and he rapidly won promotion. Soon after the accession of Nero, Valens was chosen by Suetonius as the bearer of the congratulations of the legions serving under him. He also carried a letter of recommendation to the Emperor, in which Suetonius spoke of his young *protégé* as 'one of the men who won the victories for the immortal Nero.'

"Cæsar received the young man graciously, and appointed him to a post in the palace. It may have been, perhaps, this special favour from the Emperor which prompted the young soldier to match himself against Burrhus, who was then Prefect of Rome, and about whom opinions differ.

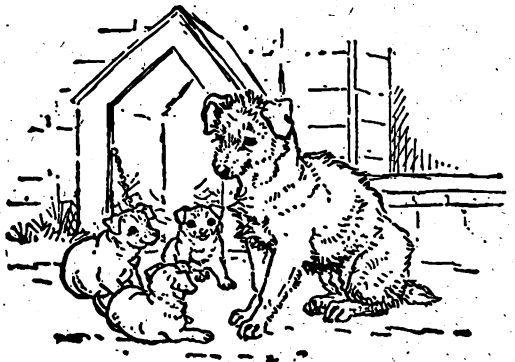
"During the time of his sojourn with the legions, many changes had taken place. His mother was dead, and Camilla, the playmate of his boyhood, was not only grown up, but engaged to marry the prefect Burrhus. This was the bitter part to young Valens. Knowing of their former friendship, he received a message from the prefect that any attentions on his part to the lady of his choice would meet with the disapproval of her lover. To this, and in fact to all his friends' entreaties, Valens gave no heed.

"He at once sought out Camilla, who was then one of the ladies attached to the court, and in spite of her engagement to the prefect, paid violent court to her. At first he reproached her for consenting to marry such a man as the prefect, who, although a Hercules in strength and as handsome as Apollo, possessed a heart as black and as base as any in Rome. His name was the synonym for the deepest vices and the grossest cruelties.

"Valens made no secret of his intentions. He meant to marry Camilla, and lost no opportunity of pressing his suit. All this was well known to Burrhus, who no doubt would have dispatched the young soldier at once, but the ardent lover was a great favourite at court, and the prefect had to be careful. However, he laid his plans with subtlety and bided his time.

"Meanwhile, the young soldier had so gained the affections of Camilla, that she, far from repelling his advances, encouraged him and asked Burrhus to release her. This he refused to do. Valens was warned that his life was in danger, and urged to leave the capital, but he laughed and calmly went on with his love-making.

"People wondered how it would end, for the prefect was not a man to be trifled with. Three times attempts were made to assassinate Valens, and each time the assassins answered for their audacity by their lives. Burrhus would have fought his rival gladly, but he



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feared the Emperor, and besides this, his plan was a better and safer one.

"At that time the blessed St. Paul was a prisoner in Rome, and this MSS. states that he and Valens often conversed together. It may have been. It is well established that the apostle was allowed considerable liberty, and that he made numerous converts in Cæsar's household.

"However, the love-making of our hero was cut short by his suddenly being arrested as a convert to this new superstition, as it was called. The writing says that he was dragged from the presence of Camilla by Tigellinus and Petronius Arbiter, favourite officers of the Emperor, and intimate friends of Burrhus.

"Camilla appealed to Poppæa, but this celebrated wife of Nero had not the influence then that she had in after years. However bad she may have been, there are many acts of kindness which should be remembered to her credit, and certainly she did her best for the prisoner; but the crafty prefect was too subtle for her.

"After two months of confinement, during which time various influences were at work on each side, the doom of Valens was pronounced. He should fight for his life with the gladiators at the next spectacle to be held in Nero's garden.

"Poppæa promised Camilla that she would be present when the fight took place, and stop the gladiator from killing Valens outright.

"This was one of the privileges possessed by the Empress at the public sports, and it was frequently exercised. Through it many noble lives were spared to years of usefulness.

"But here again the machinations of Burrhus were at work. Whether he had heard or anticipated this last resource of the Empress the record does not say, but certainly he was prepared for it.

"The distracted maiden was mad with grief, and in order to stay her marriage, feigned illness, and threw herself on the protection of Poppæa, who, to her credit, did battle nobly for the poor girl.

"Through her she was able to have one interview with her lover before the day appointed for his death. She had dispatched messengers to her father, Galba, but they had always been waylaid and slain by those in the pay of the man she hated.

"So the fatal day arrived, and the people assembled in the grounds of the Emperor to witness the sports; Valens was only one among many who were called upon to offer themselves as targets for the hacking of swords of the gladiators. The lust of blood which had prompted the ancestors of these Romans to deeds of valour, now urged them on to deeds of atrocious cruelty. The Christians on these occasions rarely made any effort to defend themselves; it was simply a massacre, and a torrent of blood.

"After some minor shows—a fight between a lion and a tiger, and the exhibition of a Gaul who fought without any weapon with a wolf that had been kept from all food for three days—the arena was cleared, and amidst the plaudits of the mob, and the flourish of trumpets, the condemned Christians were marched in, and placed in position. Among them was Valens.

"It was a cruel sight to see the form once so strong and handsome now so wasted with hunger and suffering, and the narrator dwells at length on his emaciated appearance. For a moment he seemed dazed with the fierce glare of the sun, so the old chronicler tells us; then he seemed to recover.

"A short sword was put into his hands, similar to what

was given to the other Christians, and he immediately turned towards the Emperor's box, and made the usual salutation of a Roman officer. Some slaves came out, and sprinkled more sand over the ground, and insisted upon the Christians taking up their swords, for most of them had thrown them on the ground.

"One man threw his weapon in the direction of the imperial box. There was a cry immediately of '*Christianus ad leones!*' and amidst the yells of the people, he was dragged off, and reserved for a more horrible fate, which I need not mention.

"Then a hush of expectancy fell on the throng as the gladiators marched in. It was noticed immediately that there was a new one among them. Contrary to custom, he wore his helmet closed, so that his eyes and nose were hidden, and he was in full armour. The stranger caused great excitement in the minds of the vulgar, and when he took up his position in front of Valens, whose fate excited most interest, the name of the unknown was eagerly inquired, but no one could, certainly no one did, get any answer. 'A Hercules!' 'A Pollux!' the people shouted. Alongside of Valens, who was tall, the newcomer looked a giant. However, the signal was given. Valens made a desperate effort to break his chains."

"Surely," I ventured, "they did not fight in chains?"

"Yes, they did. Chains were attached to their ankles and their wrists, sufficient to allow the free use of the arms, but still placing them at a great disadvantage, for it was not meant that the Christians should escape or defend themselves with any chance of success, but just sufficient to add interest to what was really a massacre. The manuscript says that when the combat commenced Poppæa hid her face behind her hands, and never looked up till all was over.

"None of the other Christians attempted to defend themselves, and they were ruthlessly hacked to pieces. Much to the surprise of everyone the lover of Camilla resolutely gripped his sword, stood on the defensive, and occasionally gave a thrust; but he was greatly hampered with his chains, though they were not heavy. They are still kept among the relics of this church. I can show them to you afterwards. Remind me when I have finished."

I nodded, rather impatiently, perhaps, for I was interested in the narrative.

"Well," he went on, "the people shouted with delight, pleased at their citizen soldier showing spirit, Christian though he was, and cheers rent the air as the two closed with clash of swords. Everyone felt it was only warding off his death for a moment or two, but again and again

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Valens exhibited exceptional skill in the way he received the savage blows of his mailed antagonist.

"'Well parried, by Bacchus!' they shouted. 'By Pollux, if the Christian were not hampered with those chains, the gladiator's pay would go to his next of kin,' shouted another. It is easily seen from the MSS. how the old Roman spirit of the Christian writer is stirred by these recognitions of courage.

"Still, there was no doubt in the minds of the spectators as to the ultimate victory of the gladiator. 'He but plays with him,' cried one. 'By Bacchus, that was a near one,' as the sword of the stranger flashed for a moment over the head of Valens, and here the chains saved his life, for as he threw up his sword to guard, they acted as a shield to his head.

"For a moment they paused for breath; then the gladiator opened with a quick succession of passes, but gained no advantage. Their blades clashed and rasped.

"Valens was now acting purely on the defensive, and appeared to be fighting with greater coolness since his narrow escape.

"His eyes burnt, and there was a set, determined expression on his face. He seemed to know exactly where each blow would fall, with a prescience which the very desperateness of his position no doubt brought out. You see, he could not lunge at his antagonist, for, with the posture which he was constrained to adopt through his chains, he was not free to balance himself, and a fall was fatal.

"Still the fight went on.

"He skipped about more nimbly than his opponent, whose armour was every moment becoming more of a disadvantage by reason of its weight and the intense heat, and he would have done better without it. Valens, in spite of his privation, was showing less of fatigue. The shouts had ceased now, and the people gazed in silence at the desperate struggle in which the odds were becoming more even; if anything, they were in favour of Valens, but as yet he had not succeeded in drawing blood from his enemy, as far as could be seen. It was hot work. The two combatants lost no breath over words. Neither had spoken since the fight began and they had now been at it fifteen minutes. The gladiator would gladly have had a pause, but as soon as he showed signs of relaxing, Valens plied him so savagely with his quick thrusts, that he had to keep going or succumb.

"The physical condition of Valens was now manifestly superior, and if he could keep it up, the gladiator must go down through exhaustion. This he evidently grasped as well as the spectators, for he now threw all science to the winds, and bore down on Valens with a wild, desperate cry of vengeance.

"Suddenly there was a yell, as the sword of the unknown caught and shivered that of the Christian into a dozen pieces; but, quick as lightning, before his opponent could recover his balance after the sweeping stroke he had made, Valens sprang in upon him, and brought his chains down behind the neck of his antagonist, and the two rolled on the ground together. The gladiator was uppermost, but before he could shorten his sword to give the final stab, the chain was tightened about his neck with desperate, merciless strength, and Valens rose from the deadly embrace, victor.

"The great Emperor leant forward from his box and clapped his hands. Petronius and Tigellinus rushed forward to see to the vanquished man. When they succeeded in removing the head-gear, which had crumpled up like a piece of cardboard with the strength Valens had used upon it, the gladiator was found to be none other than Burrhus, who had managed, through Tigellinus, who was responsible for the organisation of the shows, to take the place of one of the official gladiators, so as to be sure of his vengeance upon the man who had stolen the heart of the beautiful Camilla, and his cunning had over-reached itself.

"He was not popular, and there were few to mourn his death. Nero, who had manifested the keenest delight during the struggle between the two, now loaded Valens with substantial marks of his favour, and certainly he managed to preserve his life through those troublesome times, which is truly wonderful when we remember the edicts against those professing the creed of Christ, and the relentless cruelty of the measures adopted to exterminate them.

"Soon after his desperate fight with Burrhus, he married the playmate of his youth, Camilla, with whom he was permitted to have, for those days, a long period of uninterrupted happiness.

"For many years he was a prefect in your own island of Britain, where his rule was distinguished for its tolerance.

"While there, Camilla died, and he returned to Rome and sought Holy Orders. He is supposed to have been the founder of this church, but there the authority is legendary. Possibly the congregation to which he attached himself took possession of the old home of paganism here, and turned it into a Christian place of worship; but that must, I fancy, have been years after, when happier times had come upon the church. That is one of the original pillars of the older edifice where you noticed the inscription."

"Why was the name of Camilla obliterated?"

"That was done in later times. Probably it was a concession to the strict rules of celibacy when it laid hold upon Christendom. Another point is—there is no absolute proof that Camilla did become a Christian, and it would be repugnant to all ideas of ecclesiastical order to have the pagan inscribed inside a consecrated building. Come into the library and I will show the chains which Valens wore in the memorable fight. There is no reason to doubt their genuineness, as they are mentioned in our records hundreds of years back. It might be worth your while when you go back to see whether you can discover any memorials of him while he resided there."

ATHOL FORBES.

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A BARRISTER'S FEE.

HILLTHAM had been a residence for gentry when London was small. As the metropolis had spread out its octopus arms and had embraced Hilltham, some of the gentry had left; but those who had stayed formed an exclusive set and looked upon the newer comers with contempt.

Every family of the exclusive circle could boast of its descent. They had not all lived in Hilltham since the days of the Tudors and Stuarts, but they had been there for three or four generations. They had managed to keep the old houses—most of them now modernised—in their exclusive possession, except one. But for that blot they would have been happy.

A mere nobody—a Mr. Davis, dealing in iron or something in the city—had bought the best of the old houses, in their very midst! And this man was a parvenu; his father had been a grocer in a small way in a provincial town. The man had absolutely no family traditions, no ancestors. It was terrible.

His son, Robert, was a rising young barrister, a man who would undoubtedly make a mark in the world, and quite a gentleman. But even that did not soften the exclusive set.

Such being the state of things, just imagine the dismay of Mrs. Cone, one of the leaders of the exclusives, when she discovered by chance that Robert Davis and Elsie Cuyler, the descendant of an old Dutch family which had settled in England a couple of centuries ago, had fallen in love with each other! Just how it happened she did not know; probably at some ball in town.

The lovers had just learnt that she had discovered their secret, and were discussing the subject in a palm-screened corner of Mrs. Martin's great ball-room.

"You are quite sure it has got about?" asked Bob for the twentieth time.

"Sure! Mrs. Cone will be over by to-morrow to condole with mamma. Goodness knows why she hasn't been before—she must have had an attack of something—for nothing but illness could keep her away."

"There's nothing for it, then, but to see your father in the morning," said Bob, gloomily.

"There couldn't be a worse time," said Elsie. "He's so put out about that lawsuit of his; there's a hitch somewhere, and yesterday he heard that his lawyer, Mr. Bull, was ill, and couldn't conduct the case; he's in a terrible way about it."

"It's a great pity about Bull," said Bob. "They are afraid it is softening of the brain. It was sad news to me, for he's been a first-rate friend of mine, the dear old man! I have always thought, though, that he took the wrong view as regards that man Hatch. I suppose that is where the hitch you speak of comes in, for there's a hitch somewhere."

"Why, what do you know about it?"

"Well, the truth is, I have been working up the case a little on my own account," said Bob. "It's rather out of the ordinary run, and interested me, and then in a way, it was your case, you see. Bull and I have talked it over several times. I told him I thought he was wrong about Hatch."

"This suit has been father's one thought for years, almost," said Elsie. "I don't know what he'll do now, I'm sure."

"Well, I'll see him to-morrow," said Bob.

"It won't be a bit of use," sighed Elsie. "Oh, Bob, if I could only give you a few dozen of my grandfathers! Goodness knows I don't want them! It does seem to me so ridiculous that I can't marry whom I please, just because two hundred years ago some Cuyler or other founded the family—as they call it! Just as if he had popped up ready-made like a mushroom! Why didn't that Cuyler die young and leave us unfounded?"

Elsie made her absurd little speech with a laugh, but the laugh was almost a sob.

"Can't you see me at fifty, Bob," she said, "prim and faded, and mildly dejected, with a taste for tea, and gossip, and good works; and not even a cat for company, for I hate the sight of them! Can't you see me, dear Bob?"

"You will be my dear wife long before that," said Bob, taking both of Elsie's hands in his. And there was so much quiet determination in his tone that she felt quite comforted.

"I made a vow that I'd win you," went on Bob, "and win you I will, if you'll only be true to me, Elsie."

"Bob," said Elsie, "I can't promise to marry you without their consent, but I'll love you, and I'll wait for you all my life, dear, dear boy."

It is an easy thing to vow vows. Nothing is simpler—an impulse—a breath, and it is done—but oh, the keeping of them!

Bob had sworn, glibly and hopefully enough, to win his true love in spite of all. It was easy to be hopeful while music throbbed and swayed, and his sweetheart was at his side; but later, when the lights were out, and

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the music silent, and his sweetheart away, things assumed a different aspect.

Win her? Yes! In that resolution he never faltered, but a great impassable "How" rose up before him and blocked the way. Night, however, brings counsel, and when Bob had finally turned in, though his head, indeed, was a whirl of chaotic ideas, light beamed over chaos; the creation of his plan had begun.

"Are you training for a walking match, Bob?" asked his father at breakfast. "You kept me awake half the night tramping over my head. Next time you have a troublesome case, my son, do, at least, in mercy to me, take your boots off. Was it a troublesome case, my son, or a bad conscience?"

"Neither," said Bob; "it was a troubled mind this time. The fact is, father, I'm going to be married."

"Well, you're frank at least, and certainly there is something refreshingly sudden about you, Bob! When is it to be? To-morrow?"

"In about twenty-five years' time, father, I should think," said Bob, gloomily.

"I'm glad you give one time to get used to the idea," laughed Mr. Davis. "You quite took my breath away. Who is she, my boy?"

"It is Elsie Cuyler, father," said Bob.

Mr. Davis sprang to his feet.

"Look here, my son, haven't you more pride than to let one of that family play the fool with you? A girl with no more heart—no more truth——"

"Don't, father, please," interrupted Bob. "I can't let even you say a word against her—I love her too well."

"But, Bob, my boy," stammered Mr. Davis, "I tell you I know what they are! They are all alike, root and branch—they are all alike heartless and false; I ought to know—I suffered enough at their hands!"

"Not Elsie, father," interrupted Bob again.

"And prouder than Lucifer."

"But not Elsie," said Bob.

Mr. Davis groaned.

"Now, my dear old father," said Bob, throwing his arm caressingly over his father's shoulder, "nothing you can say will shake my faith in her. She has the pluck to stand out against any Cuyler or anyone else."

"Well," said Mr. Davis with a sigh, "have your own way, Bob. I won't stop you if you think you are right. I don't see how you are going to get her, though."

"I've got a plan in my head," said Bob. "I'm going down to see Bull about it."

The immediate result of Bob's visit to Mr. Bull was two notes. One, addressed to Peter Cuyler, Esquire, was as follows:

DEAR CUYLER,

Come to my house, if you can, some time either to-day or to-morrow; I am forbidden the office. I want to see you about the suit. Robert Davis has just been in, and he struck me as just the man to take it. He has the whole case at his fingers' ends; has been studying it very carefully. I verily believe he has hit on a solution of the Hatch difficulty—cleverest thing I ever heard. I don't think you could get anybody better to carry the case up for you. He is young, of course, but his law is sound, and he is wonderfully keen, and a brilliant speaker. If you think well of it, I will have him meet you here at any time you name, so the sooner something is settled the better.

Yours very truly,
J. BULL.

The other note ran:

MY LITTLE SWEETHEART,

Just a little line to tell you that I shall not see your father this morning, after all. I have a new plan which I will explain to you to-night at the Freemans'. Meantime, suppress Mrs. Cone. Until to-night, my darling, good-bye.

Hastily, but ever faithfully, BOB.

While Elsie was still poring over Bob's note, she was hastily summoned to her mother's room, where she found Mrs. Cuyler in tears, a telegram in her hand.

"Your grandmamma, my dear, your poor, dear grandmamma," sobbed Mrs. Cuyler. "Your Uncle Richard has just telegraphed me to come at once—and I'm afraid it is the end. She is so old; ninety-five her last birthday."

Whereupon Elsie, although her grandmamma had known neither her nor anyone else for ten years, was quite conscience-stricken to find that her keenest feeling was one of rejoicing in that her mother, for a time at least, would be out of reach of Mrs. Cone's tongue.

Immediately all was bustle and confusion in the Cuyler household.

Just as the footman was putting Mrs. Cuyler's travelling-bag in the carriage, Elsie, glancing out of the window, saw Mrs. Cone standing on her doorstep.

"She is coming," thought Elsie, with a sinking at her heart.

"Dear mamma, you will lose your train!" she cried; and straightway she hustled slow, stout Mrs. Cuyler, breathless, but still expostulating, bodily down the stairs.

And just as Mrs. Cone reached the door the carriage rolled rapidly away. And Mrs. Cone simply said good morning to Elsie and walked on.

"What an escape!" gasped Elsie, sinking exhausted into a chair. "In another minute she would have suggested driving down with mamma; I am positive she would. Poor mamma," she added with a little tardy compunction; "I hope she won't have very long to wait at the station!"

Bob threw himself heart and soul into the study of the intricate, puzzling case, which had dropped from Mr. Bull's failing hands into his strong grasp. For Mr. Cuyler had taken Bull's advice and given the case to him.

The case at the time of its first trial had made quite a stir in the legal world. Consequently, could he only lay his finger on the weak spot which he felt existed in the enemy's defences, and succeed in reversing the decision of the court, his name was made. He would then, he felt, be in a position where he could more confidently urge upon Mr. Cuyler the request for his daughter's hand in marriage.

The case was expected to come on in August, and until then it was decided to keep Elsie's parents in ignorance, if possible, of their daughter's revolt against family traditions.

"It isn't exactly like deceiving them, you know," said Elsie somewhat casuistically. "It isn't as if we were going to see each other all the time; as long as we aren't, there certainly can be no use in making everybody unhappy."

"No use at all," said Bob, decidedly. "Of course, I would rather fight it out fair and square. I hate concealment and all that, but when it comes to fighting a lot of ghostly grandfathers, why, I don't see that there is anything for it but to meet them on their own ground, as it were."

Fate had conspired with these young lovers to keep their secret from paternal ears. Mrs. Cuyler, after her mother's death, decided not to return at once, but to have Elsie join her, and to go across immediately to the Riviera for a few months' rest and change. Mrs. Cone therefore, had found no opportunity to enlighten Mrs. Cuyler as to those tell-tale glances and hand-clasps.

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This was to be the last meeting before Elsie left.

They had strolled away together in the sunshine under the soft, feathery elm branches. Everything about them thrilled and throbbed with life and hope and gladness; and their hearts thrilled, too, in unison.

Time passed. The case was reached and heard, and the judges were to give their decision in a fortnight.

Bob had fought his fight well, and had made two or three telling points in his argument.

Little thought those learned men, sitting so solemnly, that romance was masquerading before them in legal array; that a bride as well as a decision was being asked at their hands.

The decision was given. Bob had won!

Old Cuyler's enthusiasm knew no bounds, and he offered to make an addition to the fee.

"I am glad to have been of service to you," said Bob, and after a while he named the price of that service.

"The *fee* I ask is possibly an unusual one," he said. "But you have been good enough to speak of my services as having been of great value to you."

"Eh!" interrupted Mr. Cuyler, sharply.

"Your very kind appreciation, therefore, emboldens me," went on Bob, undisturbed, "as does my knowledge of the importance of this decision to you——"

Mr. Cuyler fidgeted nervously.

"And leads me to hope that you will not think my demand unreasonably great."

"Well, well, out with it! You make as much preamble as though you were asking—asking for a fortune!"

"Mr. Cuyler, I ask as my fee your daughter's hand," said Bob, calmly.

"What, sir!" cried Mr. Cuyler, his red face aflame, "You—you——!"

"I have loved her for years," said Bob.

"You—you nobody! do you dare tell me!" stammered Mr. Cuyler, fairly speechless with indignation.

Bob bent over the peppery old gentleman, holding him down in his chair with one strong, young arm, and looking him full in the eyes.

"Now, Mr. Cuyler, listen to me," he said quietly. "Marry your daughter, I will, either with your consent, or without it, as you please. I will take your consent as my fee. If you refuse it I must, of course, express my demand in pounds, shillings, and pence; and I warn you I shall not insult your daughter by naming a paltry sum as her equivalent.

"You said addition to my fee; but no fee was named!

"I shall then, as I said, marry her without the consent you refuse. I swear I will! You have your choice. Don't answer me now—take till to-morrow to decide; talk it over with Elsie. Possibly you may conclude that to accept my proposition will be the wisest and pleasantest arrangement that you can make, as it certainly is the best from a financial point of view."

"You are a clever young dog! I'll say that for you," fumed Mr. Cuyler.

"Thank you, sir," said Bob pleasantly. "Think over my suggestion, will you? Good-morning. I'll see you to-morrow."

That evening the Cuylers' man-servant actually went up the Davis steps, and pulled the Davis bell handle. Mrs. Cone saw him do it. He left a note, which Bob tore open breathlessly and kissed a dozen times. She saw him through the Davis window. Mrs. Cone was terribly agitated. She hungered and thirsted after the knowledge of what that note contained.

It said:

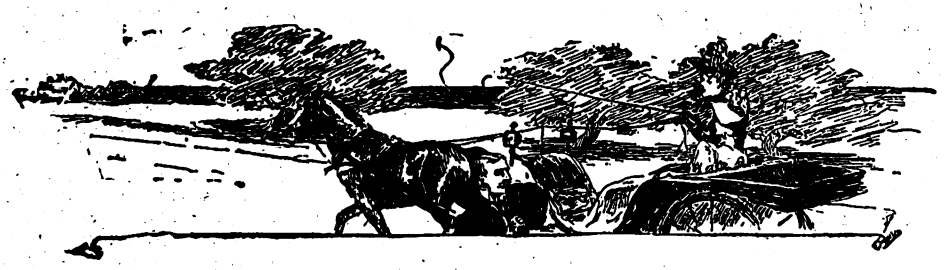
Oh, Bob, dear Bob, it's all right, they have given their consent at last, and I am so happy! Come over at once; they are expecting you. Don't look for an over-cordial welcome, though. I have tried to impress upon them that 'he gives twice who gives quickly,' but it doesn't seem to affect them. There has been a battle royal, but we have won the day, and nothing else matters, and oh, Bob—I love you—love you—love you.

Yours for ever,
Elsie.

And so, when spring again came, there was a wedding over which discussion waxed fast and furious among the exclusives. All the matrons shook their heads, and all the maidens applauded. The presents were superb. Mrs. Cone herself sent a lovely set of dear little devotional books, bound in white vellum, with such a sweet little note.

The wedding itself was like all other weddings, except that perhaps the bride was prettier than some brides are, and that the bridegroom looked more radiantly triumphant and happy.

Gordon Martin.



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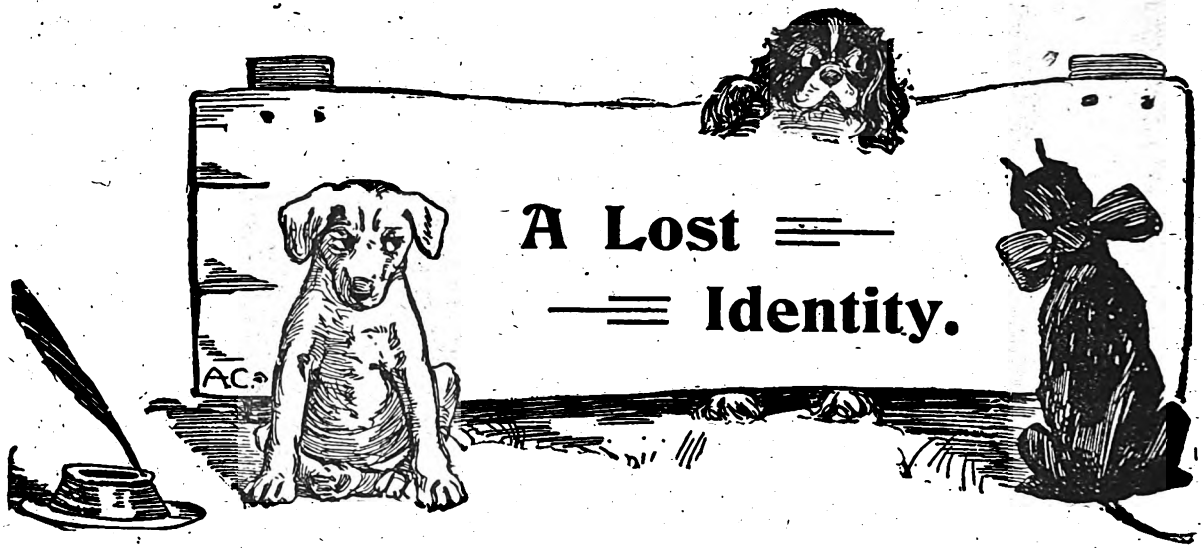

A Lost Identity.

"ADAMS is a good man," said the detective-inspector. "He is persistent, and has ideas of his own. We've about given up the Foster murder, but Adam still sticks to it."

"Where'd you get Adams?" asked the chief of police.

"Volunteered; said he'd just come out of the hospital after a short illness—was a stranger, and had nothing to do; had been reading accounts of the murder and wanted to try for the reward, so I let him go ahead. He had done detective work before. He claims to have two clues—a broken iron seal and a torn piece of coat lining. Here he is now."

A man of about thirty-five entered the room where the two officials were sitting.

"Anything new, Adams?" said the inspector.

"Yes, sir," replied the newcomer, emphatically. "How could we have missed it? Look at that!"

Carefully he took from his pocket a large, white envelope stamped and post-marked. It was partially torn, but this much of the inscription remained:

"Mr. William Dryden, Fairfi——"

The inspector examined it curiously and then said, rather contemptuously:

"Why, Adams, we found a bushel of old envelopes in the dead lawyer's office. You haven't abandoned the seal clue?"

He winked merrily at the chief, but a moment later he bit his lips with vexation at his own stupidity.

"I have abandoned nothing, sir," replied Adams with some heat. "We have accounted for every person we know of who entered the lawyer's office the morning of the murder. We have missed this man Dryden. Examine the post-marks on the other side, that of Fairfield of August 15. Dryden received that envelope on the morning of the murder, came straight to the city and went to Foster's office with it. How else could it have got there? Dryden killed him, and I am going to get Dryden."

The following morning Adams was on the way to the suburb of Fairfield. During the long sleepless hours of the night the name of Dryden had haunted him. He had tried his best to recollect who it was of that name he had once known, but at last he gave it up with a gesture of wearied resignation.

Notwithstanding his loss of sleep he was feverishly awake. He was on the eve of solving the great murder mystery. There was no one to divide with him either the honour or the reward, not even Jackson, an envious detective. What better avocation could he have chosen, and at a time, too, when the future had seemed so hopeless?

It was but a short ride to Fairfield. Adams went at once to the little hotel. As he inquired for a room he looked up at the portly landlord and casually asked:

"Got many people here?"

"A few, sir. The Bradburys, the Gillespies, old Mr. Dundon, and young Mrs. Dryden, poor thing!" replied the host in a way that indicated that these people were known to everybody.

"Why 'poor thing'?" asked Adams, catching at the words.

He tried to conceal his anxiety in the question, and felt he had failed. But the landlord was stupid and loquacious.

"Didn't you hear of it, sir? Her husband left here the middle of August and has never been heard of since. Some thinks he's dead, but his wife don't. He was only here once—I was away at the time. She never leaves her room now, except to go to the post office every day."

Adams was at the post-office the next day at the time when Mrs. Dryden usually went. He kept in the background, for he wished to see without being seen. Already he felt ashamed of himself. The idea of spying upon a broken-hearted woman and laying a trap for the one she loved, was something more than merely distasteful to him.

She came at last—a fair, golden-haired woman. Even at a distance he knew that it was she before he made an inquiry. As she drew near he retired behind a recess in the post-office and watched her with staring eyes. Slowly and with seeming reluctance she left the counter after her futile errand. In her face there was an expression of infinite sadness, yet in her eyes still flickered the light of hope.

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Adams stood there long after she had disappeared—stood there knowing well that his mission was at an end. Never through his efforts would her husband be captured. Short as was the time he had seen her, he knew that he loved her. In his heart he felt there had always been just such an image of a gentle face.

Out of the post-office he drifted aimlessly. A number of people were coming from the railway station, where a train had just arrived. Suddenly his face flushed in anger as he recognised among the number his fellow-detective, Jackson. In a sort of frenzy he rushed at him and grasped him tightly by both arms.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"I came at a request——"

"Go back at once. I am going. There is nothing in it. Foster requested that the letter be returned to him immediately. That is the investigation of the envelope. I have seen Dryden and investigated everything. The man had nothing to do with the murder. Are you going?"

"Yes; but——"

"Then *go!*" screamed Adams, beside himself with impatient rage. "I will join you at the station. A train will be due shortly. Stay there or I'll—strangle you!"

Jackson looked at him in amazement, hesitated a moment, and then turned and walked back to the station. Adams watched him until he saw him enter the building, when he wheeled round and strode rapidly to the hotel. He would see her again, perhaps speak to her.

He entered the room which served as a sitting-room. There was no one there. He then walked out to the desk. The little dog-eared hotel visitors' book caught his eye.

With an exclamation of impatience at not having thought of it before, he was at once engrossed in the book. Page after page he went back over the names with his finger until he stopped as if checked by an electric shock. The little clock on the wall above him ticked off five minutes, but still he stood there, his eyes glued to the page and his finger at a name. Then he hurriedly tore the leaf from the book, and crushed it into his pocket.

A moment later, Jackson entered the hotel and started back when he saw Adams. But in the latter's eyes there was no longer any anger. Instead, he regarded the other detective calmly, but steadfastly. Jackson felt reassured.

"Adams, old man," he began, "what is the matter with you? I'm not here on your job; I'm here on another matter altogether. Show me up, landlord."

The two ascended the stairs. Adams waited awhile and then followed them. At the first landing he found himself in front of a room used by visitors to receive friends more privately. The door stood ajar. It was impossible not to have seen within, and he saw there the woman to whom his heart had gone out, conversing with Jackson.

Not long after that he was in his apartments in the city. He got out the broken seal and the torn piece of coat-lining and placed them upon the table. Then he sent for a doctor.

The doctor found him in a state of excitement, bordering on fever. But he was surprised to learn that he had not been sent for to prescribe for his patient.

"Doctor," said Adams, endeavouring to control himself, "when you treated me for my wound at the hospital, was there any scar left after it had healed?"

"Why, how did you learn it?" the doctor broke out involuntarily. "It is impossible for you to see it yourself without artificial means."

"I understand that. Was there anything peculiar about the scar?"

"There was, Mr. Adams; although I have never mentioned it before. The scar is in the shape of a Maltese cross. But you must not think of it."

The doctor never knew how it happened exactly, but he had hardly disclosed his secret when he found himself ushered out of the house and dismissed.

Adams went back to his room trembling, his forehead damp with perspiration.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "what made me think of it? What made me examine it?"

Then he snatched up the detached broken arm of the seal and brought it down heavily upon a pad of paper. The impression formed was a Maltese cross.

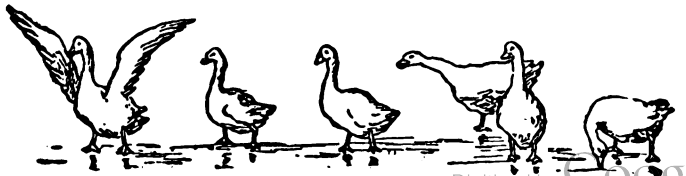
"Here! Here is where it is," cried the distracted man, as his hand clutched the back of his head. He staggered back as if to fall in a faint, when his distended eyes rested for a second on the piece of lining. A newly-born, unnatural energy seized him.

With the piece of lining in his hand he bounded to his wardrobe and tore down his clothes like a madman. He was not long in finding it—a light overcoat, with a part of the lining gone, which the piece matched and fitted. With clenched hands he raised himself to his full height and then fell upon the bed in a heap.

They found him there the next day at noon—Jackson and the lady from Fairfield. When they entered the room his eyes were like those of a man suddenly killed. At the sight of her, life seemed slowly to kindle in them, the eagerness, then struggling recognition, and then the light of a joyful awakening. As the wife threw herself into the arms of her husband, the veil lifted through which his memory had so long and vainly tried to peer. In the fraction of a second it all came back to him; his visit to the lawyer who had tried to ruin him; the murderous pistol in the hands of the other and his successful struggle to secure it; the cruel blow from behind with the broken seal: the renewed attack by the infuriated scoundrel; himself dazed and lapsing into unconsciousness, yet battling for his life, and finally the indistinct vision of a man beneath him, whose throat he grasped with tightly closed hands. Then he vaguely remembered staggering through the street.

Often again the hideous vision came before him, but he told no man or no woman what he saw. For his conscience had acquitted him.

ALFRED COX.



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Untold Tales of the Indian Mutiny.

By H. HUNTER.

III.—THE MYSTERY OF THE RUPEE NOTES.

I TELL the tale as I heard it told.

It was in a pleasant verandah overlooking the goomtee at Lucknow, three-and-twenty years after the incidents narrated had become part of the unwritten history of the great Sepoy Mutiny.

"Yes, India has made many, but it has marred some," observed a retired member of the Bengal Civil Service, who was revisiting the scene of his former labours. "I can recall one, a good soldier, an honest fellow, a thorough gentleman."

We waited for the story, and presently it came.

"Lucknow had fallen, the Kaisarbagh was a wreck, the Court was in flight. Captain Sterling, attached to the 4th Panjabese, covered with dust, grimed with powder, a blood-stained handkerchief bound tightly round his sword-arm, and his tunic cut and hacked to ribbons, wiped his streaming forehead and prepared to follow the orderly.

"He was standing amidst the *débris* in the Palace gardens, endeavouring by voice and presence to curb the savage fury of the looters, who were smashing whatever they were unable to carry away, when a message from the General summoned him to headquarters.

"Sir Colin was not great in strategy, though he laid his plans skilfully at Lucknow; as a commander he may probably have deserved the sobriquet of 'Crawling Camel' which was given him; but he was a good fighting man, and ever prompt to recognise the quality in another. A display of dogged pluck, a fine contempt of danger, coolness under fire, and a grand capacity for hard hitting—these were the things for which the General kept an open eye, and were the shortest roads to favour in Sir Colin's division.

"At the assault on the Shah Nujif, Sterling had led the Panjabese, who supported the Highlanders under McBean; and now, at the attack on the Begam Kothi, the Captain had again shared the honours with the Scotsmen.

"As they raced up to the walls, neck and neck, Sterling had noticed a lot of bamboo poles, such as natives use for hut-building, lying by a heap of stones near a ruined summer-house. He had no ladders, and thinking the poles might come handy, Sterling ordered his fellows to bring them along. It proved a happy thought. The bamboos were laid against the walls, and the men swarmed up like monkeys till, the poles breaking under the strain, the Captain, who was first man up, was left with only a handful of his own Panjabese and half a dozen kilted laddies, to negotiate matters inside with a thousand-and-odd Jack Pandies. And a very good account he gave of them. How many fell to each man's share 'twould be hard to say; but when the rest of the party got into the place, just fifteen minutes after Sterling had mounted the wall, the rebels were lying about thick as flies round a sugar-cask.

"The incident at the storming of the Begam Kothi was not the only brave deed done by Captain Sterling at the taking of the Royal city of Wajid Ali; but it was the only one which happened to be personally witnessed by Sir Colin himself.

"When Franks had got possession of the Kaisarbagh, and the capital of the Kings of Oudh was practically in the hands of the English, the General sent for Captain Sterling and thanked him publicly for the splendid service he had rendered; assuring him of speedy promotion and promising to consider him for the 'Cross.'

* * * * *

"Roy Sterling was the son of a clergyman in a manufacturing town in the north of England—the only boy in a family of five; a hard worker and devoted to his profession.

"By favour of the County member, a commission had been procured for him in the Bengal Army of the Hon. E.I.C.; and he had landed at Calcutta determined to win promotion and earn distinction. The Mutiny had given him a chance. He was coming rapidly to the front, but—Roy loved a woman!

"Mary Eastman was the daughter of an Englishman who had come out to India in the personal suite of a former Governor-General, and having subsequently obtained service in the establishment of one of the native Princes, had decided to remain.

"Until the outbreak of the Mutiny, George Eastman had been on the extensive Civil List of the King of Oudh. The stables and stud of the luxurious monarch, who had as many horses as wives, had been under the control of the 'cute Yorkshireman. The emoluments were large, but the pickings made them larger. Eastman was reported to be nearly as 'warm' as old Johannes, the Portuguese merchant, who traded in everything—State secrets included, and was said to know more of what went on, both inside and outside the walls, than any half dozen others—black faces or white.

"Of the unmarried 'regimentals' who came out to India in the pre-mutiny days, three out of five would have jumped at Mary Eastman and her handsome little 'dot' as a prize well worth the capture.

"The railways, the big ditch at Suez, and fast steamers, have made India to-day quite another country for Europeans from what it was before '57.

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"The number of marriageable white girls in the three Presidencies was then comparatively few, and the chances of a run home, unless for the 'bigwigs,' were too fine to be counted upon. Men went to India in those days to stay. Many never returned till they went back for good. Some made their homes in the country and lived out their lives there.

"The fact that Mary's father was in the pay of the King of Oudh, and probably without any scruple about shaking the Pagoda tree, would not have weighed a melon seed with men, most of whom suffered from chronic impecuniosity, and whose principal object in exiling themselves for an indefinite period was to rake in the rupees and retire.

"Mary herself was a finished little coquette — bright, piquant, attractive. She belonged to a class well-known in India—a class which has wrought a good deal of mischief, and ruined not a few promising careers. Greedy of admiration and fond of exercising the fascinations with which she was liberally endowed, she had no sense of prudence, and was unrestrained by domestic influence and healthy example. She had a soft, seductive manner, eyes which she knew how to use, a wonderfully well-shaped hand, and a voice which could either melt or thrill.

"As became her father's daughter she was a splendid horsewoman, and for all her winsome ways was absolutely fearless in the saddle. Wherever she appeared a crowd of men courted her. Her admirers could be counted by the dozen, her followers by the score.

"But the houses of the upper division of the Covenanted Service were closed against the daughter of the King of Oudh's Englishman, consequently the men who gravitated towards Mary Eastman were mostly of the military class and of the adventurer type.

"The European *entourage* of Wajid Ali Shah was composed chiefly of Portuguese, Italians, and a few crapulous Frenchmen—the offscouring of their respective nations. Above these George Eastman towered, metaphorically, by half a length; but he had touched pitch, and for that and other reasons was not acceptable.

"Lucknow in those days was quite the wickedest city in all India; and the Court, the wickedest quarter in all Lucknow. Mary had lost her mother before she was seventeen, and the atmosphere in which the girl had perforce to live was deadly. That she was no worse than fickle, flighty, and foolish, should stand to her credit.

"Amongst Mary Eastman's many admirers were two who had some reason to suppose themselves particular favourites. They were Captain Sterling and Lieutenant Rodgers. Both were a cut above the best of the bunch which usually gathered round the lady's saddle. Sterling was a poor man with no expectations; Rodgers had a competency and fair prospects. Neither properly came under the description 'adventurers,' and each had a family reputation which rested with him to maintain.

"The men were open rivals for the lady's hand, but it

A very good account he gave of them.

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would have been hard to say which had the better chance. The scales were held so evenly between them. Fond of fun, fond of flirting, fond of having her slaves at her feet, Mary played them off against each other, probably without intending any harm, and thinking only how jolly it was.

"Then came the rising at Meerut, the massacre at Delhi, the murders in Lucknow itself; and life suddenly assumed a more serious aspect, while all the joy and gaiety went out.

"After the first relief, under Havelock, Mary Eastman, who had found refuge with a friendly native in a house in the narrow streets at the back of the Kaisarbagh, seemed to have made up her mind that if ever she got out, Roy Sterling and no other should be the man of her choice.

* * * * *

"When Captain Sterling, wearied with the fatigue of four days' fighting, threw himself on his string bed on the night of the 15th March, 1858, to snatch a few hours slumber, it was the happiest moment he was to know in life.

"He had been personally thanked by the Commander-in-Chief, and had learnt that Mary Eastman was safe and well in the heart of the city. From the hand of a native who had inquired for Sterling *sahib*, up and down the camp, he had received a message from Mary herself. She was anxious, she said, to be assured of his safety. She was well, had adopted the dress of a woman of the people, and would come into the English lines as soon as it was safe to venture into the streets.

"Two days later an English lady in native costume came into Grant's camp on the Sitapur road, and inquired for Captain Sterling, giving her name as Mary Eastman. Roy, who was with Outram's division, did not see her.

"On the same day, Sterling received through the hands of the friendly native who had brought him the first message, a packet containing ten 100 rupee notes, together with a few lines signed 'M. E.'

"The writer begged he would accept the notes as a contribution to the commissariat, or hospital funds; 'or make use of them in any way you think fit. If you love me, Roy, you will find a pleasure in expending them for me.'

"Lieutenant Rodgers had looked in on Sterling at breakfast, with a bundle of I. O. U's—innocent looking bits of paper representing fifty pounds—money lost at cards, and pony matches, for sport, and love, and war, went on merrily side by side.

"'If Sterling could make it convenient to pay, the Lieutenant would be eternally obliged.'

"He was being 'pressed' by Captain 'Fourspots'; and Sterling, who had his own reasons for disliking 'Fourspots'—there had been a serious quarrel between the two twelve months before, over a disputed bet, and the Colonel had recommended 'Fourspots' to exchange. The chances of war, however, had brought the men together again. Sterling had promised to let Rodgers have the 'ready' after mess. He hadn't a notion when he made the promise, where the money was to come from, but he knew that 'Fourspots' would willingly sacrifice a few gold mohurs to secure a handful of his I.O.U's.

"When he opened Mary Eastman's letter and saw the ten 100 rupee notes—the rupee was then worth two shillings—Sterling's first feeling was one of relief. He had an uncomfortable notion that 'Fourspots' was seeking to possess himself of the I.O.U.'s held by Rodgers. Any qualms he might have felt about using the notes to discharge his gambling liabilities, vanished when he thought of his 'paper' in the hands of 'Fourspots,' and the use the man would probably make of it. Mary, herself, he felt sure, would think no worse of him. Her standard, perhaps, was not very high; but, having the wherewithal to put himself beyond the reach of his enemy, she would certainly consider him a Quixote to allow any silly scruples of honour to prevent him.

"Half the money would suffice to set him on his legs again, and in future he would take his Major's advice, and give no I. O. U's.

"'Put the cash on the table, my boy, at the beginning, and when the money's done, stop playing.'

"That was the Major's advice to the 'subs.,' and it was common sense.

"When he saw Mary he would tell her what he had done, and had no doubt what her answer would be.

"He took five of the notes, folded them, put them in his waistcoat pocket, and, passing them across the mess table to Rodgers, received back his I.O.U's in exchange.

* * * * *

"Eighteen-fifty-eight was drawing to a close, the back of the Mutiny had been broken, and the country was gradually becoming tranquilised. Captain Sterling, however, had heard no more of his promised 'step,' or of the V.C. for which he was to be recommended.

"Mary Eastman, he had heard, was staying with friends in Calcutta, but a letter which he had addressed to her had failed to bring a reply. The various columns and detachments were continually on the move, and the army post-office arrangements were very imperfect. There was nothing for him to do but—wait. Waiting has always played a large part in affairs Indian.

"At this time ugly rumours were flying round. An inquiry had been ordered by the Chief Commissioner for Oudh into alleged dealing in rupee notes by civil and military officials.

"Numbers of wealthy natives, who had taken no part in the Mutiny, had complained that rupee notes to very large amounts had been obtained from them by Englishmen for sums in cash that were insignificant beyond imagining.

"Notes for 1,000 rupees had been parted with for less than 50 in silver. The English buyers had spread it about that all 'paper' found in the hands of natives be would repudiated.

"Robbery was even alleged on a pretty extensive scale, as the Englishmen would buy 'paper' of any low caste native, who for a few annas would sell notes of the value of 100 rupees.

"Johannes, the Portuguese merchant, was reported to have identified many of the notes, which had passed through his hands more than once. The old dog took pay from both sides indifferently, and lined his pockets thickly. He professed to recognise every one of the notes which has been inclosed to Sterling. He had paid them away to certain traders for goods received, and these men now swore they were stolen from them to sell to English buyers.

"Captain Sterling, when asked to say how the notes came into his possession, declined. His motives were prompted by chivalry, but his refusal laid him open to suspicion. Not for one moment did he dream that Mary herself had obtained the notes by knavish duplicity; but he was not sure about Eastman. It was just the sort of thing that George Eastman might be likely to do. He had no particular reason for shielding

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Eastman, who had returned to Lucknow to look after his property there; neither do I think the personal side—the acceptance of the girl's money—weighed with him a featherweight. But her name was dear to him, and at any risk he would keep it out of a discreditable business.

"Life in India, however, is lived with doors and windows wide open. Privacy is practically unknown. Captain 'Fourspots' and another—besides any number of black faces—had seen a native hand a packet to Captain Sterling on a certain day; the native, indeed, was produced, and told an artless tale about a native woman, which didn't help the Captain. On the evening of that day Sterling, who had acknowledged he was 'short,' had discharged certain debts with rupee paper—being the said notes.

"Captain 'Fourspots' himself had received five, through Lieutenant Rodgers.

"Well, as Roy refused to open his mouth for Mary's sake, there was a strong circumstantial case made out against him.

"The thing dragged on for months, and eventually four men were declared guilty of illegal dealing in rupee notes, one of them being Roy Sterling.

"Many a good man said many a good word for Roy, but from Mary Eastman he heard nothing.

"The authorities were divided over the case of Captain Sterling, but early in '59 orders came from Calcutta, and Sterling was officially informed that the Government of India had no further use for his services, and was instructed to report himself in London by a date mentioned.

"At Bombay, some senseless idiot told him that Captain 'Fourspots' and Mary Eastman were to be married in March.

"I saw him for a few hours before he sailed, and was impressed that I should never see Roy Sterling again.

"One night, when the ship was in the Red Sea, there was a splash heard in the water. Next morning Captain Sterling was missing.

"Poor Roy had 'gone over.'

* * * * *

"The mystery was never properly cleared up. Years after, the native who brought the notes to Sterling, confessed that he had received the packet from 'Fourspots,' who had also instructed him how to act; and later, had coached him and others, for examination before the Commissioner's Court.

"The communication which Sterling received from Mary after the storming of the Kaisarbagh, I think was genuine. The letter which accompanied the notes, I take to have been a forgery.

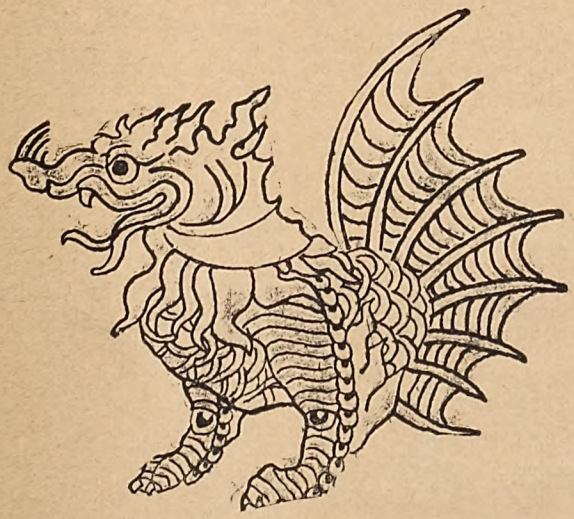
"'Fourspots' had known the Eastmans for some bit. George Eastman was just the sort of man to attract 'Fourspots'; and likely enough the Captain had sundry specimens of Mary's handwriting in his possession; while forgery is a fine art in India.

"Probably the white rascal had seen the black deliver the first message, and knowing the Indian character had determined to use him as a tool.

"What yarn the beggar pitched to the girl you may guess. She, of course, would put Sterling down as guilty. The 'crime' itself wouldn't shock her, but the consequences of being 'found out' would.

"Rodgers always said that he believed 'Fourspots' was responsible for Sterling's ruin.

"A braver gentleman, a better officer, India never saw, but the end was shame and disgrace, through mistaken loyalty to a woman who was unworthy."



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THE FOUR ARROWS.

A LEGEND OF OLD SYRACUSE.

THE jealous rage of Simetha, the sorceress, is the most powerful poem of antiquity; Simetha, who was betrayed by the Myndian Delphis and could not, by her charms, lure him back to her, had by this been made an implacable enemy of mankind and a blasphemer of love.

She had pursued for ages the impious works of witchcraft, and kept the island entirely under the spell of her sorceries. She was formidable to travellers belated on the shores, and was without mercy to the shepherds who guarded their flocks on the hilltops that were redolent with thyme.

In a cave whose murky depths were relieved only by the dull gleam of mother-of-pearl, whose entrance was almost obscured by the intertwining of briar bushes and the prickly thorn, and was only opened by the magic of a charm, dwelt the sorceress. On all sides of this uncanny cave were hung skeletons of symbolic beasts, and baleful herbs were drying in grinning skulls. There, when the shadows lengthened like the trail of serpents, and the moon was at its full, she brewed her magic poisons.

At her harsh cry, when the shore was dark, all the wicked spirits awoke, and there was a whirring of wings through the air, a crunching on the sands, and a furious crackling among the branches. Then they crept and crouched about the fatal door, awaiting the commands of the sorceress.

Simetha then became like an ancient sybil, her hair bristling like a flight of silver arrows, her face wrinkled and her sunken eyes glowing like embers. Her long teeth knocked together at each hissing breath, and above her shaggy eyebrows played phosphorescent lights.

In her three favourite beasts were imprisoned the evil spirits of the air, the earth and the water. These surrounded her, all impatient for the word of command that should let them loose.

The vulture, with his blood-stained beak, spreads his gigantic wings to sail through the air and cast a blight upon the harvest and a shadow upon joy everywhere.

The wolf bounds forth with open jaws to prey upon the bleating lambs across the plain.

The dolphin, with quivering fins, waits for the signal to plunge into the foaming sea and wreck some boat upon its tranquil course, when he appears upon the surface and sends forth from his nostrils spouts of water in his triumphant joy, beating the waves with his sinuous tail.

And these things happened, for they were transcribed from an old book of undeniable authority, a short time before the beginning of the era of mercy in which we live. The original manuscript having been destroyed at the burning of the library of Alexandria, a literal history cannot be given, only a rude sketch of this strange story.

Simetha was not alone with her evil spirits in her mysterious cave, where the penetrating incense of philters mingled with the rank odours of the mummies of animals and the savage breathing of her three companions, the vulture, the dolphin and the wolf.

Before the despised love for the Myndian Delphis had crazed her, widow as she was of one of the most honourable citizens of Syracuse, she had had two daughters, in whom her power had preserved their youth, at the same time maintaining the equal distance of age between them.

The elder, Thestylis, was the living portrait of her mother when in the full bloom of her once vaunted beauty. Thestylis was tall, and with the wealth of her luxuriant dark hair and the wonderful radiance of her beautiful eyes, was the living image in her marble whiteness of the Venus Victrix, made for the adoration of the helpless.

She had inherited in every way the diabolical nature of her mother, and Simetha had no more bitter and wicked counsellor than this superb creature, who smiled at suffering and danced to the unhappy wail of her victims.

Her hair floating like a fury's, she seemed to spread a darkness round her, and when from the promontory she gazed upon some shipwreck, or looking inland beheld the devastation of a burning field, the wreck of the harvester's toil, her flapping draperies seemed to cast a sinister shadow against the sky.

Unlike her (if anyone was ever like her) was the second daughter, Lilia, whom neither her mother nor her sister could draw into the orbit of their evil doings; as sweet in the virginal flower of her charms as they were inexorable in the fatal evolution of their destiny; made of the brightness discarded from the shadows of their souls, and of all the gentleness shut out from their being. She was a flower of purity in this garden of evil.

More slender than her sister, she was in the purity of her race the incarnation of all that was lovely and feminine, and inspired the sympathy of the good and the wise, for she was like a dream of perfect loveliness, upon whom the poisoned arrows of perversity could make no impression. And in reality she was a thousand times better even than she appeared to be, as her soul was more perfect than its radiant setting.

Even as a child she obstinately persisted in trying to rescue the victims that had fallen under the enchantments of her mother and sister, and often in the night when the sorceress had unchained the fierce wolf, Lilia might be seen, by the light of the stars, hastening toward the distant pasture to warn the shepherd, who, wrapped in his dark mantle, slept peacefully on, unconscious of his danger, with his sheep gathered round him. Or, standing on the edge of a cliff, she would signal to the venturesome sailor who was approaching the rock-bound coast, at the moment that the dolphin disappeared beneath the blue wave. And again she would go toward the mountain which lovers were ascending hand in hand, to put them on their guard before the devouring vulture had spread his great wings to descend like a thunderbolt on their heads.

Thus robbed of their prey, the rages of Simetha and Thestylis knew no bounds. Therefore, to prevent her interference in their machinations, when the hour for their dark deeds arrived, Lilia was imprisoned in the gloomiest corner of the cave, bound hand and foot with

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hempen cords, and in this prison, in her rustic chains, the child slept the sweet sleep of innocence, and wore upon her lips the smile of sweet dreams.

But when the sun was high, she was free; free to follow the flight of the butterfly, and listen to the songs of the birds.

Wandering through the meadows in her garments of white, she often stopped to listen to the rippling of the brook, which was as clear and pure as her own soul.

It was nearing the break of day.

It was the sweet and mysterious hour which frightens away the shadows of the night, and when the petals of the convolvulus tremble before opening.

Simetha and Thestylis had not yet finished their fiendish work; on the contrary, they were making haste to accomplish their dark deeds with feverish fingers, feeling that the hour for enchantments was slipping away.

Lilia was still imprisoned and was lying on her couch, pale and beautiful, with her hair loose and flowing, blending softly with the warm flesh tints of her arms, and contrasting with the harsh colouring of the hempen cords which bound her.

As the sorceress was watching for the first approach of the dawn, a flame of light in the eastern sky made them cry out with rage. But there were no rays from this light, as of the morning sun, and as the light drew nearer they saw it was a boat of gold, which was quickly ploughing the waves and making for the shore.

Simetha and Thestylis howled with a savage joy, like the osprey hovering above its prey. The boat was not empty, nor was it drifting, for a man stood at the helm and directed its course.

Soon they realised that it was from the brow of this mysterious sailor that the light came which illuminated the golden bark.

Suddenly, at a sign from Simetha, the monstrous and impatient dolphin, spurred on by the eager Thestylis, plunged into the blue sea, only a foamy crest indicating its track. Its approach to the boat was shown by a deep ruffling of the waters, which surged and swelled round it, while the vulture, let loose at the same time, darkened the sky with its great wings.

Soon a gigantic wave lifted the fragile craft, and, half opening, clasped it in its immense unfurlings. Then the dolphin appeared upon the surface, to gloat triumphantly over his evil doing.

But the wonderful sailor seemed to fear nothing. Standing at the stern, he drew from an invisible quiver an arrow of flame and pierced the monster between the eyes. With convulsive quiverings, it sank beneath the water, leaving a trail of blood upon the surface. Suddenly the sea became smooth and caressing, and hardly moved the boat which a moment before it had been ready to destroy, and the vulture, who thought that the fiendish work had been accomplished, with a flap of its wings returned to the earth.

The sky at once resumed its usual calm and suddenly were the colours of the rosy dawn mingled with the copper tints of the east.

When, with swelling sail, the boat approached, Simetha and Thestylis were filled with astonishment at the sight of the audacious stranger, who only smiled as he neared the shore.

He was young, with golden hair; his face was without beard, and he had a strange light in his eyes. He was clad in a robe of lily whiteness, the folds of which looked like the unrolling of petals.

Feeling that they were confronted by a superior being endowed like themselves with a mysterious power, Simetha resolved to meet him with stratagem. She composed her deceitful face, and from the lips of Thestylis came a sweet, weird song, like that of a syren, as they approached the stranger quickly to bid him a treacherous welcome.

The morning was already advanced, and the last stars were melting in the cerulean depths like the points of arrows burying themselves in newly-made wounds. Emerald tints blended with the purple of horizon and were lost in an azure mist.

The hour of enchantments was over, and the powers of darkness had passed. They must now wait for the coming of the night to attack the daring one.

And as the stranger alighted from his boat and made it fast to the shore, his tread upon the sand made it scintillate with light like falling stars.

Simetha received him with silent grace, for probably he spoke a language unknown to her, or he thought it useless to speak, as no word had as yet passed his lips, which still wore the same enigmatical smile that seemed to mirror his thoughts.

In the meantime a strange thing had happened. Thestylis, who, for a moment, had left her mother's side, returned transformed. She was not the same Thestylis; with coquetry she had bound her wealth of hair high upon her head and placed thereon a beautiful blood-red rose, and her sombre drapery had been artistically caught up on her shoulder and high on her hip, artfully disclosing the lines of her perfect form and the whiteness of her shoulder, as if the desire to please had for once overcome the desire to harm.

And Simetha admired her for the ruse she had employed to detain the stranger on the island until night, if not by the sentiment of love, at least by the sentiment of admiration.

But Simetha was deceived. Thestylis was sincere. She had obeyed a true feeling, and one new to her. Her soul more than her body was changed. Into her heart, withered by hatred, the smile of the stranger had entered, like a sea troubled and calm at the same time.

She already loved him of the long white robe, and struggled not against the sweet power of love which had thus suddenly been revealed to her. She longed to save him now, and for him would give up her life.

When Simetha withdrew to allow Thestylis to exercise her wiles upon the stranger, she, with an impassioned voice, broken by sobs, told him of the dangers that surrounded him, at the same time imploring him to stay. A woman's sacrifice is never complete.

He listened to her recital without showing any emotion, and it was certainly not from fear that he followed at her bidding, and it was not because he had misunderstood her warning, for only his serene smile and wonderful eyes answered her words.

Following a road which led to the cave, they entered, thus avoiding Simetha, who meditated his destruction, thinking that in this Thestylis was aiding her.

The stranger must be hidden until evening, thought Thestylis, who, taking him by the hand, led him through paths under the rocks known only to herself; but he had seen, through an opening in the granite rock, the sweet form of the sleeping Lilia, in her rude prison, which was closed imperfectly by brushwood from the light of day. Simetha and Thestylis had not awakened her at the accustomed hour, fearing that she might try to save the stranger.

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As soon as Thestylis had brought him to a place of safety, she told him to await her there, while she should go in search of fruit and wine. It was necessary to divert Simetha's attention, so Thestylis departed, turning many times, with a graceful movement of her supple neck, like the stem of a flower, to look back at him.

No sooner had she disappeared, than the stranger retraced his steps until he arrived at the door of the cell where Lilia slept. He tore aside the network of brambles, and, kneeling beside the young girl, he contemplated her in her innocent sleep. The sweet rhythm of her breathing seemed like the music of the oar upon the waters that bears one to the land of dreams.

With tears coursing down his beautiful face, he long and earnestly gazed upon this lovely image; then, with only the breath of a kiss, he awakened her.

A great joy shone in the eyes of Lilia. It was as if she had only changed her chains, to enter into the depths of an unknown gulf, a palace of peace.

Enveloped by a mysterious power, she obeyed the smile of the ever-mute stranger, and when he showed her by a gesture—a gesture full of tenderness and authority—the road that she must take along the shore, and then beyond the sea, she felt her yielding footsteps bearing her onward, and she closed her eyes that she might retain this sweet dream, far sweeter than any before.

She lost consciousness, and when her eyelids opened again her bright eyes looked like an icy brook which had been melted by the spring. She found herself in the fields, he who accompanied her walking by her side and taking her in his arms when obstacle barred the way. Thus the day passed, Lilia not knowing where her footsteps led her.

When the night came they saw a great fire blazing on the shore. It had been built by Simetha and Thestylis, who, in their fury, were trying to burn the boat, the one from rage and disappointment, and the other from a broken-hearted jealousy, and the mountains echoed with their angry clamour.

But the boat was of gold and could at most only become a molten mass, to spread its purple and yellow veins in every direction.

Simetha and Thestylis, certain that the fugitives had not been able to reach the shore, let loose the wolf, who, bounding over the plains with open jaws, caused a panic among the flocks. But this time the flesh of the stupid sheep was not what he wanted, nor did he even turn to look at the frightened shepherds, who, cowering, seemed like swallows flying low before the storm. The prey he sought was the two white figures clinging together at the noise of his approach.

The wolf saw at once his double prey, and with eyes glowing like balls of fire, crouched for the final spring.

Then the stranger quickly sent from his invisible quiver a second arrow of flame, which stretched the monster dead upon the plain. And it seemed as if in the death of the creature a great joy had fallen upon the earth.

The wandering sheep halted to bask in the warm moonlight, which, coming through a rift in the clouds, seemed to cast long white rays which crossed in their path a flight of moths, whose wings glistened as if of powdered silver. The shepherds, leaning upon their staffs, bowed their heads in thanksgiving. Then they all went forward to greet their liberator, to kiss his hands, and the white robe of Lilia, who, like a broken reed, leant upon her companion.

But the stranger, still pointing onward, bade farewell to the shepherds, and, with a signal that they should not follow him, he and Lilia began to ascend the hill.

Beneath them stretched the blue sea in its grandeur. The cool grass refreshed their burning feet with the evening dew, and over the fields came the faint aroma of wild flowers. By the light of the stars they beheld in the distance sleeping Syracuse, and upon the air came the hum of its night sounds, like the murmuring of the ebbing tide.

Lilia clung to her companion in the innocent outburst of her gratitude, and his answering smile brought peace to her soul, and his eyes seemed brighter to her than the brightest stars.

Suddenly a whirring noise was heard overhead, and at the same time the shadow of the vulture fell at their feet in the pale moonlight.

Sent by Simetha and Thestylis, it flew like a rocket through the air, uttering its hoarse cries.

On the horizon were gathered together clouds in nebulous groups, and the moon was slowly descending from its zenith, when again the stranger drew from his invisible quiver a third arrow of flame, which, darting through the air, struck the ill-omened bird. Wounded, it fluttered downward, flapping its wings against the rocks, and then, with a few convulsive quiverings, remained motionless for ever.

And as a silver-lined cloud, loosened from the mass, floated towards them, the stranger, with the dreaming Lilia in his arms, mounted it, as if it were a horse bent to his will.

The cloud, with its burden, floated on and on through space, higher than the mountain-tops and beyond the luminous spaces of the Milky Way.

It was at that hour when the constellations were blazing in their splendours, that the stranger, still clasping his precious burden, craved admittance of the stars that guarded the portals of heaven, to keep out from those blest abodes the evil-doer upon earth. But not one was opened to him; they all pleaded the inflexible command of the Creator, and the eternal law of the universe.

On they went, far beyond the vapoury clouds, and even beyond the stars, until the skies seemed like a glorious and gigantic gem of lapis lazuli, against which their flight would be broken.

Then the archangel Azrael, for it was he, drew from his invisible quiver the fourth and last arrow of flame, and shot it into this inflexible azure, which opened in a golden wound a path through which they entered.

Then throughout all Heaven the shout arose "Azrael! Azrael!" and the triumphant hymn of seraphim and cherubim re-echoed and re-echoed.

But the wound in the sky was never closed again. Another star appeared in the firmament to astonish the wise men of Chaldea.

By the light of this new star the shepherds whom Lilia loved and with whom she had left a part of her beautiful soul, were shown the mystic road to the manger of the new-born Christ.

In a darkened corner of the island, Simetha and Thestylis, checked in their crime, under the new order of things, still send forth their wails at the rising of the moon; and this is why the sailor dreaded that smiling but treacherous sea that washed the shores of Sicily, cradled the idyls of the sweet poet of Syracuse.

Armand Silvestre.

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Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

TIME 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE FLEET DID.

AT eight bells in the second dog watch, the look-out on board the *Magnificent* announced the hour in a stentorian voice, adding with true nautical vigour: "Selsey Light about five knots on the port bow, nor'-east by north. A fine night. All's well," which meant in ordinary English that at eight o'clock p.m. the Channel Squadron and its attendant torpedo-boats were some six miles off the coast in the neighbourhood of Selsey Bill, with a clear sky and smooth sea, and everything in order in the disposition of the fleet.

On board each vessel there was the utmost activity, and, to a landsman, the most hopeless disorder would have seemed to prevail. The ships had been put into fighting-rig hours earlier, but still there remained much to do in the shape of finally testing steam-pumps and hydraulic machinery to see that everything was in working order. Ammunition had to be drawn from the magazines, and placed in proper positions for use, watertight doors in protective bulkheads needed careful examination, appliances for extinguishing fires required overhauling, and, last but not least, the cooks were busy in preparing a solid meal for all hands, as a useful preparation for the labour of the night.

Jack's personal arrangements were soon made. If his occupation kept him below deck he divested himself of blouse, shirt, boots, and socks, belted his trousers tightly round his waist, and chewed a contemplative quid as he set himself to the manifold tasks which still lay between him and supper—for the British tar loves to go into a fight half-naked, as did his progenitor of the days of Trafalgar and the Nile.

Shortly after one bell in the first watch, that is to say, a little after 8.30 p.m., the Admiral signalled half-speed, and and called all captains of ironclads and commanders of smaller vessels on board the flagship. They were soon assembled in the wardroom, as the Admiral's quarters were too small to accommodate so many officers, and were, moreover, being adapted to the requirements of additional hospital space.

Lord Charles Beresford explained that he had brought them together in order that each officer should clearly understand not only his own duties but the general plan of attack, and it would be the duty of commanders individually, through their subordinates, to make the principles of his intentions known to every member of each ship's company.

"I take it, gentlemen," he went on, "that few of us, if any, will survive this affair, as we are hopelessly out-

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numbered. But it is our glorious privilege to do all that lies in our power to injure the enemy before we lose our lives or our ships.

"I have asked myself how we can best serve our country at this juncture, and it appears to me that we should endeavour to destroy the French and German transports and thus lighten the labour of the army in resisting any attempt at invasion. You all know the disposition of the allied fleets as outlined in the last message signalled from Gosport, and I have no doubt that a similar formation has been preserved in anchorage. Some of the enemy's ironclads and a considerable number of their gunboats will have ranged themselves broadside to the beach to shell the town and defending forces, whilst the attention of the remainder will be keenly directed towards the efforts of the troops to effect a landing.

"There is no moon, and if I mistake not, a fresh breeze from the sea and the clouds coming with it, together with the noise and excitement of the bombardment, will render it comparatively easy for us to approach unobserved, as a sharp look-out to the south is hardly to be expected under the conditions. If they expect a naval attack from any quarter it will be from either east or west.

"That being so, I purpose making a detour and striking in from the southward. Battle-ships will form in two divisions, the *Magnificent* leading the starboard and the *Resolution* the port attack. Torpedo-boats will follow in the same formation until the moment of impact with the enemy. It is probable that the enemy's gunboats and torpedo-boats will be present in considerable numbers on the weather-side of the fleet, but it will be the duty of the two divisions of battle-ships to smash right through them, depending upon rams and quick-firing guns only.

"It will be the object of both divisions to intervene between the enemy's battle-ships and his transports, and to screen our torpedo-boats by endeavouring to draw the enemy's fire upon themselves. The torpedo-boats on reaching the fighting-line will incline inwards, the leading pair endeavouring to sink the first two of the enemy's transports. The second pair of torpedo-boats will pass the first, and attack the next transports in the line, and this manœuvre must be repeated by the whole twenty-two boats, each one rigidly directing all efforts towards the single object in view, namely, the destruction of the enemy's land forces and *matériel*.

"When this task has been accomplished, gentlemen, I leave you to your individual devices to do the utmost amount of damage in your power to the enemy's fleet, and when you find your vessels in danger of sinking, you should endeavour to run them ashore to save the lives of the remnants of your ship's companies. The sole alternative to this course is to go down whilst destroying an opponent."

There was silence for a moment when his lordship finished speaking. Then the commander of the gunboat *Speedy* said: "I presume, sir, that I take on as many of the enemy's smaller fry as I can gather round me?"

"No Commander Hardinge, I am sorry to say I cannot meet your views in that way," replied the Admiral with a smile. "It will be your business to send round a launch in an hour's time to collect private letters from the fleet—opportunities will meanwhile be given for writing them so far as is practicable—and you will then observe operations from a safe distance, subsequently making off to Portsmouth or Dover, as you may think fit, and reporting to the Admiralty all that has happened."

The officer thus addressed turned scarlet with indignation "Do I understand you, sir," he said passionately, "that the *Speedy* is to be turned into a post-office, and I and my crew——"

"Commander Hardinge, silence!" said Lord Beresford. "Obey my orders, or, by God, I'll court-martial you in the next world!"

After this explosion the Admiral calmed down a little and explained, in kindlier tones, that the *Speedy* was doing absolutely necessary, if disagreeable service, as the Admiralty must be placed in possession of the facts, there being no certainty of survivors reaching the shore, or of events being correctly observed from that quarter.

"And now, gentlemen," he concluded, addressing the entire gathering, "I have only to say that all external lights must, under every circumstance, be extinguished, the best efforts being made to preserve correct distances. Fresh orders, if indispensable, will be made by trumpet-call from the flagship and repeated down both lines. It remains for me to insist upon the need of every man in the fleet understanding the plan and object of the attack, and to wish you all good-bye and God-speed."

The officers silently saluted and trooped out of the ward-room. Hardinge observed in a sarcastic undertone to Captain Blake of the *Repulse*: "This is a jolly fine arrangement for me, isn't it?"

"Well, you see, old chap," began the other sympathetically, but Hardinge growled:

"Oh, yes, I see well enough. Anyhow, he left me to decide what 'a safe distance' means."

By nine o'clock the squadron was steaming at full speed again, and the course was altered a point or two towards the south.

True to the Admiral's anticipation, a stiffish breeze from the Atlantic put a curl on the waves and promised to bring up a choppy sea next tide. Some light cirrus-clouds spread themselves over the sky, dimming the stars, and lending obscurity to the horizon. Confusion had now given place to perfect order on board each ship in the fleet.

By the Admiral's instructions an extra ration of grog was served out all round, and general permission to smoke was given, as he felt that the exceptional circumstances of the case justified this departure from strict naval custom. He would gladly have sanctioned the use of the ship's bands, too, were it not for the fear of being detected, and as a matter of fact, the French torpedo-catcher, *Belle Etoile*, did unknowingly pass the squadron about half-past ten o'clock at some two miles distance, being then on her way to Brest to announce in grandiloquent terms the occupation of Worthing by the allies, as General de Rosny thought the attack was practically over when the Frenchmen had once gained the pier!

The mere fact that they had been promptly swept off it only served to assure him that in the more determined effort being made whilst he wrote his dispatch they would be successful. Besides, the Paris morning papers must be able to state that perfidious Albion was in the grasp of the combined forces.

On through the night steamed the silent and ghost-like fleet, noiseless, save for the throbbing of the screws, which was hardly discernible in the soughing wind, weirdly indistinct in the unrelieved gloom, seeming like some procession of terrible and gigantic spirits of the deep passing swiftly over the waters to avenge the wrong being done to the Queen of the Seas.

At last the course was abruptly altered by a wheel to the north, and half an hour later the look-out in the foretop of the *Magnificent* reported the flashes of gun-fire and the steadier glare of burning houses right ahead.

The nervous tension throughout the fleet now became almost unendurable.

"Bust me if I can stand this 'ere waiting," said No 1 of the forward barbette 12in. 46-ton gun confidentially to his butty, No 3, and he hummed: "Oh, would I were a bird, that I might fly to thee."

"You'll be there soon enough, Jim," said the other. "I wonder which way we'll go, up, or down, or in pieces?"

"Stop that talking there, or I'll report you after the action," said a warrant officer sternly.

"Who to, Nosey?" said a voice. "To Old Nick?"

At this sally there was a general snigger, in which the lieutenant in charge of the barbette joined.

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Men were thrown into the water by tens of thousands.

Every man in the fleet knew that he was going to practically certain death, but that was of slight import—delay alone was irksome.

The progress of the events on shore was now easily distinguishable, and Lord Beresford's face became brighter than it had been for some time when he found that the enemy had not yet effected a lodgment. The allied fleet was plainly silhouetted against the glaring background of light, and the Admiral, who knew every ship in the French navy by sight, said to the captain of the *Magnificent*: "We are in luck, Drysdale. The farthest vessel in the enemy's starboard line is *La Gloire*, the French flagship. She is just about our fighting weight, and we must endeavour to reach her, if possible."

Astonishing as it may seem, the foremost ships of the British fleet had crashed through the outer fringe of gunboats, sinking four of them outright and crippling several others, before their presence was observed by the enemy's battle-ships. The majority of these were swinging to their cables at the moment of attack, and were consequently in the worst possible position for using their guns, and no sooner had the English ships entered their opponents' lines than they commenced firing with tremendous energy and precision.

In less than two minutes every ship was hotly engaged, and the fight became the fiercest ever known in the history of naval warfare. Never before had such vessels or projectiles been used under such conditions. The noise of the battle was plainly heard at Chichester, Arundel, Horsham, and other towns even more remote from the scene of action.

This surprise was complete. This gave the attacking fleet a very considerable advantage, so they succeeded in cutting off the transports from the ironclads before the latter could make any effort to get under way.

It was only when the British torpedo-boats commenced their career of destruction among the crowded troopships and liners that the allied fleets perceived the frightful predicament in which they were placed, and how their fire was being drawn by the battle-ships to permit complete destruction of the invading force. Throwing every other consideration to the winds, they then endeavoured, by closing in and concentrating their fire, to sink the torpedo boats by sheer weight of metal. But it was too late. Even where they succeeded in their object they as often as not had done quite as fatal damage to one of their own unarmoured vessels by misdirected shots, as a Messageries Maritimes or North German Lloyd steamer sank like a cracked teapot when struck between wind and water by a shell from a 10in. or 12in. gun.

Although the British torpedo boats were literally swept with showers of lead from the troops on board each transport, they grimly persisted in their work of death. Ship after ship was blown up and sunk, the terrible crash of the torpedo attack passing into the roar of a second explosion as the water reached the furnaces. It was a fearful scene of death and disaster. Men were thrown into the water by tens of thousands, only to be engulfed in the maelstrom caused by some sinking ship, to be smothered by the ever-rising waves, or to be crushed into mangled atoms by the swift torpedo-catchers and gunboats darting in from all quarters to the rescue.

Incredible as it may seem, not a transport or cargo-ship was left in the allied fleet. In those few minutes of wholesale holocaust and carnage, 120,000 Frenchmen and Germans, with a fabulous quantity of cannon and munitions of war, had been swept away into the deep waters of the English Channel.

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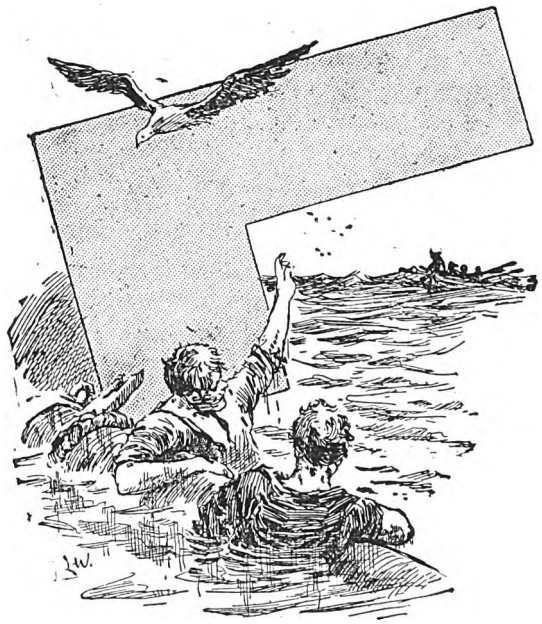
Lord Charles Beresford, perceiving that his apppointed task had been accomplished with a success beyond his wildest hopes, now devoted himself to the comparatively simple task of selling the lives of himself and his men as dearly as might be. Rapidly changing his tactics, he rammed a second-class French cruiser which was crossing his bows, and split her in twain as though she were a rotten stick. This left the path open towards *La Gloire*.

Imitating his example the other ironclads entered into a general action all round. Numbers and weight of metal of course now began to tell, and in fifteen minutes all that was left of the British Fleet was one battle-ship stranded on Worthing beach, and the dispatch vessel *Speedy*, which was hurrying off to Portsmouth with her bows smashed in, with a bullet through the fleshy part of her commander's left forearm, and a broad grin on the face of that worthy officer, who seemed to have completely recovered his good temper.

But the British Fleet had gone down in good company. The eight ships of war were accompanied by seventeen of their enemies, whilst the twenty-two torpedo boats had accounted for all of the allies' transports and thirty-one of their own size. And the shattered remnant of this new Armada made off from this unequal contest, steaming slowly through the night to Brest and Bremerhaven, with rage



Some were picked up clinging to wreckage.

and shame in their hearts, and sore wounds in the bodies of both ships and men.

In a word, the destruction of the British Fleet had entailed the most terrible and crushing disaster that the enemy could have encountered.

Meanwhile, how came the *Speedy* and her commander to stand in such urgent need of repairs?

When Beresford ranged up alongside *La Gloire* he contrived to give that redoubtable battle-ship such a warm salute that she rapidly presented almost as damaged an appearance as did the *Magnificent*, notwithstanding the previous experiences of the latter vessel. An artillery duel at pistol-shot distance between two such monsters must mean the utter annihilation of one or the other in a very few minutes, and, to make sure of the result the German flagship *Fürst Bismarck* proceeded to cross the bows of the *Magnificent*, pouring in her broadside as she did so. As a last expiring effort the *Magnificent*, whose engines were intact although she was perceptibly in a sinking condition, rammed the *Fürst Bismarck* with such hearty goodwill that the lesser German vessel forthwith heeled over and sank. The *Magnificent* quivered and staggered from the effects of the blow, and for a little while her steam-steering gear was thrown out of order.

The incident was taken advantage of by *La Gloire*. She started upon a sixteen points curve which must have brought her steel-shafted nose into the quarter of the British ship, but now the diminutive but irrepressible *Speedy* appeared upon the scene.

When subsequently threatened with a court-martial for disobeying orders, Commander Hardinge explained to Lord Charles Beresford that owing to the smoke and confusion it was impossible for him to learn what had happened unless he ventured right into the midst of the combatants, and at that identical moment, seeing the predicament of the Admiral's ship, he felt bound to interfere, so long as he ran no great risk himself. At which the Admiral laughed contentedly, for he had, on the previous day, recommended Hardinge for the command of a new cruiser fitting out at Milford Haven.

But to resume. Hardinge realised the desperate plight of the *Magnificent*, and was for a second half-mad with his own comparative helplessness. Suddenly an inspiration seized him, and he ran his little vessel at full speed ahead, into the stern of the French ship. By this trick, the object of which was not perceived until it had been accomplished, he smashed both the rudder and the propeller-blades of the ironclad, which drifted away powerless on the tide, to cross the path of the sinking torpedo-boat *Alert*, and to be blown up by the last Whitehead torpedo discharged from its tubes. In fact the tiny assailant was the first to go down.

Lord Beresford saw the whole incident, and was commenting on it to Captain Drysdale when a splinter from a random shell knocked him senseless. The commander of the *Magnificent* then turned the vessel's head to the shore, where he succeeded in beaching her at low water mark. She was drawing five feet more than her wonted depth of water, and must have sunk in another couple of minutes after the time she ran ashore.

A few officers and men from other ships managed to save their lives by swimming to deserted or overturned boats, and some were picked up clinging to wreckage hours afterwards by search parties of fishermen, who proceeded from Worthing to the scene of battle.

The incoming tide cast up a ghastly legacy of the fight in the shape of hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses. It was in this guise, and in no other, that the army corps of France and Germany effected a landing upon British soil.

CHAPTER VI.

The Prince and the People.

England was in a wild ferment of joy on the following day. From all parts of the kingdom came accounts of special thanksgiving services in the churches and chapels, and of hastily convened meetings of Corporations, to give representative assurances to Her Majesty the Queen, and to the Government, of enthusiastic loyalty, and ungrudging support, no matter what might be the trials in store for the nation.

An hour before Mr. Balfour had made his great speech in the House of Commons, the Adjutant-General had issued telegraphic orders for the calling out of the first-class army reserve, and the mobilisation of the Militia and Volunteers. Regimental districts had been hard at work all night in making the necessary preparations, and the consequence was that when every man in the United Kingdom learnt in the daily papers of the dispersal of the allied fleet, he also became aware that his services were needed if he had ever borne arms.

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The result was most gratifying to the authorities.

From every military centre came intelligence of men flocking to headquarters before the official notice demanding their presence had reached them, and in one instance, that of the 29th Regimental District, at Richmond, in Yorkshire, no less than eighty per cent. of the Army Reserve had rejoined the colours before Thursday evening. It may be remarked, in passing, that when the roll was called a few days later, prior to drafting off the troops to their regiments, it was found that in this locality, which was typical of most other places, the magnificent total of ninety-seven per cent, of effectives had been reached.

At Manchester and Birmingham the volunteer battalions set a splendid example to their comrades elsewhere by unanimously deciding to place themselves at the disposal of the Government for service abroad, whilst in Ireland, where there are no volunteers, some amazement was created at Dublin Castle by an offer from the Mill Street district of Cork to supply a complete regiment of *armed* patriots. Scotland rose to a man, and the Welsh miners promised to supply the fleet with enough coal for a year, and then take their places in the ranks.

The Press in London and the provinces not only inspirited the people by magnificent reports of the attack on Worthing and the way in which the British Fleet had maintained its unsullied reputation, but strengthened their courage and resolution by the calm dignity with which the atrocious action of two apparently friendly Powers was discussed.

"Never," said the TIMES, "has England been face to face with such terrible odds; never has she looked with more prophetic serenity to the golden era of renewed peace and prosperity when the battle-clouds shall have passed away. Our most venerable statesman has told us that it is our duty to 'earn anew the gratitude of the world,' and we would fain believe that the unfortunate peoples of France and Germany will not stand aloof from testimony in this regard when the demons of greed and vain glory shall have ceased to blind their eyes to the horror and misery into which they have temporarily plunged a large portion of humanity."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH meant well in writing a glowing eulogium of the Worthing Volunteers, but in dealing with the disparity of numbers between the allied troops and the Major's stalwart band of riflemen, happened to quote Byron.

> Of the three hundred give but three
> To make a new Thermopylae,

with the inevitable result that Major Perkins was christened Leonidas for the rest of his life. And he rather liked it.

Of course the PALL MALL GAZETTE also broke into rhyme, of broader vein, heading its leading article thus:

> Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,
> But four times he who gets his blow in fust.

But it was reserved for Mr. T. P. O'Connor in *M. A. P.* to give a graphic personal touch to the crisis by thus describing the scene in the House of Commons:

"Men gazed at Mr. Balfour through a mist of horror—a mist of blood I had almost written—and so it seemed to me at that supreme moment in the history of the mother of parliaments. Pallid, dumb, stricken though we were—physically and intellectually palsied with the fearfulness of the announcement—yet were the Irish members keen to notice the rancorous venom with which Mr. Chamberlain plunged, aspen-like, into the debate. When the rough nobility of my friend, Dr. Tanner, showed itself in its shirt sleeves to an astounded House—to be cheered with a frenzy that not even the bitterest partisanship had hitherto evoked—I looked at the Colonial Minister to note how the fierce tumult of the scene affected that sphinx-like and malignant nature. He was to the careless glance outwardly unmoved—frigid, keenly observant, utterly passionless—but to me, versed as I am in every mood, in each hidden emotion of this enemy to the Home Rule cause, there was clear and convincing proof of the tornado that raged within.

The Prince moved forward in front of the brilliant staff.

His eye-glass dangled on his breast, and his orchid had fallen unnoticed to the floor!"

Lord Wolseley, who at 2 a.m. had lain down on a couch in his room at the Horse Guards, rose at 5.30, and by seven o'clock had made all arrangements for a grand review of regulars and volunteers in Hyde Park.

The parade was fixed for two o'clock, and the early editions of the evening papers announced that T.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke of Connaught, the Duke and Duchess of York, and other members of the Royal Family would attend in State.

The Commander-in-Chief knew exactly what he was about in ordering this seemingly unnecessary pageant. No man in England better realised the tremendous extent of the struggle upon which the country must now embark for self-preservation. It was above all things needful that the spirits of the people should be buoyed up by every resource, and a fine military display, in all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war, was a prompt and fitting sequel to the thrilling news flying hourly across the length and breadth of the land.

Londoners of all ranks crowded into the Park.

Great ladies were there in their carriages, representatives of every class and section of society came to gather inspiration and hopefulness from the spectacle. Not that there were many troops present. A selection rather than an absolute assembly of the forces at the time within hail of the Metropolis had been made by the Commander-in-Chief. The Blues, the 1st and 2nd Life Guards, two battalions of the Coldstream Guards, four squadrons of the Scots Greys, the complete regiments of the 17th Lancers, the 8th Hussars, and the King's Royal Dragoons, two batteries of Horse Artillery, and about eighteen guns of the

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Field Artillery, together with some twelve thousand Infantry, both regulars and volunteers, made up the parade.

The sun, shining down upon this brilliant assemblage of bright-coloured uniforms, with steel cuirass and glittering accoutrements sparkling in its rays, almost robbed the gathering of its fierce significance.

Public enthusiasm, too, knew no limits. As regiment after regiment filed on to the parade ground, cheers were raised for them, and although some of the battalions were better known to the crowd than others, there was no discrimination in the heartiness of the applause accorded to each.

When well-known officers began to arrive there were further manifestations of cordiality from the thousands of onlookers.

The advent of the Prince and Princess of Wales, accompanied by their daughters, the Duke and Duchess of York, the Duke of Connaught, and a brilliant suite, caused such an outburst of popular enthusiasm that the progress of the Royal party through the Park to the saluting point was purposely made slow.

Even then it seemed as if the people were unable to give complete utterance to the tumultuous feelings of loyalty and national pride which actuated them. It was rapidly noticed that the Princess of Wales and the other Royal and distinguished ladies in the party were simply attired in English, Scotch and Irish products of the loom and mill. Not a single inch of foreign ribbon or lace was visible on their garments, and the people quickly saw that if example could achieve it, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, with her ever-ready tact and accustomed good judgment, had given the initiative to a movement on the part of the women of England to wear only home-made fabrics during the progress of the conflict in which England was now plunged.

On reaching the saluting point the carriages were drawn up in semi-circular form, and the Prince of Wales, who wore the uniform of a colonel of the 1st Life Guards, quitted the barouche, where he was seated by the side of the Princess and mounted a handsome charger that was in waiting. The Duke of York, the Duke of Connaught, and such members of the suite in waiting as were military officers, followed this precedent.

The parade was for inspection purposes rather than for the practice of manœuvres. In fact, it would have been impossible for any general to move his troops to any extent over the Park, owing to the dense crowd of citizens of London which on all sides surrounded the battalions now drawn up in line.

Sir Redvers Buller was in command, and it was noticed that after the troops had gone through a few movements in the manual and firing exercise, a communication made to him by the Prince of Wales caused General Buller to so dispose the line that the troops were massed in a hollow square, of which the open side was occupied by the carriages of the Royal party. When the necessary quarter column formation for this change had been effected, the Prince of Wales moved forward in front of the brilliant staff by which he was surrounded, and it was quickly seen that he was about to address the gathering.

Disappeared into the crowd in charge of his escort.

Such an unprecedented incident appealed so strongly to the dramatic unities of the moment, that a marvellous silence fell upon the thousands of people who witnessed it.

In a strong, firm, and evenly-balanced voice, which reached to a very considerable distance, His Royal Highness then spoke as follows:

"Sir Redvers Buller and officers and men of the Garrison of London. In addressing you briefly to-day I depart from established custom in order to utilise this favourable opportunity of conveying to you, and through you to the people of the British Empire all the world over, the sentiments of Her Majesty the Queen at this supremest hour in the history of Britain. Her Majesty charges me to say that she recognises with a delight intensified by life-long conviction, the indomitable faith and loyalty which characterise the English-speaking people at a moment when such qualities are in the most urgent demand.

"The tremendous nature of the struggle into which we are forced by the action of two great countries, but yesterday deemed our friends, is as well known to Her Majesty the Queen as to her subjects. Her Majesty is beyond all things gratified to perceive that in this hour of stress and terrible danger her people are as steadfast to themselves, as true to their convictions, as faithful to the traditions of their forefathers, as Her Majesty has ever believed and has ever known them to be in times of difficulty or peril."

His Royal Highness paused for a moment, and a low

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murmur of applause and of keen appreciation swept through the multitude, which would not cheer so that not a word of the speech might be lost.

With even greater vigour of voice and animation of gesture the Prince of Wales continued:

"The dispositions made by the authorities for the defence of England against invasion, and the protection of our highway through the world—the sea—will be made known to you as rapidly as circumstances may permit. Meanwhile I am enabled by the courtesy of the Commander-in-Chief to acquaint you with the fact that preparations are now being rapidly pushed towards completion for the purpose of landing two strong expeditionary forces on the shores of France and Germany."

At this announcement a tremendous outburst of cheers came from the crowd, and, if the truth must be told, the assembled soldiers were as ready to join in the demonstration as anybody else, whilst their officers were themselves too keenly interested in the momentous statement made by the Prince of Wales to take any definite steps towards checking such an unwonted military solecism as cheering in the ranks.

After an interval of some minutes' duration, order was sufficiently restored to enable the Prince of Wales to proceed.

"It is only," he said, "in consequence of the urgent recommendations of Her Majesty's ministers that I have been restrained from taking my place in some responsible position with one or other of these army corps. For reasons of State, however, it is felt to be imperatively necessary that I should remain in England. No such galling if needful restriction are imposed upon my son, the Duke of York, and my brother, the Duke of Connaught, and both these direct representatives of Her Majesty will fill their fitting positions as English princes at the head of British troops fighting for their beloved country."

Another great wave of emotion passed over the crowd. Men yelled themselves almost into a frenzy of excitement, women wept hysterically, some fainted, and the onlooker, unconscious of the cause of this high nervous tension, might have fancied himself in the Bois de Boulogne rather than staid and orderly Hyde Park.

"And now," said His Royal Highness in conclusion, "there remains for me to say to you all: 'Be of good cheer.' I believe that we shall emerge from this struggle a greater, grander, and more powerful nation than we have gone into it, if that be possible. Whatever of effort, whatever of self-denial may be necessary, will be given by all of us, from Her Majesty the Queen down to her least significant subject. In this matter we are a united and determined people, and I have yet to learn that there is any combination of armed force existing in this world which cannot be swept out of the path of Britain when she is aroused. Again, I wish you all God-speed."

With this His Royal Highness waved his hand to the people and the troops, and there came back to him the appreciative cheers of thousands upon thousands of voices.

The Royal party now made preparations for returning to St. James's, and the Prince again seated himself by the side of the Princess. They proceeded very slowly through the Park, acknowledging cordially the vociferous acclamations from the living lines of people through which their carriage slowly forged its way.

Turning out of the Park at Hyde Park Corner, the escort and vehicles were about to move off at more rapid pace, when suddenly a man sprang from the crowd, dodged a policeman and mounted life-guardsman who endeavoured to intercept him, and jumped on to the step of the carriage in which the Prince and Princess of Wales were seated.

With a look of intense entreaty in his eyes, he said to the Prince, speaking with desperate earnestness: "Will your Royal Highness hear me for a moment?"

Although naturally startled by the incident, the Prince of Wales was quick to prevent two members of his escort from cutting down the daring intruder, as he perceived in a glance that the man had no evil intentions in thus abruptly thrusting himself forward.

"What do you want?" he said to the stranger, who still clung desperately to the side of the carriage.

"I am an inventor, your Highness," was the answer, "and I have discovered a weapon which can be rapidly turned to account, and which I believe will be sufficient in itself to save England even in the face of the odds against her. I am a poor man, and of no consequence. No one will listen to me with sufficient authority to take really practical steps towards rendering my invention of value. I thought that if at the risk of my life I could get speech of your Royal Highness, I might succeed in obtaining your sympathy. I want no reward or self-aggrandisement of any sort. I am above all else an Englishman, and I hope that this fact will be sufficient excuse for my action at this moment."

He uttered these words with such absolute conviction in every tone, and yet with an air of decision and self-reliance that could not fail to be impressive, that the Prince of Wales was strongly disposed to hear him further.

"You know," he said, "that at such a time as this every moment of my life is taken up with important business. Do you feel justified in demanding half an hour from me to listen to you under these considerations?"

"I do, your Royal Highness," was the reply.

The Prince turned to the amazed commander of the bodyguard, who was standing near the carriage ready at a word or a sign to run his sword into the unfortunate inventor should he turn out to be what he looked like, namely, a dangerous lunatic, and said: "Captain Duncombe, kindly take charge of this man and bring him to me personally at Marlborough House at five o'clock. Tell the attendants that it is my express desire you should both see me in person."

The officer saluted, and the inventor, with a look of utmost gratitude and satisfaction on his face, quitted his hold on the carriage and disappeared into the crowd in charge of his escort.

Punctually at the appointed hour Captain Duncombe and his companion, who had meanwhile made himself known as Henry Thompson, an electrical engineer in the employ of the City of London Electric Lighting Corporation, presented themselves at Marlborough House.

The officer had accompanied the man to the latter's lodgings in order to obtain a working model of the device which he wished to exhibit to the Prince of Wales, and before allowing it to be packed up had assured himself that it contained nothing in its essentials harmful to human life, however harmful to that commodity it might prove in subsequent operation.

The Prince of Wales not only listened to Mr. Thompson with the utmost care and appreciation for more than half an hour, but astonished the Commander of the Royal Guard by requesting the loan of a magazine rifle. Some experiments were forthwith made in a coach-house, the doors and windows of which had been closed.

As a result of these strange proceedings, Mr. Thompson was brought back into the Royal study whilst a messenger was dispatched for the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Wolseley arrived five minutes later, and the whole matter, whatever it might be, was gone into again with him.

His lordship appeared to be quite as much impressed with Mr. Thompson's invention as the Prince of Wales himself had been, and the remarkable outcome of this poor and unknown electrician taking the desperate step of forcing himself upon the attention of Royalty in such unpromising manner was that on the following day he found himself at the head of a vast electrical manufactory, with practically *carte blanche* instructions from the War Office and Treasury to turn out as many duplicates of his invention as was possible by working day and night.

The influence of this episode upon the subsequent character of the struggle between England and her enemies became evident later on.

(To be continued.)

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Hide and Seek.

"Five years ago to-day," said the Marquise de Kermel, smiling sadly, "my husband and I started upon our wedding journey. Heartily tired of the regulation routes to the Alps, the Riviera, and the blue skies of Venice, laid out by our world for the guidance of newly-married lovers, we turned our steps to the Morbihan, that nearly forgotten corner of weirdly-picturesque Brittany.

"At Vannes one of our relatives suggested to us, among the many other local curiosities, to be sure and visit the old manorial castle of Ker-pen-hir, situated near the Pion-har-ney, not far from those celebrated and mysterious megalithes that they have named the 'Karnac Alignment.'

"A very ancient, half-ruined old castle of crumbling, moss-covered stone, with, nevertheless, in its intricate galleries and ghostly old chambers, remnants of costly tapestries and princely furniture, ravaged and colonised though they were by worms and rats. For concierge or cicerone, as you please to call her, there was an equally ancient old peasant woman, withered and brown as a witch; she had no companion in her caretaking but a tame crow answering to the name of 'Tête Noir.'

"'My good monsieur and madame,' said she, 'this manor was last inhabited by M. Yvon, the last born of Ker-pen-hir. A terrible fighter was he, monsieur, and kept up the war on the enemies of the King long after that which they called the "Pacification of Brittany" took place. Though they hunted and chased him from morning till night, they never caught him, for he had a knack of vanishing whenever it suited him, and they could never find him.

"'One day he disappeared like this, and from that hour till now he has never been seen again. Some think him dead in foreign lands, others here in his own manor, spirited away by the evil one—who helped him, people say. The good curé himself, even, wouldn't come to this place for an empire after the night had fallen.'

"'And you, my good woman,' queried my husband, 'what do you think has become of this singular baron?"

"'*Mon Dieu*, monsieur; how do I know any more than I know where that crow of mine goes for a bed every night? For go he does as soon as dark arrives, to sleep in some place in this old building—the Lord knows where! But, see; here are the keys, take them and go where you please. It will amuse you more than to have me with you, and my old legs carry me badly.'

"Enchanted with the latitude allowed us by this unusually amiable guardian, we received the keys and passed to the inner court, once a handsomely-paved square, but now a wilderness of grass and weeds, in the right-hand corner of which rose the donjon-keep, the staircase leading to its turret being in a dangerous, crumbling state.

"'We'll go up, all the same,' said my husband, 'the view must be superb from that height.'

"But I refused, pointing to the danger of the climb, and my husband went alone, laughing at me for my cowardice, whilst I entered the château and began to wander aimlessly about the great vaulted rooms and echoing corridors.

"Soon I heard my husband coming after me, and the childish notion struck me to punish him a little for his stubbornness and for laughing at me, by giving him a good fright. Laughing with glee, I darted into a corner and squatted down beside an enormous black oak cabinet seemingly pushed there to be out of the way. I would spring upon him as he passed and give him a fine scare!

"I crouched down, I say, and the space being narrow, pressed heavily against the wall. All at once something gave way, something like a panel that yielded under my weight, and before I had time to know what had happened to me I found myself tumbled backward into some sort of pitch-black opening, while the door swung to behind me with a strange whirling grind.

"Startled by the accident, I began to feel about me. Each side of me were walls, glacial, stony walls. Before me, a wooden surface, covered with a ragged padding, through which I felt something like an entanglement of some sort of mechanicism.

"The ramblings of the old concierge flashed into my mind, and the strange disappearance at will of the missing baron. Had he managed to construct unknown and mysterious hiding places in his stronghold at Ker-pen-hir? Such concealments were common in the days of the revolution. Could it be possible that I had fallen headlong into one of those queer secret places?

"The fancy gave me a thrill of romantic pleasure, quickly succeeded by a shudder of deadly terror. Suppose I could not reopen that door? Suppose I remained there to die of fear, cold and hunger?

"Nonsense! I had only to cry out loud enough and they would hear me. But I had lost all further desire to

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frighten my husband! And then I began to call aloud, to call still louder, to scream at the top of my lungs.

"Not a sound responded, and I was conscious myself that my voice made no more impression in that padded cell than if I had been screaming for help in a subterranean dungeon.

"A poisonous, choking odour of mustiness, too, stifled my breathing; the cold froze me to the soul, and I heard under my feet a suspicious scampering.

"Maddened, bewildered, I threw myself upon what I was sure must be the door, clawing, pushing, seeking a spring, a knob, a projection of any kind that would enable me to open it. Nothing! Nothing! The cell of the baron still guarded its secret!

"Nevertheless, my eyes, growing accustomed to the darkness, began to vaguely distinguish that which surrounded me. I moved forward cautiously, and saw before me the first steps of a narrow staircase, built in the thickness of the wall. Perhaps at the bottom I might find some issue! I descended the steps. Ha! I could see better now.

"I was in a sort of vaulted and very high rotunda; what light there was flittering, after a fashion, through a narrow opening in the roof, contrived, possibly, in some out of the way corner of an inner court, and veiled by vines and brambles. Hope revived in me. Bare walls of greyish stones surrounded me; to one side, an old black Breton bed; a couple of chairs; in the centre of the floor, a square table covered with a tattered green serge; on the table, a sword and writing materials; beside it, a huge armchair and—did I see aright?

"Had I lost my senses?—in that chair—a man? Yes, a man whom the high carved chairback had until now hidden from sight; a peasant from the dress he wore, the broad-brimmed, flapping hat, and the embroidered waistcoat.

"Some friend of the concierge's, perhaps, slipping in here for a quiet nap—I was saved—I should soon see daylight. With a scream of joy, I spedto his side.

"'Monsieur! Monsieur!' I cried, and touched his shoulder gently.

"He did not stir. How soundly he slept! I moved round the chair and faced him squarely. A wild shriek escaped me.

"The man was a corpse, a mummy almost; a carcass covered with black parchmentised skin! Two cavities, black and deep, pierced the face, all that was left of what had once been his eyes.

"I shrieked again, and fell against a chair, half swooning with terror. Nevertheless, as often happens in times of supreme crises, I seemed to think with redoubled speed and clearness, to know in a flash, as it were, the desolating truth. I had before me the corpse of Baron Ker-pen-hir, overtaken by death while fleeing from some of his human enemies!

"Some peculiar property in the air in this shut-up dungeon had dried and preserved his remains, as they dry and preserve in a certain Italian convent, in the cells of a subterranean chapel, the bodies of the monks whose souls have passed away.

"Then—then—what would become of me, ignorant of the dungeon's secret, and unable to re-open or re-find the door through which I had fallen? And again I screamed and screamed, till my voice failed me.

"No one came. No one heard me.

"The tones were buried here as they had been in the cell above. Death had caged me, slow, torturing, accompanied by more than the usual hideous train of anguish and fright.

"My mother, my husband, my friends—I should never see them more.

"They would seek me; oh, yes, they would seek me and search and search for me, as they had sought for the Baron Ker-pen-hir, but they would never find me any more than they had found him. My inexplicable disappearance would but add another to those sombre legends of which this old Brittany was so full!

"And how I should suffer in that place of horror; before that ironically grinning corpse, tortured by thirst, tormented by memory, before death released me from my agony; without hope!

"Meanwhile, the gloom had increased about me. Vague as the seeing had been from the start, I saw now nothing at all, nothing but the white, gleaming teeth of that horrible mummy-head, concentrating in themselves all the last faint rays of light in that fast blackening chamber.

"Breathless, panting, straining my eyes in the darkness, I fell upon my knees to send up a last plea to heaven.

"Suddenly, as I fell, a cry sounded near me, hoarse, at once mocking and menacing; at the same time the corpse shook its head violently, with a dry, rustling sound. This was too much. My senses left me.

"When I came to myself again the night had passed. A pale, yellowish reflection told me that the sun was shining; that day once more had come. I had not dreamt, however, the horror that had happened to me. I was truly buried alive, by my own childish folly, in the prison and tomb of Baron Ker-pen-hir. That cry, too; that hoarse, raucous cry, which rung in my ears still, I knew now whence it had come.

"I saw now what had set the corpse's head nodding at me the night before. It was 'Tête-Noir,' the concierge's crow, perched on the chair back and pecking and tweaking at the Baron's hat.

"The sight of that bird was a new ray of hope for me. Heaven had truly heard my prayer, for I saw in the coming of that bird to the cell at this time almost a path to assured safety. My plan was formed instantly and I set about executing it.

"In my pocket I had my handkerchief, stamped with my name. Warily approaching him, softly coaxing him meanwhile—a wholly needless strategem, though, as 'Tête-Noir,' despite his evilly sparkling eyes, was the gentlest creature in the world—I caught him in my arms, securely knotted my handkerchief to his leg and launched him gently toward the crevice in the roof, through which he had certainly made his way.

"Cawing loudly, the handkerchief fluttering white behind him, the crow flew away.

"I swooned in earnest this time, only coming back to life to the ringing sound of pickaxes breaking in the roof, and my husband's voice in anguish beseeching me to assure him that I was not dead.

"The rest you divine. 'Tête Noir' had done his errand nobly. Straight as an arrow he had gone for his breakfast; the handkerchief had been seen and removed, but even then another whole day must pass—and this was the second one, remember—before the crow would seek again the place of nightly rest. They watched him, my husband and the peasants he had summoned followed him, saw him enter his lair and I was saved.

"I saw my dear ones again; my friends; God's beautiful sunlight; but I had lived a lifetime of agony in those thirty hours of black entombment, and never more, so long as I live, will I play "hide and seek" in an old Breton manor!"

F. Boubée.

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THE GLADIATOR.

A Tale of the Eastern Empire.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE THIRD.

"Through the Meshes of the Net."

CHAPTER V.

The Sliding Stone.

"We had better seize Time by the forelock," said Rhesus, "and bring our share of the treasure away in the chariot while we have time."

"As you please," replied Proclus, then fell to laughing immoderately, which angered his friend for a moment.

"I see little to make us mirthful," he said. "What has got you?"

"I was thinking of Marcen," said the other, "of how completely, in his suspicious cunning, he has over-reached himself. Had he been content to simply overhear and act upon his knowledge, he would have won. He could have lured you here alone, or waylain me unexpectedly. As it is, he has shown his hand, put us on our guard, and defeated his own designs. But now to work. Since the gold fever is upon us also, let us be quick with our task. You, Zethra," addressing the driver, "will remain with the chariot. If any armed men appear you will leave it and come down to us."

Therewith they entered the lane, and finding the head of the stone stairs easily now so much had fallen in, came soon to the Hall of Waters. The boat, with its rowlocks of graven bronze, still rotted there, floating idly on the slimy flood. Guiding themselves by the flaring light of their pine torches thrown on the fragments of the rusted chain, they pulled along the dismal avenues of the giant pillars until they found the entrance to the tunnel. There they made fast the craft, and entered hastily. But as they overtrod the footstones of the archway, Zethra's voice came to them. It echoed weirdly through the ghostly aisles. They knew that Marcen was once more on their track.

"Back into the boat!" cried Proclus. "We must save my brave man, above all things. And it is scarcely likely they will all face the water."

"And if they do," cried Rhesus, as they pulled back, "you shall not risk your life to save mine again. It shall be as you said that awful night—'Friends always; friends to the end.'"

They reached the foot of the steps as Marcen and six sturdy rogues were halfway down. They got Zethra in and pushed off. Only just in time. Their short sculls had not struck seven sprays of the inky flood behind ere Marcen and five of his men were in the water and swimming after. Lest they should be capsized with coming to close quarters they pulled away with frantic strokes. Springing into the mouth of the tunnel they prepared to dispute the passage.

One they struck back in the death agony as the others clambered up; then, before the onset of the rest, retired gradually towards the great rock door. In the narrowness of the way and the shifting gleam of the torches they had some set-off against the superior number. Going slowly, pace by pace, guarding and parrying every wild stroke carefully, they came to the huge wall of stone that from the slaty greyness of the shadows loomed out black, still, forbidding. They came to a sudden stop. Now one of the foes is down, now Zethra, now another.

With their backs to the wall they eyed the foe warily, each with sword half raised, and in the moment of hesitation that fell upon all at sight of the stone—even upon Marcen, whose fury at his own oversight was now consuming him as a fire—Proclus said to his friend, whispering guardedly:

"Now for the final act in the tragic comedy of this indifferent-merry life of ours, as I said when we stood here before. You to the right, Rhesus; I to the left—but this time let the comedy end differently. Guard me while I press the key in its place, and be ready to dash through. Let them come after if they will."

Rhesus saw his clever plan and stepped a pace forward. Nerved to the utmost tension by all he had suffered from Marcen, he played his sword before the eyes of the enemy like a cataract of falling steel. They gave back a moment, and in that moment there came a grating sound from behind as the huge stone slowly rose.

The friends dashed through the opening it made before it settled back with a sullen jar into its upright place, and the graven characters upon it stood revealed, but the others did not follow. The three gladiators had tasted enough of the two men's valour, although those who had fallen were now up again and Zethra was dead—one, in fact, having dragged him away and thrown him in into the water—and they waited for further assurance. Marcen, for all his ferocity and rising greed, was afraid. The friends threw down their torches and stamped them out, thus shrouding themselves in darkness, leaving the foe in light. In the darkness they took rest and waited.

But the brief gleam that the last flicker had cast into the cavern had flashed on the jewels and the gold of the long-sought treasure piled upon the rocky floor. The fears of Marcen were dispelled. The avarice of the gladiators was aroused. Marcen had not told them of this, merely wishing to use them in getting the key from Proclus. Now they had seen it he had no alternative but to feign to share it with them.

"Make an end of these obstinate fellows," he said, "and we will divide yonder hoard in equal parts. Come, they are only two, and we are four."

No more urging they needed then. With torches waved aloft and short swords pointed forward, they dashed headlong into the darkness. There was a moment's wild struggle, then Proclus and Rhesus won through, rushed out, and turned again. They checked the following charge, and standing one at each side of the passage, at the upper edge of the stone, held their own well. One of the three cut-throats Rhesus stayed with a sweeping upward swing of his blade, and another Proclus settled with a home-thrust delivered in the most approved arena fashion. Only Marcen and the third now remained. These hesitated at daring the passage again; and Marcen, though not facing the two swords that barred the way, foamed at the mouth with rage.

"Why dally there?" cried Rhesus, derisively. "Why let your treasure lie? You have schemed for it long enough, surely! You have played false to all your friends, caused much blood to be shed, and blighted the best years of more than one life, for its sake. By all the gods of old Olympus, and all the saints of the new Heaven, you will surely not confess yourself outwitted at last by a galley slave and a drowned man! Come, there is a way between us!"

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"Yes, come," laughed Proclus, with a cynic sneer, "come! Gather up your precious gold and jewels and trinkets, load up your worthy comrade also, and face us like men! As Rhesus says, there is a way between us, and it leads you clear of this dismal place—if it only leads to the nether world! Waste no more time here than you can help, Marcen. You are somewhat of a judge in matters artistic, and many of these old treasures are splendid works. You know the ancient saying: *'Ars longa, vita brevis'*?"

The fellow with him stood with blanched face and dagger gripped convulsively in his red hand, but Marcen was stung to madness by the taunts of the friends, and lost control. He bade the man keep guard, placed his torch in a cleft of the wall, and ran back to the treasure. He began secreting it about his garments with feverish haste, hurling bitter imprecations at his foes as he worked. He toiled like a driven slave, overturning the piles of glittering wealth and picking out the best. The perspiration poured from him in shining beads. His fingers bled from contact with the rough edges of the uncut jewels.

The two friends stood laughing at him, and presently a fresh thought came to Proclus. He leant upon the wall as though in mortal pain, putting his hands on the rock and resting his face upon them. The gladiator, seizing the chance, sprang forward. But Rhesus understood the cynic's action, and put out his blade, tripping the man up. Before he could rise the same blade stilled him for ever. Into the soul of Rhesus the iron had eaten. Then Proclus lifted his head, slipping something long and bright into the folds of his sash; and with sword poised, glanced upward.

* * * * *

Marcen hears the struggle, hears a peculiar, grinding noise, and looks up also. At what he sees a terror seizes him; a handful of rubies scatters from his grasp. Yet his eye catches the red gleam of one as it rolls on the floor, and his greed cannot let it go. He is no longer a man, he is not even a traitor; he is Avarice incarnate. He springs towards the gem, clutches it with claw-like hand, thrusts it into his girdle, and darts towards the falling stone.

It is more than half-way down now, sinking in a lessening angle with majestic motion. The two men beyond it are blurred to his sight by the thin sheet of dust that falls from its edge in a dry cascade. It comes lower, gaining impetus with its fall, and when he reaches it he has to bend, to creep, to get into the opening.

He casts away the red jewel; a wild oath on his quivering lips; a fearful agony of terror in his bloodshot eyes. He has almost scrambled through when the point of a sword pricks his hand. Its edge shines sharp before his face. He recoils from the glittering thing that crosses the small angle of escape, and a wild shriek rings through the cavern, echoing down the passage like the cry of a lost soul. Rhesus even now would hold back his friend's hand, but Proclus is firm. With cool sneer he watches the mighty mass descend.

It grinds down its guiding grooves with a slight, rocking motion, caused by the impulse of its ponderous bulk. Rhesus averts his eye as a writhing hand is pushed from under it. With a thunderous shock it settles to its place. The vibration of its fall dies away, and all is still. Grim, silent, inanimate, it looms before them, filling the square of the passage completely. Only the clutching hand protrudes.

"It is well," says Proclus, shuddering. "It was awful, but just. Let the treasure lie now, Rhesus. We have enough with the handful of jewels we picked up while we waited in the darkness. I would not raise the stone again for the ransom of an empire."

"Nor I," says Rhesus. "Let us be going."

So they turn back up the tunnel and get into the boat, finding the foot of the steps by the light of the one remaining torch. There Rhesus stoves in the craft, watching it settle down for ever in the flood, and after it Proclus throws the long and slender key of bronze. The black ripples made by its splash break dismally against the giant columns, and the muffled echo of their breaking sighs in weird diminuendo down the dim arcades.

Rhesus utters an exclamation of relief, then together the two friends ascend the narrow stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

Over the Sea to Sicily.

The outlet into the lane was open, and they stepped out of the darkness into the full flush of a perfect dawn. The sun had risen in a cloudless sky, and was bathing the tapering spires and countless roofs of the city in a flood of hot and golden light. Along the narrow streets, however, the shadows were yet deep and cool. The two men, keeping well in the shelter of these, reached the new house of Proclus without observation or pursuit. The gladiator Marcen had left on the steps, they saw not again. Perhaps he had thought better of the business, grown weary of waiting, and gone home. Perhaps he had stolen the chariot, for it was missing!

Their way of escape now seemed clear. If Theodora, through her many spies, had gained no inkling of their plans, it *was* clear. So Proclus bade his friend keep to the house all day, saying that he had work to do that must be hurried, if they were, after all, to leave the city that night.

The hours dragged on wearily for Rhesus. He wandered idly through the statuetted walls of the mansion, listened unheedingly to the sweet songs of the Jewesses, disdained the sensuous allurements of the dancing girls; and as twilight neared, found some relief in the gossip of an old slave. It was such gossip as is usual in such places—such as was every-day talk in that strange city of piety and plunder, wine and wealth—even to the last item, of the sacking and burning of a great villa beyond the wall, near the Charsian Gate.

"It is reported, master," said the old slave, with a peculiarly knowing gleam in the corners of his eyes, "that the pillagers were a band of Sythians, whom—may God condemn them!—have harried our suburbs unmercifully since Nika. But I think otherwise. Be that as it may, they have done their work well and got safely away, taking the fair daughter of the house, who has long been ill-treated, 'tis said, by her harsh foster-parents, with them. The latest rumour has it that the said parents have since been set free. That also I doubt."

Rhesus hoped that the rumour was true, and hearing that the name of the beautiful girl who had been carried off was Annita, gave no more thought to the matter. The old man went out, and after him the dancing girls, and the Jewesses. The dusk deepened to night, and Rhesus felt a strange silence grow upon the house. He went from one room to another, roused to some suspicion. He called for the attendants. The house was empty; no one answered to his call.

He went out into the street, glaring now with the torch-lights of passers-by. He noticed the varying badges of blue and green, and heard the ribald songs of the tipsy gallants whose day began with night. The sky was moonless, but wonderfully starry and clear. The sweeping curve of Andromeda, swung over the changeful Algol, recalled his far-off home to his mind, and the many evenings he had spent in tracing out the constellations on the black background of that mystic space. His uneasiness was lulled a little. He went back into the house and waited; and presently Proclus returned alone.

"I was afraid you would have thought me false, Rhesus," said he, "so long have I been away. My task has been a hard one. The slaves have gone, I see—by my orders. It is well. I have a great surprise for you to-morrow, friend, so stuff your sash with all the coin you can, and let us be going."

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"I am ready," said Rhesus. "Weary of this waiting, too, though I never doubted your fidelity. But what is this surprise you have in store?"

"That you shall know when we are clear of this evil place," said the other. "I have something yet to do here."

He ran down the silent passage to the back of the dwelling, and presently, with a queer smile, returned. Rhesus heard the crackling of dry wood and guessed his errand.

"We must be wily as foxes if we are to get away," said the cynic. "It has come to my knowledge that some hint of my intention has reached the Empress. So I thought it best to create some diversion for the soldiery and the mob!"

They were a street's length away by this, but the cry of "*Fire!*" was already raised, and the crowd ran crushing past them towards the house. Curls of smoke and tongues of flame leapt from the rear of it. Falling sparks, carried by the fresh wind, overtook them.

"Constantinople will have work and gossip enough to-night!" laughed the incendiary. "It will pay them back somewhat for the trouble they gave us that night you and I know so well, Rhesus."

Unnoticed in the tumult and excitement they came easily to the palace garden. Passing the little portal, they entered the aloe grove. Rhesus felt his heart beat high, and a strange diffidence seize him, now he stood on the threshold of love's kingdom at last. Yet when the flutter of Eutasia's robe came down the flower-embroidered path, his dalliance vanished. He sprang out of their concealment and clasped her to him as ruthlessly as he had done that first day—how long ago it seemed!—when he picked her from the sand of the arena and bore her round the course in his chariot.

"Then you are not afraid to leave all for my sake, sweet little 'Tasia?" he asked.

"What think you, Rhesus? I am here, and ready, and impatient to be gone. What would you have more?"

"Nothing, dear," he cried, and led her down the shaded groves to the garden steps, with Proclus coming carefully behind. There, with muffled oars and a silent crew, lay a light galley waiting.

There was a patter of feet and a great commotion in the garden as they stepped on board. Lights flashed between the trees, voices called, weapons gleamed in the clear starshine.

"Cast off!" cried Proclus. The little craft sheered away. He shouted back a mocking derision to the baffled emissaries of the Empress. The rowers gathered rhythm in their strokes, the low shore receded, the lights sank to wavering dots that at last were lost in the gloom, the angry cries were swept away in the night wind. Safety for the fugitives was won at last.

All through the night the galley sped down the dark-shining waters of Propontis and the Hellespont, and though pursued by a warship manned in haste, got clear away and out upon the opening bosom of the Egean.

* * * * *

As the greyness of morning twilight gave place to the red tinge of sunrise over the glittering sea, Proclus drew Rhesus and Eutasia to the stern of the ship's deck, and bade a sailor bring up the lady from below.

She came up the hatchway steps radiant with the freshness of beauty. A blush-red hue was painted on her soft cheeks by the ocean breeze. With the lovelight in her dark eyes, she crossed the deck to Proclus and placed her hand in his.

"This," said the cynic, gravely, "is Annita, whom I took from her home yesterday in a somewhat rough manner. You may have heard of my exploit in the city. She is to be my wife, Rhesus."

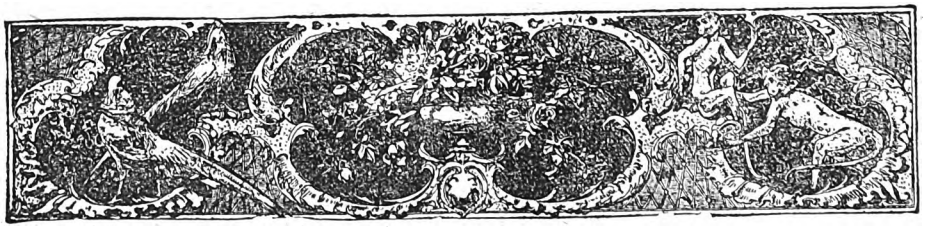
Rhesus said no words beyond a simple greeting, and the two women kissed each other. Leaving them to make friends in their own way, the two men went together to the side and gazed out upon the spreading wash that the ship left behind her in the waters. In that moment of heartfelt joy and peace the ambitions of one and the pessimism of the other were swept away for ever in the merry-whistling gale.

They talked awhile of their adventures and trials, their failures and successes, their loves and their prospects for the peaceful future, arranging to put in at Athens and be married in a sacred shrine of the old faith yet remaining there. Rhesus, as the quiet years of peace to come in the white-walled villa set amid the vineyards and the orange-fields of sunny Sicily lay fair and bright before him, had no regret for the hopes of his youth that were now no more. He had no regret for the life of the gay city blessed by Nature and cursed by man; for the treasure that had cost so much, and was now lost. He had chosen the better part of life, after all, gaining a greater treasure than all the jewels in the world, a greater gift than the applause of men. The words that escaped his lips, breaking the spell of the silence that had fallen between them, were re-echoed lowly by his friend.

Eutasia and Annita took them up in refrain, shattering the spell completely with their merry laughter; and the words that their sweet voices flung out over the sunlit sea were "home" and "rest."

And the swift galley bore them safely to both; for the Fates are kind sometimes.

THE END.



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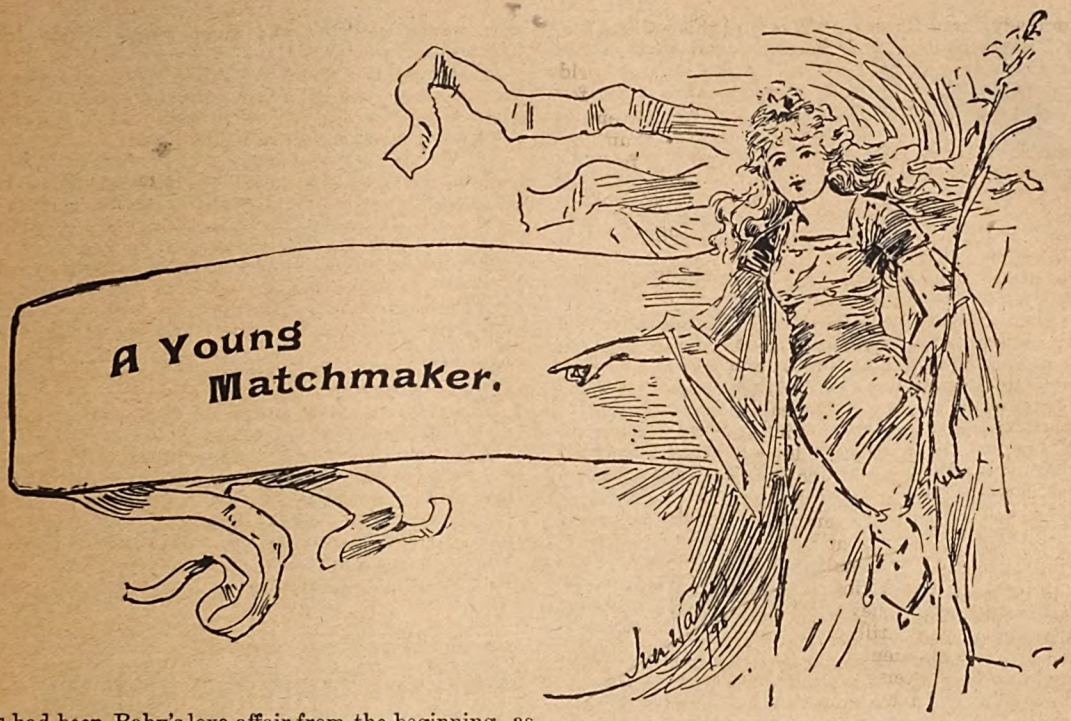

A Young Matchmaker.

It had been Baby's love affair from the beginning, as he had introduced the young people, compassing the matter in this way:

The Lansing family had just moved to Southampton and were busy with the settling of their household goods' The family consisted of The Baby, aged hree years, his father and mother, and Aunt Mary Lanting, all young people, and all, apparently, existing sbut to revolve round the small autocrat of the household.

On this busiest of all days, Baby took it into his curly pate to explore the city of his adoption, and, after various thrilling encounters with huge, hungry-looking dogs, with street urchins, larger and more worldly-wise than himself, and thundering waggons and drays, his courage forsook him, and he collapsed into a sobbing little heap at a street corner.

Just as he had decided that he had not a friend in the world, a young man hurrying past caught sight of the forlorn little one, and, with a mingled feeling of impatience at the interruption, and of pity, stooped and picked him up.

"Hallo, young man! What has happened?"

Baby's plump cheeks were flushed and dusty, with paths down them where the tears had trickled. His lip curled pitifully as he replied:

"I zus wented out, an' now I's losted!"

"Very evident, sir. And what may be your name?"

"Baby," with a sniff.

"Baby what?"

"Ist on'y Baby!" with impatient iteration.

"What's papa's name?"

"Papa, course! An' Mamma's ist Mamma, an' Aunt's 's Auntie, an' 'at's all."

Despairing of identifying his burden, the young man started in search of a policeman, when he encountered a young lady. He had just time to see that she was breathless and pale, and while her pink cotton gown was most becoming, it was hardly appropriate for the street, when she gave an ecstatic cry of recognition and caught Baby in her arms, where he put two plump hands about her neck and patted wildly at the back of her head, to the refrain of "Auntie! mine own Auntie!"

Then, as Miss Lansing turned to acknowledge the family debt to Baby's rescuer, he recovered his dignity and remarked with an eloquent gesture of a fat forefinger:

"Zis ist mine Auntie, what loves me. An' zis ist ve nice man what foun' me when I was losted. I fink I'll call him Uncle, 'cause I never had one 't all, yo know."

And so Baby introduced Frederick Austen and Mary Lansing; and as he had with much trouble to himself, made them known to each other, so he lent them the aid and encouragement of his presence and advice on all important or embarrassing occasions. Sometimes the occasions alluded to were embarrassing chiefly because of Baby's wide, inquisitive blue eyes and searching questions.

One evening, when the young people were discussing Chopin as Miss Lansing played softly, Mr. Austen apparently engrossed in the argument, but really, as he bent over the fair player, marvelling at the changing pink and white in her cheeks and the regular waves of her soft brown hair, an experienced eye would have known at first glance what was imminent; but Baby rushed upon the scene, calling, in his high-pitched treble:

"Auntie! Oh, Auntie! I wan' to ask yo somefing!" Then, sure of the attention of his audience, he burst forth eagerly: "W'y—mamma—w'y, las' night mamma said to papa 'at she fought uncle meant somefing sewious, an' I didn't know whedder yo knowed it or not!"

When the critical moment arrived, and the young solicitor skilfully pleaded his case; when his entreaties had broken down the last barrier; when his eager arms

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had opened to receive the slender form; when the world and time itself were, for the moment, blotted out for two people, there came a howl of indignant remonstrance from the staircase in the hall. Baby stumbled down the few remaining steps as fast as his fat legs would allow, tore across the floor and threw himself upon the girl, clutching at her skirts until she stooped to raise him in her arms, where he clung, panting defiantly.

"She's mine auntie, mine own, an' Uncle ner no one else can be a-huggin' of her."

Through the bliss of their early courtship Baby hovered about them with an insistence that sometimes caused Mr. Austen to say something impatient under his breath as he gnawed the ends of his moustache, but, being a wise young man, he concealed the fact that the presence of a wriggling human interrogation-point was not always as welcome as "the flowers that bloom in the spring." He used sometimes to wish that it was a pug instead of a child, "for then," he would soliloquise, "I could persuade Mary to let me take the little wretch by the nape of the neck and put him out of the room."

But Baby stayed on, making himself a prominent factor in their conversation, and on that never-to-be-forgotten day when they quarrelled—about nothing much, to be sure, but still a serious quarrel—he took a hand in the disagreement, sided with his beloved Auntie though plainly stricken to go against the Uncle of his adoption, and placed his chubby little person between the pair.

"Yo shan't look so at mine own Auntie!" he declared with quivering lip. "See how you've made her k'y. Go 'way 'twunst."

Aunt Mary seemed to gain courage from this display of spirit on the part of her protector, for she raised her head and echoed Baby's summary order, adding a few scathing remarks that Baby perhaps thought, but that were impossible to his limited vocabulary.

Three months passed, during which time Baby prattled much of the Uncle who used to love his Auntie, and Aunt Mary grew more slender, and the pink came less often to her cheeks.

And in a solicitor's office a young man fretted and fumed over his law books, or in court glared and thundered at his opponents with a vehemence that caused the older lawyers, whose own love affairs were in the dim and shadowy past, to open their eyes and wonder if Austen were in training for politics.

Coming downstairs one afternoon he encountered at the street door a kilted young man of some four years, with a dilapidated cap set askew on tangled yellow curls and an air of sturdy determination beaming from his blue eyes and not over-clean face.

"Hallo, Uncle!" said he. "I knowed if I come stwaight down stweet I'd fin' you."

"Why, how do you do, Baby?" returned the young man, turning a trifle pale. Then extending his hand: "Won't you shake hands with me?"

"Affe: ..hile," was the business-like response. "But, fyste I want to show you," and he pulled a dilapidated photograph from under his arm. "Zus see how Auntie 's 'poiled zis ole fing, a k'yin' on it. I see her do it, lots o' times, an' I fink you oughter gimme a better one fer her, 'cause you been naughty to her."

For a long minute the young man stood motionless, staring down at the little figure and the soiled photograph of himself. Then with a swoop of his strong arms, he lifted the child as he had done on the first day of their acquaintance.

"I can't say that I'm sorry that the picture has been spoilt in that way, Baby, and I'm perfectly willing to give Auntie another one, but suppose you take Uncle up to see her, and he'll tell her he's sorry for being so naughty to her."

Baby heaved a sigh of relief.

"Well, I fink you better. 'At 's 'e way I allus does when I been naughty, an' it makes me feel good."

Within half an hour all the heartache and loneliness were of the past. Baby stood aside with hands clasped behind him, viewing the pair with speculative eyes. Then their sweet oblivion vanished before his piping voice:

"Uncle, I fink you better stop a huggin' Auntie so hard, an' tell her 'at you're very sorry fer bein' so naughty to her, an' p'omise her 'at you won't make her k'y, never no more!"

Baby steered his love affair successfully thereafter, and at the wedding marched proudly in the procession, and, except that he slapped one of the little flower girls for stepping on the bride's train, behaved with the utmost dignity and decorum.

He still keeps a watchful eye on the pair beneath their new roof-tree, and takes quite the pride of proprietorship in their peace and happiness.

ALBERT ANDREWS.

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

W. K. L.—No, the Royal Family cannot constitutionally abdicate without the consent of both Houses of Parliament.

G. D. G. writes to point out that Napoleon was once wounded by a musket ball in the left foot at the storming of Ratisbon, when he defeated the Arch-Duke Charles, on April 23rd, 1809.

I. P.—Coats of Arms were originally so called because ladies and gentlemen had their armorial bearings embroidered upon their dresses. A knight was allowed to adopt any symbol he chose, and it soon became the symbol by which he was known.

Fireman.—The difficulty caused by the rapid evaporation of the water contained in the fire buckets of a building or works can easily be avoided by pouring a few drops of oil into the buckets, which will form a preservative coating on the top of the water.

G. G.—The only man in the kingdom to whom the word "Sir," without any qualifying term, can properly be employed as an apostrophe, is the Prince of Wales. In speaking to a baronet—Sir John Jones for example—you must say "Sir John," and never on any account "Sir Jones."

Citizen.—If you wish to have a warm situation for your house, choose a spot on a hill, not in a valley; for although a house situated low down gains a certain amount of shelter from the high winds, it is more than counterbalanced by the presence of damp. Moist situations are always colder than dry ones.

Hiawatha asks for the best way of discovering whether a seed is ripe or not.——There are many ways of determining this. During the process of growth the seed is always soft, when it is ripe it becomes hard. Colour, of course, plays a prominent part in the maturity of seed. A ripe seed is usually brown or black. It will also be found that, as a rule, a ripe seed will sink in water, owing to the density of its particles, while an immature one will float.

Puzzler writes: "Can you assign any reason for the fact that a wetting with fresh water will almost invariably be followed by a severe cold, while a wetting with sea water has no such effect?"————Because the salt in the sea water acts as a double preventive of cold in the following way: It retards evaporation, and the sudden absorption of heat from the body which follows a fresh water wetting is thus avoided. Secondly, the salt causes an extra flow of blood to the skin by its irritating effect upon it.

Storm.—Storm warnings were first issued in Holland in 1860.

Metre.—The expression "hair-breadth," now usually called "hair's breadth," was once a regular measure. It was the width of sixteen hairs laid side by side.

J. N.—The first hippopotamus in the possession of the Zoological Society—in 1851—was a gift to the Society; but it cost £1,000 for transport. The society once paid £2,400 for three giraffes.

R. R. R.—The originator of the famous three "r" alliteration—"reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic"—is said to have been Sir William Curtis, at one time Lord Mayor of London. It occurred in a toast in 1795.

Miner.—A mine on the Dalquharren Estate, Dailly, Scotland, has been burning for fifty years. It has just spent itself. The flames occasionally burst forth from the ground in volcanic fashion. The dykes of rock which intersected it prevented the fire from reaching the other mines.

Alice.—You are quite right; the "spider's web" pattern for dresses and waistcoats is really not at all new. Here is a quotation from a diary written about 160 years ago: "A coat of rich yellow, with the netts of spiders cunningly drawn on the cloth." It was worn by a gentleman at the notorious Ranelagh Gardens.

Contractor asks whether a railway-bridge has ever been fixed in position in one night.————Yes. About eighteen months ago the Great Eastern Railway removed the old bridge over the River Lea, near Tottenham Station, and fixed a new one in its place in nine hours, despite a severe snowstorm. The G.E.R. has done some quick things in that way.

S. I. S.—Sisters of Charity originated with the labours of Vincent de Paul. Wherever he went he was accustomed to urge benevolent women to undertake the relief of the suffering; but he found that these volunteers did not continue the work for long. He resolved to found a society; he did so in 1633. From this society of four members has sprung the great organisation of our days.

B.—The importance of eating a good breakfast is strongly insisted upon by many medical men. One large firm in the North of England is said to have turned out more work with the same number of hands after it altered the time of starting from six to eight, thus enabling the men to have breakfast before they began, instead of working two hours before breakfast. The Portuguese have a saying to the effect that no man can be a good husband who does not eat a good breakfast.

Siller.—A silver coin is usually in currency for twenty-seven years.

Numis.—The "Kreutzer," which may be called the Austrian farthing, and which is being withdrawn from circulation, is one of the oldest of European coins. It has been in existence for more than four centuries. It circulated in North and South Germany at one time, but has been practically limited to Austria for twenty-five years.

Taste.—It is all a matter of custom. The person who cannot do with less than three pieces of sugar in a small cup of tea can, by degrees, accustom his palate to relishing tea without any sugar. Most people would think an egg quite insipid without salt, but one member of this staff declares that salt simply spoils the flavour of the egg. "Salt," he says, "may be necessary if you are forced to eat an egg that has reached the 'political' stage, but otherwise it is a disadvantage."

A. T. has been led by his thirst for knowledge to ask me if America was known to the ancient Greeks.————There is no evidence. A French writer has tried to prove that it was, but his proof is not convincing. He says that Aristotle describes a foreign country where, in the vicinity of marshy ground and sluggish rivers, a booming sound is heard at night. This sound could not be accounted for; but the writer asserts that it must have been made by the American bull-frog; so that America was known to the Greeks.

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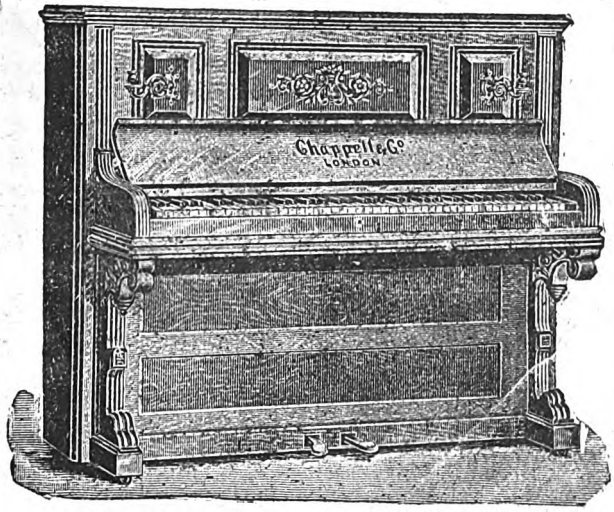
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 504. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 27TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

Chappell Pianos.

Estd. 1808.



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SHORT STORIES

Edited By C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 504. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 27th, 1898.

UNTOLD TALES OF THE INDIAN MUTINY.

IV.—The Lights at the Delhi Gate.

By H. HUNTER.

THE old fort at Agra—what a crowd of memories cluster round its battlements and bastions! What legends, mostly grim and grisly, linger about its pillared courts and sculptured arches. What tales are told concerning its long galleries, where the ladies of the Zenana used to play "hide and seek" with the Emperor. What stories of the gloomy range of underground vaults, the secret stairs, and mysterious passages; and of the curious chambers concealed in the masonry of its great carven gateways.

What phantoms flit through its gleaming pavilions, or hover round it massive towers, or haunt its terraced roof and airy colonnades!

The old palace of Shah Jehan, dominated by the dark red wall of the great fort, and with the sacred waters of the Jumna flowing in a deep channel at its base, was indeed a place in which to dream dreams and see visions.

But the story which I have to tell cannot be contemptuously dismissed as the one, or politely referred to the other.

Yet few stranger have ever been told outside the pages of sensational romance.

It was never doubted by any of the large number of English, civil and military, who were living at the time in the fort—never doubted even by the three or four leading civilians, who, of all men there present, were

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the least disposed to credulity, after the report of Colonel Fraser and the ocular demonstration afforded them.

The Delhi Gate of the old fort at Agra, imposing as it looked to the eye, contained only two or three moderate-sized apartments, a few small chambers and several narrow staircases and alleyways by which access was gained to the roof above the main gateway, and to the battlements beyond.

In one of these apartments in the first months of the Mutiny was quartered a clerk attached to the Stores Department.

The man was an Eurasian. In his veins ran the blood of two continents, Europe and Asia; a mixture despised in the East, and by none more than by the English rulers of the Empire of India. There are reasons for this which do not concern our story; but, during the stress of the Mutiny, the fact was too often allowed to prejudice the opinion of the men in authority in many of the affected districts.

Agra was no exception. The civil officials, the magistrate and the collector particularly, would listen to nothing that reached them through Eurasian channels. That an Eurasian gave the information was, in their eyes, enough to condemn it as untrustworty. Nothing coming from Eurasian sources could move the Lieutenant-Governor to action. It was tainted. Eurasians didn't "count" in the calculations of the Anglo-Indians responsible for the government of Agra.

The Stores clerk was a cut above the average run of his race, and naturally resented the low estimate put upon his blood by the chief civil authorities of the place. His room in the Delhi Gate commanded a view of the great wall which inclosed the fort on the landward side. From the window he could see straight down the Rowney—the dry ditch which ran at the bottom of the wall.

One evening, when the charcoal fires began to glow about the fountain, and the English families who had found shelter in the fort were assembled as usual in the great square of the Palace, for the social meal which closed each eventful day, it was pretty evident, from the eager talk and suppressed excitement, that something had occurred to give the daily gossip a fresher flavour, and a newer interest.

A rumour, indeed, had gone about from group to group, till it had travelled the entire circuit of the square, which had set every tongue wagging to the same tune, and filled every heart with vague feelings of uneasiness, apprehension, and alarm.

In those days, filled with excitement, when the improbable and the unexpected were happening every hour, nothing was too wild or too extravagant for belief—and, with the old fort a perfect rabbit-warren of underground passages, extending in all directions and very imperfectly explored, there was ample foundation for the imagination to build on.

Any number of rebels might find concealment in the long range of subterranean chambers beneath the Palace. The mutineers, who were believed to be in the suburbs and villages across the river, could get access to these chambers, it was said, through the secret passages which extended under the Rowney—the dry ditch—and had exits in different quarters of the city.

The rumour, circulating through the Palace Square on this particular evening in July '57, declared that strange noises had been heard in the Rowney at unholy hours, and strange lights had been seen there long after gun fire had warned everybody to retire and the bugle had sounded "lights out."

The story, it was reported, orignated with a clerk whose room in the Delhi Gate looked into the ditch, which it commanded as far as the angle of the wall.

"Yes," said young Joyce, the Deputy-Assistant Collector, who was drinking tea with Mrs. Cubitt's party, "with that half-caste chap who weighs out the grain rations, Dick Costello—drunken Dick, as we call him. The man's never sober more than half his time—not but what they say he does his work just as well in one condition as the other."

"Well," put in Lieutenant Batson, who had just come off duty at the Bengalee bastion, and for whom Nellie Cubitt had reserved a chair next her own, "it isn't every fellow who can plead such a good, sound, reasonable excuse for his liquor. I wonder the man isn't drunk every day in the week instead of only making it three out of seven. He certainly deserves to be commended for his moderation."

"Was there any truth in that story?" inquired a sad-looking lady, one of the fugitives from Gwalior.

"Truth!" chirped the cheerful Lieutenant, "why, my dear madam, it was all truth. And the very part which one would be most inclined to reject is really the truest half of it.

"When the mutineers broke into his room in the city, Costello was about three quarters through with a bottle of Exshaw's 'best.' He received them with all the grace and courtesy of Government House, invited them to be seated, apologised for not having glasses enough to go round, assisted them to smash his mirrors and break his furniture; danced with them round the bonfire they made in the street, and yelled louder than any rebel in the mob.

"They thought him a lunatic, but he was only drunk; and, while every other Christian, man, woman, and child, was brutally murdered and mutilated, Costello was left unharmed. Lunatics, you know, are always objects of reverence in the East."

"But Mr. Drummond, I'm afraid, hasn't much sympathy with Dick sober and none at all with Dick drunk."

"I understand," said Joyce, "that he's threatened Costello, that if he finds him repeating that silly story again—about the lights at the gate, I mean—he'll make an example of him."

"Yes," hummed Lieutenant Batson, "as he did of the corn merchant who sold grain to the Commissariat contractor.

"The poor devil got two months in 'chokee' for helping the General to feed the garrison. Oh! we're a happy family, aren't we? Let the military issue an order, the civilians immediately publish another; and the Mussulman says to the Hindoo: 'See how these Christians love one another.'"

"With the sword hanging over our heads we spend most of our time in squabbling and quarrelling."

"We haven't got a man here; that's what's the matter with Agra," said a quiet spoken individual in the uniform of the mounted militia. "A man who can grasp the situation and 'sit firm.' The magistrate swears by the Mahommedans, and the Lieutenant-Governor supports him. The General swears at them, but lacks capacity and trusts to luck. The Colonels are good men and true, but their hands are tied: on one side by military etiquette, on the other by civil authority.

"This story of the lights at the Delhi Gate would have been investigated and disposed of before ever it got to be the common gossip of the fort, if we'd had a man here like Lawrence or Nicholson. But Drummond

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thinks he's done enough when he's called Costello a drunken fool; and Mr. Colvin declines to hear a word against Drummond.

"Heigh-ho! There goes Fraser. Excuse me, Mrs. Cubitt," said the militia man rising. "I want a word with the Colonel."

* * * * * *

"Yes, I know what Mr. Drummond has threatened, but you can leave me to deal with that, I think," said Colonel Fraser to Dick Costello, the morning after Mrs. Cubitt's tea party in the Palace Square. "Now then, let's have the whole story. It can't be a very long one, and tell it as straight as you know how. You needn't look round the room in that scared fashion, man. There's nobody behind the grass mats; there's not a soul within hearing but ourselves. You're telling the tale to none but me, understand. So now, eyes front, if you please."

"Well, Colonel," stammered the unfortunate Stores clerk, by no means assured of the Colonel's power to protect him, and with the sense of an unholy secret weighing like lead upon him, "as you say, it isn't much of a story, and Mr. Drummond——"

"How did it begin, man, and when did it start?" interrupted the Colonel impatiently. "Give us a day or a date, can't you? Something definite to go upon. Be careful what you say; but see you don't keep anything back."

"It began with the noises, Colonel," said the man, breaking into a perspiration from sheer fright. "I was lying awake one night—it's dreadful hot up in that room ——"

The Colonel fidgeted.

"It was the Thursday in last week, Colonel," continued Costello with a gasp.

He had caught the look in the Colonel's eye.

"Just a week ago to-day, sir. I was lying awake. I hadn't been to sleep and I wasn't dreaming.

"I was thinking of the fine new house which Jotee Persham, the military contractor, had built himself out of the commissariat money, when I heard a sound like somebody tapping with a hammer. I didn't pay much attention to it at first. But it continued—'tap-tap,' at intervals of every few seconds.

"That's a hammer striking a chisel, thinks I, after it had been going for a bit. But I didn't know the sappers worked in the Rowney all night. Some new order out, I s'pose!

He saw a shadowy form emerge from the shelter of the wall.

"I lay listening for a matter of p'raps twenty minutes, wondering what it might be and thinking every moment it would cease. But it kept on 'tap-tap' as regular as the beat of the clock on the wall there. Now and again, the hammer would seem to miss the chisel and strike the stone. The difference in the sound was plainly perceptible.

"All at once it occurred to me, as a singular circumstance, that only *one* hammer should be going if the sappers were really at work in the ditch below. So I got up and went to the window. There wasn't a soul to be seen. There wasn't so much as a dog moving. The Rowney was deserted. But the tapping went on as

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before. I didn't half like the sound of that 'tap-tap,' coming up at regular intervals from the silence below.

"It seemed to come from the wall below the gate. I listened at the window for a good bit, expecting to see someone. But I saw nothing. The noise, however, continued without ceasing. When it stopped, I don't know. It was going, I believe, when I fell asleep.

"The following night I heard it again. It began about the same time—as near midnight as makes no difference. I listened again. It came from the same place—about twenty yards from the gate, at the foot of the wall. There was no other sound, no voices, nothing but the regular tap of iron on iron, or iron on stone.

"Next morning I reported it."

The man stopped. He was shaking like a leaf. The Colonel looked hard at him, drew his own conclusions, and, taking a bottle from a dwarf cabinet, poured out a measure of brandy. Adding thereto a small quantity of water he handed it to the man.

"Drink this, Costel.o," he said, "it will steady your nerves a bit. You've got a touch of hysteria. There's nothing for you to be frightened of, my good fellow. I give you the word of an English officer, you shan't be punished for speaking the truth, or what you believe to be the truth. Just tell me plainly all you saw and heard and leave the rest to me."

"I don't make so much, sir, of Mr. Drummond calling me a drunken fool," said poor Dick, querulously. "I know I drink more than's good for me; but I wasn't drunk when I heard them noises, nor yet when I saw the lights; and I ain't quite a fool, either. Would they trust me to keep the Stores accounts if they thought me a fool?

"But I've got something to tell, Colonel, that gives me the shivers only to think of—something that'll make you turn against me worse'n Mr. Drummond, for he ain't heard it, or you must be a won'nerful good sort, Colonel—'cuse me, sir. Something, sir, that I wouldn't tell Mr. Drummond—no, not if he promised me a pension! And the worst of it is, Colonel, that I should be satisfied if I knew I was drunk; but I was sober, sir, as sober as Mr. Drummond himself. Yet I'll take my dying oath I saw all four of 'em."

"Four of whom?" said the Colonel, thoroughly interested at last.

"The four English soldiers who went into the vaults and never came out again."

Colonel Fraser sat and stared at the man for some minutes without speaking.

"Do you know how long ago that is?" said he at length, without taking his eyes off Costello.

"Fifty years, they say, or thereabouts."

"And you saw those men?"

"I saw them, Colonel, as plain as I see you. I knew them by their English uniforms and their white English faces. But I told you you'd turn against me."

"I thought you said you saw *nothing*," rejoined the Colonel severely.

"Nothing, till the night before I saw the lights in the shed. And then I saw those men in the bottom of the ditch at the foot of the wall, not twenty yards from the gate."

"What were they doing?"

"Stooping over something."

Colonel Fraser was silent for a moment.

"And you saw the lights on Monday?"

"Yes."

"Last night?"

"I didn't look, Colonel. I've seen too much. I don't want to see any more. Let them look whom it concerns. Drunken fool, is the best word they've got for me—you don't believe me, Colonel Fraser, any more'n Mr. Drummond," added the man, sulkily, after a pause, during which the Colonel sat staring at him in a way that was trying to the nerves. "But I'll swear it by all the oaths in the High Court—on the Koran, the Ganges or the Bible."

"The lights and the noises, Costello, are one thing—at least they come within the practical and the possible. They are capable of being traced and investigated; but I must say you've shaken my confidence in the story by introducing the supernatural into it. The most charitable explanation of the matter is to suppose that you were——"

"——drunk, of course."

"Overstrung was the word I was going to use," said the Colonel, quietly.

"Well, I've got no more to tell, Colonel," said the man looking up sullenly, "and if you've quite done with me I'll be glad to go."

"You haven't mentioned this—er—this new experience—about the four soldiers, Costello, to anyone?"

"Mr. Drummond said quite enough, sir, to keep me from opening my mouth to a living soul—and I wish now that I hadn't told you, Colonel. 'Tain't done me no good."

"It shall not do you any harm, Costello; and now, tell me this one thing more and then you may go. Did the light appear in any other part of the Rowney, or only in the shed?"

"Only in the shed."

"Thanks, I think that will do," and Dick Costello left the Colonel's quarters smarting under the conviction that in all Agra there was no more deeply injured man.

* * * * * *

"What does Mr. Drummond say to it now—eh? Drunken Dick's scored off him nicely. Reckon he don't feel quite so big as he did; and the military aren't sorry."

"It's a fair take-in, old man, I own; and it's made somebody look as if it hasn't agreed with him. But then, I think it's rather something of a 'let-down' for a good many of us, ain't it?"

The speakers were Teddy Joyce of the Revenue Department and Lieutenant Batson of the Bengal Artillery. The place was the great marble-flagged Square of the old Palace; the time, evening; the occasion, a tea party given by Mrs. Cubitt, the hostess of the evening, already a week old, when the rumour of lights at the Delhi Gate had first been whispered in the Square.

"Have they found who put the shed up?" inquired the lady, handing the Lieutenant a cup of tea.

"No and never will. They'll never be any wiser than they are to-day."

"And what have they discovered?" asked pretty Miss Nellie, eager for the story which ought to be at the back of the mystery.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing."

The party forming Mrs. Cubitt's social group on the marble flags of the Pearl Zenana, stared blankly at the speaker.

"But, I say, old man!" said Joyce "the shed, hang it all!—that couldn't have been put up without hands. That was substantial enough, anyhow. Surely the engineers know who knocked that together."

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Lieutenant Batson shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask 'em," he said ironically. "I reckon Drunken Dick's given the whole garrison a pill to swallow that they can't digest.

"You've read the story of Jonah's gourd? Well, that's the story of this shed. There was a shed in the Rowney one morning; there was none there when the men knocked off in the evening before. It had sprung up during the night.

"Fact, my boy; you needn't look so incredulous. We had hundreds of fellows at work in the Rowney—natives most of 'em. Nobody made it his business to inquire about the shed; and now everybody denies all knowledge of it whatever.

"Cotton and Fraser, being military men, don't try to juggle with the facts. They honestly admit themselves beaten. But it ain't satisfactory by a long chalk."

"They'll never believe it at home," murmured Mrs. Cubitt, meditatively.

"I don't fancy any of us would venture to tell the tale in England," said the Lieutenant, "but I've got all the details if ever I feel the 'call.' I can go one better than most, for I saw the men with my own eyes."

Nellie looked at him, speechless with awe and wonder.

"Yes," he continued, "I did. And nothing, I think, that's hid in the future can beat, for me, the experience of last night.

"The Colonel, you know," he said, addressing Mrs. Cubitt, "posted a trustworthy sentry below the window in the Delhi Gate, with instructions to watch the shed, and if he saw a light in it, to fire.

"Not a sound broke the stillness of the Rowney. But about 12.30 he saw a shadowy form emerge from the shelter of the wall, creep along the ditch and enter the shed. The next moment a light shone through the cracks in the boards, and from a small aperture near the roof which served for a window. A minute later the sentry challenged and fired.

"In the morning the shed was searched. The shot had smashed a water-jar which had stood in a corner; but of the visitor there was no trace, nor of the lamp, nor of any means of procuring a light.

"The light disappeared the moment the man fired. The figure he saw no more. The next night the Colonel posted *two* men at the gate, one being a corporal. There was light enough in the sky to distinguish objects at a short distance.

"Soon after twelve, the men became aware that *two* figures were moving rapidly and noiselessly along the line of the wall in the direction of the shed. The corporal could see them with greater distinctness than the private; and he says they wore the uniform of the British Line before Waterloo. They entered the shed together, and almost immediately the light appeared. The shed seemed to fill suddenly with a strong, white light. The corporal challenged.

"There was no reply, and both fired.

"But when the shed was searched in the morning, it was drawn blank. There was nothing that would help to elucidate the mystery that had gathered round that rough structure in the Rowney which had been erected by some person or persons unknown. Only, the water-jar, which had been smashed on the previous night, had been replaced by another.

"The light vanished as soon as the shot swere fired; repeating in this, its behaviour on the first occasion.

"'But there should be *four*,' said the Colonel with as ghastly grin when the corporal made his report. The story which has been told for nearly fifty years, says that four soldiers went into the vaults to hunt for hid treasure, and never came out again—which,' said he 'I think is not at all improbable, considering the number of galleries and passages they would have to traverse. Go and find the other two.'

"It was said in a joke, but when the sergeant told him at ten o'clock the same night that he was going to take charge himself of the post at the Delhi Gate, the Colonel said:

"'I needn't tell you, sergeant, how anxious I am to get this matter rid up. It's all over the fort, and the Lieutenant-Govenor isn't half pleased about it.'

"There were four men on duty that night at the gate; the sergeant, a corporal, and two privates. The history of the two previous nights was repeated, save that on this occasion the number of figures which entered the shed was increased by *one*. Number three had turned up.

"In the morning the Colonel directed me to have a sergeant's file ready at ten p.m., and he would go with them himself to the Gate and surround the shed directly the figures had entered it.

"At ten precisely we drew up in the shadow of the great Gate; but the Colonel had been sent for by Mr. Colvin and the command devolved upon me. I had merely to carry out the Colonel's instructions.

"It was a clear night, and we could see everything distinctly. We could almost count the boards in the shed.

"At half past twelve exactly, by my watch, four figures came out of the wall below the Jehangiree Mahal and made direc ly for the shed. They were clad in the old British uniform of the Line, and moved like skirmishers going into action. They moved without noise, and so quickly that before I could get my men together, they had gained the hut. Before we had gone a dozen steps the light shone out. Every man in the little company saw it. There was nothing ghostly about it. It seemed to come from a powerful lamp, fitted probably with an Argand burner.

"The four dark silent figures, creeping with bent backs, swiftly and stealthily through the gloomy void of the great ditch, had given the affair a certain touch of the uncanny; but in the light which shone from the shed, there was no suggestion of the weird and the supernatural.

"I had posted the men, three on each side, and was just creeping up myself to take a peep through the chinks in the boards, when suddenly, without sign or sound, the light went out. It was a queer experience.

"'Fire!' I cried, springing back, and on the instant, twelve shots riddled the shed from end to end.

"We remained on the ground till dawn, when the Colonel and Mr. Drummond came down, and under their direction the shed was removed. There was nothing in it but the water-jar aforesaid.

"How any living thing could have escaped the storm of balls which rained through it I cannot explain, any more than I can say how it was we found no trace of lamp or lighter.

"The ground was dug away all round for a depth of three feet; but nothing was discovered that would indicate a concealed passage, or, indeed, any means by which exit could have been found from the Rowney or concealment within it."

As Lieutenant Batson ceased speaking, the gun from the bastion warned the little crowd in the Square that the hour for retiring—nine o'clock—had arrived, and slowly the social gathering began to break up.

The mystery of the lights at the Delhi Gate, like so many other incidents connected with the Great Sepoy Mutiny, remains a mystery still.

They were never seen after the removal of the shed.

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THE HOUSE OF THE LIGHTED WINDOWS.

A Story of 1860.

That voyage is memorable to me, not only for the confidence the Government showed in thus employing me, but also for a melancholy circumstance connected with it which caused me many hours of fruitless regret—I may say, almost of remorse. The negotiation was without good result; I speak of it because it involved me in something of an adventure, and also because my conscience is not at ease to this day for the thoughtlessness into which I was led.

The schooner was no sooner under way than I had reason to retire to my state-room, for we laboured from the very first with a heavy sea.

However, when not too unwell to appear with my companions, I found them not unpleasant fellows.

The captain was a cautious old fellow with little to say and with a rather disconcerting way of shutting up one eye, and making long and silent observations of whoever happened to attract his attention by addressing him. The mate informed me that this habit was contracted from his gazing many hours at a time through a greenish-brass spyglass which was his constant companion.

As for the mate, I must say that I took quite a fancy to him. He was an extremely agreeable young Irishman, though saucy and sadly given to flattery, but with an unusual amount of quickness and discernment; for he said to me one evening, as we beguiled the time with cards:

"Is it in the interest of the Government that ye're making this voyage?"

"That it is, Mr. Kilgore," said I. "And it's very important that we don't go to pieces in the meantime," for the ship was dancing to a lively tune.

"That's just what I was going to say," he answered, with a laugh. "I have no great objections to getting into port with a whole skin mesilf."

"You seamen take it very well, sir," said I, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "but I am what you would call a land-lubber, eh?"

"You haven't extraordinary good sea-legs, and that's a fact," said the mate.

"Yes," said I, returning to the orignal subject, "if my papers do not arrive when due, important complications may arise."

"Be jabers, if we'd known that, we'd have been shy of taking ye on board. It's a great responsibility to drown a plenipotenteeary."

I will not say but that I was uneasy, especially when a lurch of the ship sent the cards flying about the room. But when I had recovered myself, I stared sternly at my companion. There was such a twinkle in his knowing turn-up nose—I will say, before I forget it, that all the power of expression of his face seemed to be concentrated in that organ—that if I were not inclined to pity him for his tragic end, I might doubt if he held quite a respectful attitude toward a man of my position, not to mention the august matters of State with which I was entrusted.

However, I took no further notice of his remark than to assume towards him a more distant manner; though I was really concerned to know if the storm were in truth more than ordinarily dangerous in the experienced eye of a seaman.

"I presume," said I, "I presume that such a tempest as this is a very frequent occurence at sea?"

"Sure, and that's very true. You would be surprised to know how many vessels go down in a year."

"You take it very coolly, sir," said I.

"That I don't, I assure ye," he replied, though he smiled pleasantly.

"May I inquire the cause of these storms?" I asked, to shift the disagreeable subject.

"Bedad, there's a difference of opinion. The captain will tell ye that it's the beginning of the equinox, but the men maintain that it's owing to the troubled spirits of seafaring men who have walked the plank into these waters or swung from the yard-arm of pirate vessels while rounding this point."

"Then we're keeping close along the shore?" I asked, with some relief.

"That's just what troubles the men, Mr. Ogilvie," returned the mate. "They'd rather be any number of leagues out at sea than hugging this coast."

"Is it indeed so dangerous?" I cried. "Rocks and breakers, eh?"

"Why, no; it's not that. It's because of an uncommon ghostly house by the shore. It's deserted, and has an ill name; for any dark night ye may see the windows lighted up in a way that is enough to send a ship to perdition at the sight of it. It stands on a cape and commands a view of the sea in all directions. I'll be happy to show ye the lights if ye have no objections to going aloft and getting wet."

I declined the offer, for I had extreme objections to "going aloft and getting wet."

The mate, I take it, would have entertained me all night with his yarns, had not the increasing storm demanded his attention.

All hands being on deck, I was left alone below. The rest of the evening was spent in complete misery, for the wind blew a most terrific gale. What earlier in the evening I had called a storm was nothing in comparison

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with this that we were having now. It was impossible to remain upright, and I wonder that I escaped with a sound bone in my body.

"I will never," said I, "set foot on a ship again," and I am not ashamed to say that I got upon my knees and said my prayers; for in my day all public men were religious men.

The mate appeared at my state-room door a little later. He was wringing wet and very cheerful.

"I'm afraid your papers won't come jue, Mr. Ogilvie," he said, "for the ship's sprung a leak."

"For Heaven's sake, my dear fellow, don't desert me," said I.

"By me sowl," began the Irishman, composedly, but the captain, passing the door with his valuables, called out.

"Mr. Ogilvie," said he, "we'll have to take to the boats, for the ship's in a bad condition."

I do not know how I got on deck. The first I remember is finding myself in a boat with the mate giving me brandy.

I will not deny that I was prodigiously afraid; I can stand most dangers on dry land, but may I be preserved from the sea!

We learnt afterward, when the bodies were washed ashore, that our companions in the other boats had no such luck as we; they must have capsized at the outset, and it's a miracle to me that we landed as successfully as we did.

We were carried far beyond the point where the men desired to disembark. I was in no condition to observe their dissatisfaction until after we were safe ashore, when I could not but notice that they showed much less delight in their deliverance than might have been expected. It made no odds to me where we landed, so that my feet felt the firm earth again.

When I had recovered myself sufficiently—though the mate said I was still "uncommon groggy" on my feet—I was very much for seeking shelter for the rest of the night, as the wind chilled me to the bone. But the men were standing in groups whispering to each other as though in fear of some danger. It seemed that we had landed within but a few yards of the mysterious house of the lighted windows.

The men declared that there was no sign of habitation for miles round, and there we stood in the thick darkness with the sea rushing up to our feet on one side, and with the house duskily looming on the other. I might have fancied that we were indeed "between the devil and the deep sea" had I not been taken up with such commonplace discomforts as a chilly skin.

I did not wonder at the men's reluctance to land on such a coast, though I may say that I saw nothing unusual about the windows of the house. But when the clouds were blown from the face of the moon, about as ill-looking a pile was disclosed as ever I wished to see, and I made no doubt that the men had been influenced by its dreary air to imagine the unusual appearances of which the mate had spoken.

It was an immense rough-cast stone house, with the plaster coming off in spots, as though an eruption had broken out upon the old building. Originally it could not have stood so close down to the water, but at the time when I saw it, the steps and the posts which supported the floor of the front verandah were under water during high tides and storms; and the whole building seemed to be gradually sinking into the sand, which at the sides and back came nearly up to the lowest windows.

Indeed, the foundations were beginning to be so eaten away that the walls had a tipsy, dangerous look, as if they had not long to stand, and it is not possible that the house could have withstood to the present day this steady encroachment of the waters and the sand.

There was one curious circumstance connected with the house which must have added to its bad reputation. It stood in such a position that the *débris* of the ocean, floating remains of wrecks, the offal of passing vessels, was apt to collect during high water under the broad verandah which faced the sea.

Indeed, the next day we were shocked to find the body of one of the ship's company from the capsized boat wedged under the steps, and I shuddered to think of how much might be revealed if the sand under that porch should be examined.

Many of these remarks I am making from information gathered later, for at the time I was less concerned about the character of the house than about my chattering teeth, so that I scoffed at the fears of my companions and urged them to join with me in taking possession of the building.

The men drew back, and I noticed that my merry friend, the mate, made himself exceedingly small. The captain had no thoughts but for his ship.

"Where are we to spend the night?" said I.

"Not in that house," muttered one of the men. "It's haunted."

"Haunted or not," I said, quite myself again, "I'm not going to stay here in the cold."

"But I don't like the looks of the house mesilf," said the mate.

"You're surely never afraid of a lonely house, Mr. Kilgore!" exclaimed I, sarcastically. I fancied that I had hold of his weak point.

"I afraid? Bedad, and that don't come very well from yourself, Mr. Ogilvie." Then he turned blusteringly to the men: "Come on, ye blithering idjits; but if ye're afraid, stay where ye are and welcome." And with a great show of unconcern he followed my lead.

Most of the men preferred the open air, though two or three from pure shame accompanied us to the house. The captain lingered behind; to do him justice it was rather to see the last of his ship than for fear of the suspicious refuge which I had shamed the mate into sharing with me.

The house was completely empty; but in the first room we entered, there was a broad fire-place which the men filled with rotten wood from the gaping windows and the wainscoting, and we soon had a roaring fire and a roomful of monstrous shadows. Mr. Kilgore had recourse to his brandy bottle for comfort, but anathematised me softly when he found that I had near emptied it while in the boat. The men sat round the fire on their heels and talked noisily to keep up their spirits.

For my part, I was much impressed by the sounds of the storm. The old house groaned and creaked in the tempest, and at each large gust I felt sure it was coming down about our ears. We were almost in the midst of the uproar of the sea; I could scarce believe that it was on land that I stood when I heard the intermittent splash of the water over the verandah. Sometimes an unusually large wave would be broken into foam against the front door, and the water leaked and dripped unceasingly in the cellar.

As long as the storm lasted the men were in an exhilarated condition and passed the time in relating the most monstrous yarns about former shipwrecks. I was

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very much pleased with their candour in admitting their fear during these experiences.

"I suppose it takes only such uncommonly stiff gentlemen as Mr. Kilgore to go through such an adventure as to-night's without turning a hair," I remarked.

"Ah, and ye're having fun at my expense after having near devoured me brandy bottle," said he.

"I'll restore your brandy bottle fourfold," I answered, "if you'll be so kind as to restore me to my friends."

"But I can't resthore the peace of the world if your papers don't arrive at their desteenation, I fancy," said the mate.

"Oh, I did not wish to give the impression that the peace of the world will be endangered, but that important complications may arise," I replied.

The time thus passed in pleasant conversation between the mate and myself; but as the storm abated, I noticed that the men became depressed and silent, muttering to themselves more than once that they wished themselves "safe at sea."

"But what reason have you to suppose that these appearances in the windows have a supernatural origin?" I asked.

"There's been more than one murder done here in Capta n Kidd's time which isn't over comfortable to talk of now," said one of the men.

"Ye may save your breath," said the mate. "Mr. Ogilvie has no belief in ghosts. By Jove, though, if he'd seen the lights himself, he sing a different chune."

"And what think you your hardy mariners would say if they came unexpectedly on our lights? If they would be but hardy enough to take a look in at the window, sure they'd see some pretty substantial ghosts."

As we were speaking, the captain entered; he was noticeably pale, and I could not repress a feeling of pity for him.

"Ah, sir," said I, "the poor ship is gone at last, is it?"

"Yes, it is gone long since! But that is no matter now.

"Have any of you been upstairs? No? But there was a light in the room above you; it appeared a short time and then went out."

The men were terror-stricken at this intelligence, but I had begun to expostulate when my mouth was summarily closed.

Directly overhead, cutting my words short, came one loud thump, followed by no reverberations or echoes or anything that could linger in the ear to reassure one that there had been a sound at all. I could almost have believed that I had fancied it, had I not seen the eyes of the men starting with fear.

"What was that?" I asked sharply.

The mate crossed himself and moved toward the door where the other men pushed past him. I myself had recovered instantly; I believe that I said somewhere that I am not easily frightened except at sea, but I ought not to attribute courage to myself as the sole cause for my coolness at such a time; for I felt conscious of a very strong desire to show these men that I was not so timorous a creature as by my behaviour on the ship and on the boat they may have been led to suppose.

"Something has blown down upstairs, and, for my part, I will stay where I am," said I.

My explanation seemed so reasonable that the men paused and strained their ears. The captain shut his superfluous eye and inspected me, but I was too much interested in the discomfort of the mate to heed his stare.

"Oh, fie, Mr. Kilgore," I said, "you, a seaman, are not scared at a bit of wind!"

It still clung to me that he had enjoyed my terror at sea; but before the night was over, I regretted my idle words.

"The mon does not live that could throw fear in me face and not answer for it, Mr. Ogilvie!" he said, flashing round at me, though he was uncommonly white about the gills as he spoke.

"I never refuse to answer for my words, sir," said I, "though I am willing to overlook a little heat in youth."

"Sir, will ye take back what ye said, then? You have as good as called me a coward twice this night," said the mate.

"Indeed, sir—" I began, with some haughtiness; but the captain interrupted me.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" he cried, "you are surely not going to make a quarrel out of a jest! Mr. Ogilvie, I thought you a man of sense."

"I have no wish to quarrel with the young man," I answered, somewhat abashed, "indeed, he showed himself a brave gentleman during the storm, and here's my hand to it, Mr. Kilgore."

We shook hands, and I have ever been thankful that our last words were those of friendship.

"And now to clear up the mystery of these sights and sounds," he said, going to the door again. "If ye say the word, faith, I'll go up and investeegate."

"Not alone, at any rate," I said; "if you have no objections, I'll accompany you."

But he was inclined to take offence at this, and persisted in going alone; he was bound to vindicate his honour, he said.

I am sure he was afraid, and indeed it was no great discredit to him, for I think he feared nothing in the universe, so long as it remained in the flesh. He put a bold face upon it, however, and started on his little tour of discovery.

We waited and listened to the sound of his footsteps on the stairs and along the corridor. We heard him pause at the door of the room above us, cross the threshold and take several steps forward, his heels sounding sharp on the bare floor. There was a second of silence and then came a most terrific, deadened blow, the force of which rattled the rotten casements and jarred the walls. This was followed, after another pause, by a scraping, dragging sound which made the flesh creep.

The men made for the door, and I was terribly moved myself; indeed, my throat contracted so that I could scarce swallow. But there was one thought that did not leave me for a moment I knew that the young mate had never been up there alone with that fiendish noise were it not for me.

"Men," I said, "I am going up there to see what this means, and if you are true men, you will follow me."

They were not cowards, for though it went sorely against the grain, they accompanied me up the stairs and along the corridor, but not one of them—not even the captain—would enter the room.

We called the mate by name, but he made no answer, and we stood shivering and wondering in the doorway, with the wind from the two broken windows, looking out on the sea, blowing strangely in our faces. I confess to

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having had a strong curiosity as to the cause of the strange noises; yet I vow that nothing but my anxiety about the mate would have induced me to enter the room.

As it was, I stepped into it, calling loudly; there was still no answer but the moan of the lulling winds, which suddenly caught the door behind me and slammed it violently between me and my companions. It was rather of a shock to me, in my frame of mind, and you may fancy how I felt, when I discovered that the door had a spring lock attached to it, and that I was shut in with I knew not what.

"Confound it, I'm locked in!" I cried. "Can't you men do something to open the door?"

We rattled the knob furiously on both sides until someone suggested breaking the door in, and then I suddenly heard them clattering and stumbling down the stairs; they all went together, there was not a man of them would have gone by himself for a fortune.

It is wonderful how fear for someone else will check fear for one's self. The mate was still on my mind, and I put behind me this trouble of my own and took a step forward with a desire to investigate. My foot slipped, and I came near falling. I stooped to find the cause, and felt that the floor was wet with a kind of slime. The touch of it was so disgusting that my gorge rose.

Feeling about to find whence it came, I discovered it to be a track like that of a colossal snail, which I followed on my hands and knees with a determination that I cannot account for. It brought me to the windows, where I became aware, in the darkness, of a darker mass directly before me, and as I was light-headed and reckless by this time, I put out my hand to touch it. The remembrance sickens me to this day; for I had put it into what seemed an enormous mouth, warm, wet and with teeth!

You may be sure that I withdrew my hand in less time than it takes to tell, and though I heard the men breaking down the door and calling my name, my mind was a perfect blank, except for the thought of the wet trail and that great mouth laughing at me in the darkness. If the object had moved I should have gone clean distracted at once. But it remained still, and at last the door fell in, and the captain ran forward, lighting the way with a blazing piece of wood.

Then I saw what my monster was, and some of the men swore and others prayed. It was the mate, with his throat cut almost clean through, with a trail of blood nearly to the door—and I had put my hand into the wound. He was lying on the floor with his feet on the window-seat.

"Heavens, this is no work of a spirit!" said the captain; and we all agreed that it was not.

Further investigation proved beyond a doubt that we had fallen upon a smuggler's retreat, for the room was filled with casks of rum and with boxes of various importations. The murderers had made a complete escape.

We found the men who had remained outside much excited; they had seen figures escaping from the windows and crawling down over the verandah, but their superstitious fears prevented them giving chase.

The peculiar position of the dead mate revealed that for same reason—probably that of keeping alive these convenient superstitions—the murderers had intended making off with the body, but found as they got out of the windows that it interfered with a hasty retreat.

I have never had the pleasure of seeing them hanged, but not long afterward a gang of contrabandists fell into the clutches of the law, for which I thanked Heaven.

I cannot express the satisfaction I felt in leaving behind me that blotched and drunken house with its ghosts of many crimes, sunning itself high and dry under the beautiful sky of the next morning. The verandah was covered with shells and pretty rippling patterns of sand; and though the sea still heaved roughly, it kept at a respectful distance.

I never again saw the captain after we parted; I heard, however, that it was not long before he was in possession of another schooner which did not leak. As for my papers, I was shocked to discover that I had left them on board when the ship foundered.

However, a merciful Providence has preserved our Government from harm and I was exonerated from all blame in connection with the loss. It has frequently come to me that those who opposed the measures adopted by the administration, had a hand in my making sail in a leaky vessel in order to break off the negotiations. I'll mention no names, but I have my suspicions.

ALFRED GRANT.

If you have not yet bought PEARSON'S MAGAZINE *for August, you will have thrown away a chance of getting the finest sixpennyworth on earth.*

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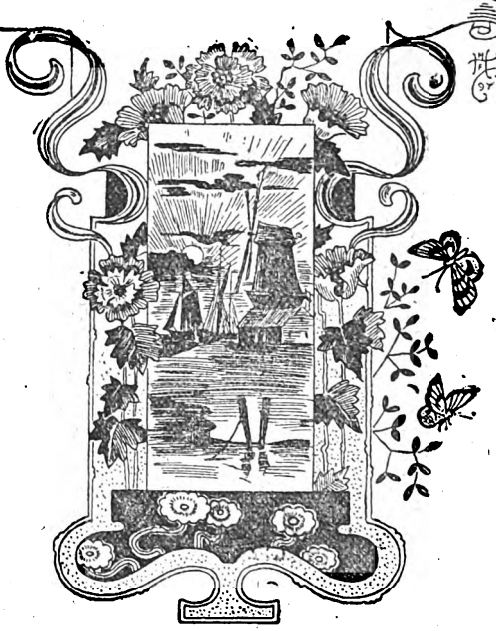
CHANGING THE BRAND.



"I DON'T understand it at all, cap'n."

Howard said it emphatically.

He was a tall, lanky man, and he leant his elbow familiarly upon the pommel of the saddle as he talked with the young owner of the Walong River farm.

Henry Penryn, the proprietor, relied no little upon the judgment and experience of Howard, and the subject of their present discussion was a serious one.

"Come, now; stock doesn't disappear, even in the bush without human agency," Penryn said reflectively. "According to the books, more than 500 head have disappeared—totally evaporated, so to speak—since last reckoning. I don't know what will happen. The leakage must stop, or I shall have to give up the business."

"Looks like there were thieves at work, don't it?"

Penryn looked at him without reply. His silence evidently exasperated his man.

"Look here," he exclaimed. He used the butt end of his whip to draw in the red dirt of the trail the figure used in the Walong River farm as a brand, thus (——) a "lazy O" in their nomenclature.

With a horizontal stroke the O was converted into D.

"Sweet, pretty little trick, ain't it?" he said sarcastically.

"But how does he get 'em?" demanded Penryn; "that is, if he is the guilty party."

"Oh, he's guilty fast enough! I've seen many a man hung on less evidence in the old days."

They were speaking of M. Perriot, a young Frenchman who had been for a time dealing in sheep in their neighbourhood and was rapidly growing rich.

M. Perriot was a good-looking, besides being a wealthy, young Frenchman.

Penryn had met him several times—usually at Freemans station, which lay several miles from the Walong River farm.

Before M. Perriot had come into the country Penryn had been about the only young man visitor at the Freemans'.

The farmer's daughter, Josie, was the magnet which drew him. Nowadays he always found Perriot there before him.

That very afternoon Penryn, taking what he called his constitutional, saw before him the young lady with Perriot as her escort. They were well mounted, and his pony had all he could do to overtake the couple, and might not have done so but that they drew rein on the verge of a hill and sat contemplating what was going on below on the other slope, where Perriot had his little camp.

So interested were they in the sheep branding, that they did not notice Penryn till he was close upon them. After saluting Miss Freeman and exchanging a few grave words with Perriot, Penryn raised his hat again to the lady and trotted down the farther side of the hill.

As he went, however, he turned to Perriot, and said, as he pointed to the scene below them:

"I've heard of a man being hung for branding a lot of sheep like that. Times have changed, but it isn't a healthy occupation even now."

"What mean you?" spluttered Perriot.

But Miss Josie turned her back upon the Cornishman.

Penryn spurred his pony on and rode down into the midst of the rabble about the camp. The men saw him coming, and somebody recognised him. The branders huddled together and turned black looks upon him as he rode into their midst.

There was a sheep close to him with an old mark—a mark Penryn knew well.

The men gathered round the Englishman with threatening faces. He looked down upon them contemptuously.

"You know what this means," he said calmly. "This place will be too hot for you fellows—understand?"

He turned his pony about and rode out of the group. One man made a grab at his bridle rein, and Penryn raised his whip, and brought it down with stinging force across his face. Then he put spurs to his pony and rode off over the rise, expecting every instant to hear the report of guns behind him. But no volley followed him, and he passed over the crest of the rise unmolested. Miss Josie and her escort had disappeared.

"If the fool remains round her twenty-four hours, I

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won't answer for the consequences. There were sheep from runs other than mine in that lot."

He struck off for his own place in a different direction from that by which he had come. The country was wilder and more broken. There was a grove of stunted trees and a branch of the river in his path, and he stopped to give his pony an hour's rest.

He was still sitting by the side of the stream, his steed feeding a few yards away, when he saw a group of half a dozen or more horsemen on the other side of the brook. They forded the stream, and then, apparently catching sight of him, drew up in an excited, gesticulating group. Penryn was quick to recognise them as from Perriot's camp.

He sprang up, intending to get his horse and be prepared for whatever was to follow, but as he loosened the revolver in his belt he heard a hail behind him. Instantly the group of horsemen spurred up the incline towards him; but before he could turn round to see what new danger threatened him from the rear, four men sprang upon him from the bush.

Some of his enemies had made a flank movement and he was at their mercy. He was dragged to the ground, the chattering crowd at once surrounded and disarmed him, and he was bound with his own belt to a lightning riven stump on the edge of the grove.

Penryn believed his condition to be desperate indeed, but he would not show fear before his captors and laughed in their faces. At that, one—the fellow whom he had struck at the camp—lashed him twice across the cheek with his own whip, and the blood flowed from the gashes.

But even the pain of the wound did not cow him.

"Do you think you can kill me and go scot free?" he demanded. "You'll find your mistake. My boys will hunt you all over the colony. And all Perriot's money won't save you."

At that they drew aside to confer, while Penryn leant against the tree to which they had bound him, half fainting from loss of blood and the pain of the gashes on his face. He remembered with bitterness how Freeman's daughter had turned her back upon him when he accused Perriot of stealing his sheep.

The girl was evidently in love with the Frenchman, and in his despair the young Cornishman did not much care what these desperadoes did with him.

Suddenly his enemies ran for their horses and climbed helter-skelter into their saddles. Penryn, with his head hanging upon his breast, paid slight attention, but when the swift beat of horses' hoofs smote his ear he wondered vaguely if more of Perriot's men were coming.

He raised his head.

The men were crossing the stream again, plying spur and lash as they went. One of them, the man who had already struck him, turned in his saddle and fired at the figure tied to the tree, but the bullet flew wide of its mark.

The pounding of hoofs increased, and pouring over a neighbouring rise came another body of men.

Penryn looked again and recognised Howard at their head. He cried aloud to him and then hung limp upon his bonds.

He came to himself again in a moment.

Howard had him lying upon the grass, and he found himself choking over some of "the real stuff," which the man had forced between his lips.

"We were just in time, by Heaven!" exclaimed Howard. "How d'you feel now?"

"Better," said Penryn, sitting up.

"Here, lemme bind that up," said the man, muffling the lower part of his employer's face in a linen handkerchief. "Them fellers had better get off as fast as they can," he pursued. "The boys are hot after 'em an' the whole place will be buzzin' about their ears afore mornin'."

"How did you know about it?" asked Penryn.

"Freeman's gal rid over an' told me how you was down in Perriot's camp. Plucky gal she is! nearly rid her hoss to death bringing th' news. Hey, where yer goin'?" he broke off to ask, as Penryn staggered to his feet and made for his horse.

"Don't suppose I'm going to stay here all night, do you?" demanded his employer, testily.

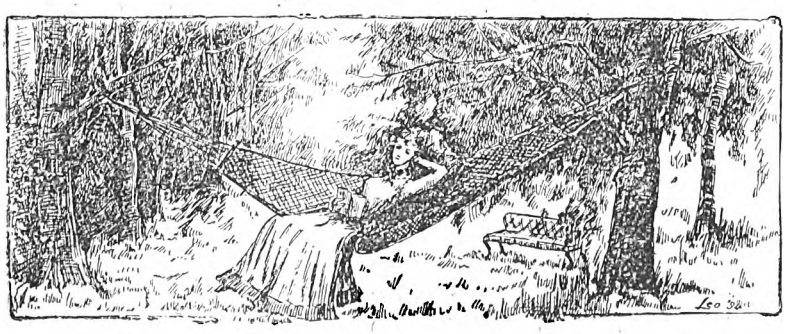
"S'pose not. You'd better go home. I'm goin' to ride on arter the boys."

"All right. I'll go home," said Penryn, but he started his horse at a canter in an entirely different direction.

Howard tightened his saddle girth before he remounted, chuckling the while. "He'll get there 'fore the gal does if he keeps up that gait," he said. "Expec' she'll be wearin' the 'lazy C' brand 'fore long an' Walong River farm 'll be gettin' a mistress."

Then he vaulted into his saddle and rode off.

MAT GOUGH.



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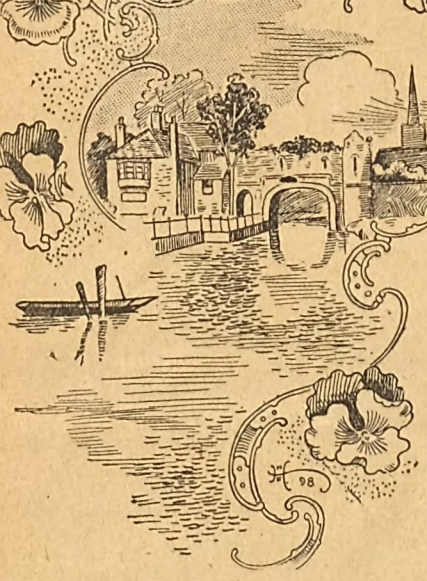
ONE HUNDRED POUNDS REWARD.



Two passengers left the train at Barton one pleasant afternoon in May. One was a tall, slender young man, with a pleasant face, frank blue eyes, and fair hair and moustache; the other, a young girl, dressed very plainly in grey serge, and wearing a thick brown veil which entirely concealed her face.

Her figure was so graceful, and showed to such admirable advantage in the close-fitting dress, that the young man looked at her with very evident admiration in his eyes as he passed her on his way to the steps.

His look was not returned. The girl's eyes were riveted on a large placard which was tacked up on the door of the waiting-room, announcing that £100 reward was offered for the apprehension of the murderer of one Rachel Taylor, on April 23rd. All communications were to be addressed to Holmes and Clifford, solicitors.

"It does not seem possible!" muttered the girl. "My old friend, poor soul! What a sad end to her strange, lonely life!"

Then she turned as the station-master came near, and asked him if he could direct her to the house of Mr. Derwent.

"It's 'bout a mile from here," he answered, "perhaps a little more. Keep on up the road till you come to a lane on your right. Turn down that, an' Derwent's is the first house you come to. Are you goin' to stop there?" he asked, with the curiosity which a monotonous country life is apt to engender.

"Yes; I am Mr. Derwent's niece," answered the girl, quietly, "and if you can manage to have my luggage sent up to Mr. Derwent's, I shall be very much obliged."

He promised that the luggage should follow her almost immediately, and Hester Derwent left the station and took the road he had indicated as leading to her uncle's house.

A situation more lonely than that of her future home could scarcely be imagined. The house stood a long distance from the road, and was completely surrounded by trees and shrubs. It was a low, six-roomed cottage with a slanting roof and small dormer windows.

About the whole place there was a look of such ruin and decay, that Hester's heart sank within her as she unlatched the gate and walked up the weed-grown path.

She had known very little of her uncle, and had not seen him for eight years; but she had imagined him such a man as her dear father had been, and was entirely unprepared to find him living in such a desolate abode.

The young girl's knock on the worm-eaten door was answered, when her patience was almost at an end, by an old wizened-faced woman, who appeared to find it extremely difficult to comprehend that the handsome young lady on the steps was her master's niece.

But she consented to admit her, and after directing her to knock on the door of a room to the right, hobbled away into the kitchen again to resume her culinary operations.

"Come in," said a clear, manly voice, as Hester knocked timidly, and she pushed open the door and found herself face to face with the young man she had seen at the station.

"I was told that Mr. Derwent——" she began.

"Mr. Derwent went upstairs a moment ago," interrupted the young man, kindly, seeing her hesitation and changing colour. "He will be back very soon. Won't you sit down? Let me introduce myself. My name is Wilfred Clifford, and——"

"Wilfred Clifford!" interrupted Hester. "And you don't know me? You don't remember Hester Derwent?"

"Is it possible!" exclaimed Wilfred, seizing both her hands in a warm grasp. "And why are you here? I thought you were at school still."

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"I have been in a boarding-school for eight years," said Hester. "Uncle sent me there when father died. Scarlet fever broke out in the school, and all those who could leave left at once. I did not take time even to telegraph to uncle. I knew that he was keeping house here, and that my coming a few weeks sooner than he expected would probably make no difference to him. But I did not think to find him in such a place as this."

"Certainly it is not a proper home for you, Hester," said Wilfred, tenderly. "Such ruin and decay may suit your poor old uncle, but you deserve something different."

"I must make the best of it since I have no other relative in the world," said Hester. "I will try to lighten the gloom. Do you remember what a lovely home we had, Wilfred? And to think your poor aunt should have met such a terrible death! I knew nothing about it until I saw the placard at the station."

"It was a brutal murder," said Wilfred, his handsome face darkening perceptibly. "You know she would never trust her money and valuables in the bank. She thought them safer in her own care, and hid them away where she imagined no one would ever discover them. She once showed me a box nearly full of rings, bracelets, stones of great value, and heavy gold chains. Most of them were heirlooms in her family, and had descended to her from many generations. But she never told me where she kept them, and I never asked.

"I often tried to convince her that they would be safer in the bank; but she would not listen to me.

"She was found on the floor of her bedroom, with her head almost severed from her body. In her desk was her will, in which she left all her property to me, and a letter in which she told me that there was a false floor to the closet in her room, and on lifting that up I should find the box containing the jewels and a canvas bag full of gold pieces. Of course, neither box nor bag was to be found, and, with the exception of the house and ground, I am as poor as ever."

"Has no clue been discovered yet?" asked Hester.

"None whatever. The matter is shrouded in the deepest mystery. But my partner, Albert Holmes, is working like a tiger in the case. He is as shrewd and sharp a fellow as I ever met, and I have faith that he will unearth the villains yet. It was so unfortunate that he was not at home on the night of the murder."

At this moment the door opened to admit Mr. Derwent, an old man, with stooping shoulders, an uncertain gait, and long white hair, which hung over his coat-collar. So much greyer, older and weaker did he look than when Hester had seen him last, that she scarcely recognised him.

He seemed greatly surprised to see her, and it appeared to Hester, who was exceedingly sensitive, that he was annoyed and a little distressed by her arrival.

He said very little, however, but, turning to Clifford, gave him a small package, directing him to give it to Mr. Holmes as soon as possible.

"I suppose you would not care to remain all night?" he added.

"I must not even think of it," said Wilfred, "much as I would enjoy talking over old times with Hester. But at any time Holmes may discover some clue to the murderers, and I must be on hand to consult with him if necessary. I should not have left town to-day for even the few hours that it takes to make a trip here, but Holmes could not possibly get off, as he had a case in court, and he wouldn't trust his letter to you by post. He seemed anxious to have it put into your hands without delay, so I offered to run down with it."

It seemed to Hester as if a peculiar expression, ironical and a little sad, rested on her uncle's face as Wilfred spoke, but it was gone in an instant, and he shook hands cordially with his visitor as he bade him good-bye.

"I will come down again, Hester," the young man said in parting from her, "and try not to feel lonely."

But as time passed Hester grew very lonely indeed. From morning to night she was thrown on her own resources for amusement and occupation. Her uncle appeared only at meals. All day long he remained shut up in a little room he called his study, though Hester could not imagine what he found to employ him there; for the room contained no books, and was furnished with only a small, deep desk, a table, and three chairs.

Wilfred Clifford kept his promise, and came occasionally to see Hester, and she looked forward to his visit as a traveller in the desert looks forward to reaching the water which will give new life to his frame. But it seemed to the poor girl as if her uncle was annoyed by Wilfred's coming, and more than once he refused to see him at all, so that her joy in the presence of her old friend was not unmixed with pain.

She saw very plainly that Wilfred was learning to love her, and she knew that he was becoming dearer to her every day; and she dreaded the coming of the time when her uncle must learn this, so sure was she that he would refuse his consent to her marriage.

She had been several weeks at the cottage before she saw Mr. Holmes. One morning her uncle announced that the lawyer would be with them that evening, and that dinner must be put off until the arrival of the late train.

"As he comes to see me entirely on businses, you need not feel obliged to remain with us," said the old man. "He is good enough to come to me, instead of requiring me to go to him. We shall be occupied in the study until late, looking over—some—papers, and you'd better go to bed early, my dear."

"Yes, uncle," said Hester, quietly.

"It may be that I shall have to go abroad for a time," continued the old man, a little hesitatingly. "But it is not certain. Holmes will decide for me to-night: so you need not worry yet, Hester."

"I did not know that your business ever took you abroad, uncle," said Hester. "But I think the trip would benefit your health. You don't look well, and every night I hear you moaning in your sleep. Last night you screamed aloud several times. It really frightened me. Don't you think you ought to see a doctor, uncle?"

"No, no," said the old man, rising from his

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seat and moving towards the door. "I'm not ill, Hester—I'm only tired; and sometimes I have the nightmare."

He left the room, and Hester, wondering at his strange, nervous manner, resumed her occupation of clearing the breakfast table, which she had ceased in order to more closely observe her uncle.

She was in her room when Mr. Holmes arrived, and overheard his greeting to her uncle, who opened the hall door to admit him.

"So you expected me? You received my note, then? I think we can push matters now without any trouble."

"Hush!" said Mr. Derwent, tremulously. "My niece may hear you."

"Why the deuce do you have a niece, I'd like to know?" said Holmes, as he entered.

Hester wondered what kind of a man Wilfred's partner could be to talk so roughly to an old man and she was predisposed to dislike him.

But she speedily forgot her half-formed prejudice when she met him an hour later at the dinner table. His appearance was prepossessing.

He was a handsome man, with keen, dark eyes, an olive complexion, regular features, and a long, black moustache, which he habitually caressed as he talked.

Though dignified in manner, he was as gracious as possible with Hester, who was young enough to be considerably flattered by the notice he took of her, and the delicate compliments he contrived to pay her before the meal was over.

As they rose from the table he took her hand and gave it an unmistakable pressure, saying that, as he should probably not see her again, he would wish her good-bye.

"I sometimes think your uncle is a little—peculiar," said Holmes, hesitating over the last word, as Derwent left the room.

"I often wonder if Miss Taylor's death had anything to do with the singular change which has come over him since I last saw him," said Hester. "They were great friends when we all lived in that part, and I know he thought very seriously once of marrying her. I remember hearing my father speak of it, and say that the old lady was more than willing. Was not her death horrible? But has no clue to the murderers been found?"

"Not yet," said Holmes. "And still—may I tell you something in confidence? I think, perhaps, you ought to know it."

"Please tell me," said Hester. "If it is anything about the murder, I shall certainly take a deep interest in it. When Mr. Clifford is here we talk of very little else."

"Ah!" with a peculiar look which made the blood rush to her cheeks. "I fancy I could find other objects of interest. And, if what I suspect has any foundation, Clifford ought to avoid the subject of his aunt's death."

"What do you mean?" asked Hester, turning pale at his significant tone,

"Only that Wilfred Clifford was tired of waiting for his old aunt's money; that he, of all people, ought to have known—had a better chance to know—where the property was secreted, and——"

"Stop!" interrupted Hester, trembling. "I will not listen to any more. You wrong him by your suspicions. They are unfounded. He was away—that can be proved."

"Perhaps so," said Holmes, with a shrug of his shoulders. "I hope so, certainly. I am sorry I gave you even a hint of my suspicions. I had no idea, of course, that you would resent my confidence." And with a smile and a bow he left the room.

Hester went to her room and tried to think matters over calmly. She would not admit to herself that she was at all influenced by what Holmes had said of Wilfred, but, nevertheless, she was vaguely troubled and distressed.

The night was close and warm, and thinking that in her present condition of mind sleep would be impossible, she concluded to go down into the garden.

She descended the stairs as noiselessly as possible, so as not to disturb her uncle or Mr. Holmes, whose voice she could hear as she passed the study door, and gaining the garden, she sank down in the first seat she saw—a rustic bench under a cedar tree.

She was about to abandon herself to the quiet beauty of the night, and the fragrance of the flowers blooming about her, when she was startled by hearing a voice say:—

"Well, now that matter is settled, the sooner we go to work the better."

"I wish you could arrange to go," replied a voice that Hester recognised as her uncle's. "You always put the worst part on me."

"Do I?" with a sneer. "I scarcely think you took on your shoulders the worst part of that business we entered on last April."

"There's a great deal of risk in going——" began Mr. Derwent.

"Oh, drop the subject. You've got to go, and that ends it. I have explained my reasons until I am tired. Are you sure that niece of yours is in her room?"

"Oh, yes; I heard the clock strike eleven a few moments ago. She is always in bed by ten at the latest."

"We don't want any surprises. Where's the old woman?"

"She went home to stay all night."

"Good. Where's the key to the desk?"

At this juncture Hester turned round and found that she was sitting within two yards of the open window of the study, the shutters of which were closed, however. She did not rise, but remained motionless, half paralysed by what she had heard.

What could be this business upon which they were engaged, and which would be ruined by a surprise?

Turning the matter over in her mind, Hester at last determined to penetrate the mystery. It was not curiosity which urged her to decide thus. She was singularly free from any desire to possess herself unbidden of the secrets of others.

No, it was a feeling; which she could not smother, that something was going wrong in that room which merited detection.

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For her own sake, she must know whether her uncle could be trusted with her welfare.

Softly she advanced to the window, and trembling in every limb, peered through a crack in the shutter. What a sight met her eyes!

As she looked she could scarcely repress a cry of astonishment.

On the table in the centre of the room lay a glittering heap of jewellery. Massive old silver, some of the pieces encrusted with precious gems; gold chains; rings; costly bracelets; sets of valuable stones; and a necklace, tiara, cross, and pin of diamonds.

A fortune was spread on that little table, a fortune which Hester felt sure did not belong to the two men in whose possession she saw it now.

With small instruments, both Derwent and Holmes were busily separating the diamonds and stones from their settings, and then pushing them into little heaps as they fell on the table.

To whom did this fortune belong?

Hester had little difficulty in determining this question.

A small canvas bag and a square, black box on the floor by the lawyer's chair gave her an unmistakable clue. She felt sure that she saw before her the murderers of Wilfred's aunt. And yet one of these men was her uncle—her father's brother—into whose care she had been committed eight years before!

What was her duty? What steps must she take, now that she had made this terrible discovery?

She stood at the window until the work within the room was completed. She saw Holmes fill a belt with stones and fasten it about her uncle's waist. She saw him take from a similar belt about his own body a handful of gold, which he gave to Mr. Derwent. She knew now why her uncle was going abroad. It was to dispose in perfect safety of the ill-gotten booty.

It was daylight when at length she sought her room again. But, though she undressed and lay down, she could not sleep. That was impossible with such a load on heart and brain.

She descended to breakfast, looking wan, pale, and haggard. She had not decided what course to pursue. She recoiled from the thought of exposing her uncle; but could she, in justice to either the living or the dead, remain silent?

Holmes had left early in order to catch the first train; she was spared the trial of meeting him again. But she found it impossible to preserve her composure, even before her uncle, who eyed her very sharply as she sat listlessly behind the coffee urn, but who made no comment on her want of appetite.

As they rose from the table Hester formed a sudden resolution. She found a longer silence unendurable. Approaching her uncle, she laid her hand on his arm.

"Uncle," she said, "last night I saw you in your study, and saw the work upon which you were engaged. How could you stain your hands with the blood of your old friend?"

Her voice was solemn and impressive, and as she spoke Henry Derwent turned fairly livid.

He staggered back against the wall like a man struck by a sudden blow.

"I did not do it—I never touched her," he gasped. "I was outside all the time. It was Holmes. I never knew she was murdered until I saw it in the papers. He did not tell me. He kept it from me as long as he could. Hester, I swear to you, I thought it was only a robbery at first. But I knew it would come to light. I told Holmes that Clifford would find out some day."

His voice had risen to a shriek. He was trembling like a leaf in a storm.

"Why did you take the money and jewels, uncle? Why help to defraud the innocent?" asked Hester sternly.

"He—he made me," gasped the old man. "He had a hold over me. I couldn't help it."

He dropped into a chair, and, entirely overcome, let his head fall on his breast and burst into tears.

"But this property must be restored, uncle. It must be given to Wilfred Clifford. You must not keep it another hour."

"You won't betray me?" shrieked the old man, falling on his knees before her, and clutching her dress with both hands. "Oh, Hester, spare me, spare me! Remember that your father was my brother. Don't betray me!"

"If I only knew what was right!" sighed Hester, as she helped him to his feet.

He did not answer; but she saw his face become suddenly distorted, his trembling increase. The next moment he fell in a fit at her feet.

Half an hour later the village doctor arrived breathless, at the cottage, having been summoned in hot haste by the old servant. But his skill availed nothing. He found no use for the medicine box he had brought; for within ten minutes of his arrival old Derwent breathed his last.

* * * * *

Late that evening, as Wilfred Clifford sat alone in the small parlour of the neat little house which his aunt had left him, he heard the sound of steps on the gravel walk. He answered the ring of the bell himself, and to his great surprise saw that his visitor was a woman. He did not recognise her until she came into the lighted hall and threw back her veil.

"Hester!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, it is I," she said, in a low voice. "Strange, is it not, that I should come alone to your house late at night? But I have come to tell you where you can find the murderer you have been seeking so long."

The next morning, Holmes was startled by a heavy knock at his door. He opened it, and was confronted by two policemen, who held a warrant for his arrest for the wilful murder of Rachel Taylor.

The evidence was against him, and he was convicted, paying the penalty of his crime a few days later.

Wilfred Clifford and Hester Derwent were married a short time afterwards, and it is scarcely necessary to say that the bride never returned to that desolate cottage where she had made such a terrible and important discovery. Nor did she ever claim the reward. Love paid the debt, and her heart was more than satisfied.

ALLAN DEED.

OUGHT YOU TO HAVE HAD ONE OF THOSE FIVE POUNDS?

THE result of the distribution in connection with the ten £5 notes offered every week in *P.W.* appears in the current issue of that paper. Three out of the ten people selected have been fortunate enough to secure £5 each by forwarding their names to this office. There are seven others, who, by failing to apply, either through indifference, or through their not being readers, did not secure their money. Their names and addresses are also given. Are you one of them?

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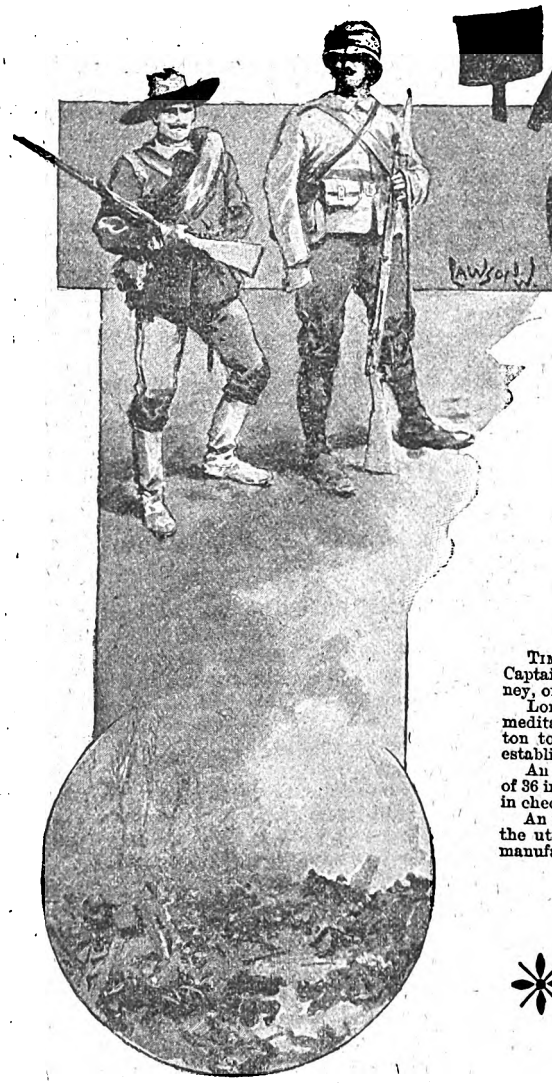
Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.



THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

CHAPTER VII.

The Voyage of the "Hornet."

From the course of events it has been made clear that Lieutenant Rodney accomplished, without hitch or deviation of any sort, the chief part of the special mission upon which he was so suddenly dispatched by Lord Eskdale.

It was not until a fellow-countryman entered the mail train at Bologna, late on the Wednesday evening, that Rodney learnt the full significance of his journey. The Italian newspapers were selling in hundreds in the station, and a chance inquiry made by the new arrival elicited the fact that war had been declared and the allied fleets were then on their way to the English coast. The Englishman who gave this information was himself intent upon catching the *Peninsular* at Brindisi in the hope that he might be able to get home by that means, as the possibility of crossing the Continent by train was practically out of the question.

The *Peninsular* was true to her appointed time. Rodney had little leisure to make some purchases to complete his scanty outfit before he stepped from the marble quay to the deck of that fine steamer. A brief conversation with the captain led him to give some emphatic orders to the chief engineer, and when the *Peninsular* swung out of the little harbour, with its quaint windmill-shaped castle guarding the entrance, the log forthwith recorded a speed of seventeen knots per hour. There would be no bonus for officers or engineers for that voyage owing to the economy of coal consumption.

On Friday morning at six o'clock Valetta was reached, and when the *Peninsular's* anchor rattled from her bows, Midshipman Fisher, of the *Hornet*, swung himself on board from a steam launch and inquired for Rodney.

"Sir Arthur Fremantle is waiting for you at the castle, sir," he said, saluting, as Frank had hastened towards the youngster when he saw him climbing up the ship's side. "He is anxious to see you immediately."

"Tumble my traps overboard, and I will be with you in half a tick," was the answer, and Rodney hastened off to bid the Captain "good-bye," in case circumstances should prevent him from rejoining the *Peninsular*, as the ship left again in two hours.

The next time he set foot on the vessel's deck, Ethel and he were *en route* to Egypt for their honeymoon tour.

"What's the news here?" he inquired as he took his

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place by the middy's side in the stern-sheets of the little launch which rapidly throbbed its way to the steps of St. John.

"We've all got the jumps," was the answer. "The fleet left yesterday morning at half an hour's notice, bound for Gib., we believe. At twelve o'clock every blessed cable was cut somewhere or another, and since then we have been drinking pegs and asking each other 'What's up?' There are 8,000 troops here and 1,000 militia, and every man jack is a complete note of interrogation in himself."

"We are at war with France and Germany," said Rodney. The boatswain heard the reply, and, as discipline forbade him to yell, or curse, or even whistle, he pressed the throttle-valve hard down and made the launch hum with excitement.

"Then what in thunder was the *Hornet* left here for?" asked Midshipman Fisher, scarlet with indignation at the thought that there was a row going on and he was not in it.

The *Hornet*, it may be explained, is a diminutive torpedo-boat destroyer, very smart and very small, so there was no wonder that Rodney laughed as he answered: "All right, young 'un. Don't be alarmed. You'll see sparks before this business is over."

There was no time for further conversation. When the launch reached the landing place, Rodney was met by the Assistant Military Secretary, Captain J. S. Ewart, of the Cameron Highlanders, and taken straight to the Governor's quarters.

Sir Arthur Lyon Fremantle received his momentous intelligence with an air of deeper concern than Master Fisher had displayed.

"Seymour and I feared as much when your telegrams reached us," he said. "The word you used meant that we were to be prepared for the worst possible eventualities in the way of a hostile combination, and both Admiralty and War Office have repeatedly urged the necessity for momentary readiness for action. Have you heard that six French warships passed south of the island this morning at 5.30, steaming rapidly eastwards?"

"No, sir. I have only been on shore five minutes."

"I thought that perhaps it might be known to the people on the launch. We are secure enough here," went on the Governor, "but I wish we could do something more than act on the defensive only."

"Where were the enemy going, in your opinion, sir?" said Rodney.

"To seize the Suez Canal, undoubtedly, and to capture all the British merchant ships they may encounter. It is fortunate that they cannot fall in with the *Peninsular*, which may now escape. I suppose they will also occupy Perim, for the sake of the coal supply, and probably bombard Aden. By the manner in which they have telegraphically isolated us, I have no doubt that the garrisons of both places will be in ignorance of the progress of events until the enemy's fleet commences hostilities."

"Why should they not be stopped?" cried the naval officer, starting up excitedly from his chair.

"Stopped! What can we do?" exclaimed the Governor.

"Blow up the canal!" was the emphatic rejoinder.

"We can't blow it up by talking about it," remarked Captain Ewart.

"No. But the *Hornet* is here, and if she is ready for sea she can get to Port Said before the enemy's fleet," said Rodney, now thoroughly excited.

"She is in first-rate trim," said the Governor. "Sir Michael Seymour told me so himself, and he left her here to act as a dispatch vessel if necessary. Unfortunately her commander, Lieutenant Cator, has been very ill from island fever, and is still extremely weak."

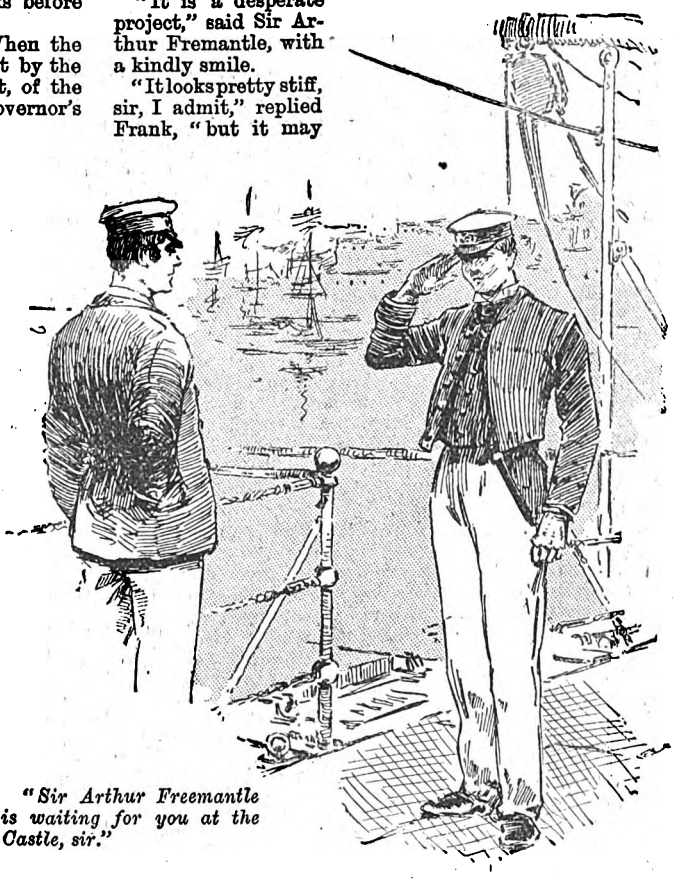
"Send me, sir," cried Rodney. "You can forward a note to the Admiral by the *Peninsular* to explain my absence and your intentions."

"Lieutenant Rodney," said the Governor, cordially extending his hand, "you are a man of action. Go, and take my heartfelt thanks for your offer, which I gratefully accept. I leave all details to you, and Captain Ewart will take you to the Admiral Superintendent so that all the resources of the dockyard may be placed at your disposal. It has always been the intention of the authorities to convert the Mediterranean into a French lake in the event of a war with France, and I see no harm in allowing Germany and Russia to share the privilege with her. I will communicate, as you suggest, with Sir Michael Culme Seymour, and I wish you good luck. Have you any plan? If successful, do you return here?"

"I think, sir, it would be best to dash through the Red Sea and warn Aden. Perhaps the cable to Bombay may be uninjured, and we could thus give India timely information."

"It is a desperate project," said Sir Arthur Fremantle, with a kindly smile.

"It looks pretty stiff, sir, I admit," replied Frank, "but it may be easy enough. Will you let me write a line to be forwarded with yours?"



"Sir Arthur Freemantle is waiting for you at the Castle, sir."

He hastily scribbled a note to Ethel, which ran as follows:

Malta, May 5, 1898.

DEAREST,—If you hear that the Suez Canal is blown up, you may feel certain that I am all serene. See my mother and kiss her for me. I am skipper of the *Hornet* for the next week.

Yours ever,
FRANK RODNEY.

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Before noon the *Hornet* was ready for sea, presenting a strange sight for such a trim little ship, as her decks were piled high with bags of coal to eke out her ordinary supply of fuel. Rodney was seeing to the careful disposition of several hundredweight of dynamite when a scrap of paper was brought to him by a hospital orderly, which bore in faintly-pencilled scrawl this message:

I have heard of your project. I know I can't be in command, but for God's sake take me with you. I will be as fit as a fiddle in a few days. Don't leave me here, there's a good fellow. Your old messmate,

Gerald Cator.

"Where is Lieutenant Cator?" said Rodney to Master Fisher, who had grown an inch in height and girth since the morning.

"In the hospital, near the Gunners' Mess, sir."

"Take three men and bring him on board in five minutes, if you can."

"*If* I can!" said the middy, as he ran off. "As if I bloomin' well *couldn't!*"

Shortly afterwards a pale and emaciated figure in the undress uniform of a naval officer, reclining on a long deck chair, with three tars and a midshipman shouldering a corner a-piece, was borne at the double out of the hospital and rapidly ferried on board the *Hornet*. That afternoon the Senior Surgeon reported Lieutenant Cator for being absent without leave, but, after a chat with the Governor, cancelled the report, and marked the register opposite his name; "Discharged cured."

As the *Hornet* steamed down the magnificent harbour, the quays of Valetta itself and the "Three Cities" were crowded with cheering soldiers and port operatives, whilst a salute of seven guns was fired from one of the forts, compliments that the little vessel shrilly returned by means of her steam whistle. Quickly gaining way, she rattled off to the east at twenty knots an hour, and, after fixing a temporary crow's-nest for a look-out on top of an improvised foremast, Rodney went below to have a quiet chat with Cator, his brother officer and old-time chum when they were cadets together on board the *Britannia*.

At six bells in the middle watch, in other words, at 3 a.m. on Saturday, whilst the *Hornet* was spinning away under her forced draught of 3,300 horse power, her speed being then close on twenty-five knots an hour, the look-out sighted the French fleet, which was visible through the hazy light of dawn about four miles away on the port bow.

Rodney, who was asleep, turned out instantly, and climbed to the crow's nest, whence he could plainly distinguish the six vessels, two armoured battleships and four first-class cruisers, travelling leisurely at about half the pace of the *Hornet*, in the direction of Port Said.

His first impulse, on descending to the deck, was to alter his course so as to be safe from recognition by the time daylight was sufficiently advanced to render the horizon perfectly clear. But the boyish spirit was not quite dead in him yet, and, after a brief consultation with Cator, he resolved to reduce speed a little without deviation of bearings, with the result that in another hour's time he would be slightly ahead of the enemy and plainly visible to them.

Midshipman Fisher, of course, thought they were going to attack, and asked Rodney when it would be necessary to rouse the starboard watch, and whether someone should not be set to clear the torpedo tubes.

The commander did not perceive his meaning for a moment, but when he did, told him to confine his attention to procuring the biggest Union Jack that the ship's stores would produce.

They had not long to wait before signals made on the French fleet showed that they were observed, and a cruiser detached herself from the rest in order to intercept them. It was absolutely out of the question for a sixteen-knot vessel to endeavour to catch the *Hornet*, but by way of amusing the Frenchmen Rodney now displayed his bit of bunting, and young Fisher gained some renown by suggesting that it would be a delicate compliment to string up the French flag beneath it, he having fashioned a tricolour by means of a pair of scissors and some string, after rummaging in the signal locker.

A couple of shots were fired at them, and the second shell fell unpleasantly close. Rodney now thought the joke had gone far enough, as he could not afford to risk his ship for the sake of amusement. He therefore altered his course, and gave the order "Full speed ahead," with the result that by breakfast time the enemy was hull down on the horizon, nursing the uneasy conviction that the British vessel was up to some devilment that could not be fathomed.

By the afternoon of Sunday the *Hornet* was within sixty miles of Port Said. Her deck was now clear of coal-bags, and some inroad had been made upon her bunkers. She had made a superb run—over 1,000 miles in little more than two days—and Rodney decided to steam boldly into the Canal by daylight, and trust to luck in dealing with any enemy he might encounter there.

He reached the dirty but picturesque port by five o'clock, and demanded the right of one of Her Majesty's ships to take precedence of all other vessels waiting to enter the Canal.

The French officials hardly knew what to say, being conscious that war had broken out, but they thought it best to simply treat the passage of the *Hornet* as an ordinary event, and forthwith supplied her with the huge electric lamp that enables vessels to make their way through the Canal by night. During the delay Rodney ascertained from the captain of a British ship in the harbour that the Canal was clear of warships, so far as he knew, and in return for the information the naval officer advised him to set his course round by the north of Candia if he wished to save his ship from destruction by the French fleet.

Rodney determined to destroy the Canal at a point between Ferdeneh and El Gisr, where the banks are fairly high. Once inside, therefore, he pushed ahead at a much more rapid rate than the stately pace prescribed by the regulations, and put an end to the expostulations of the French pilot by having him securely lashed to a chair in the mess-room.

By midnight he had reached the spot selected. Every preliminary had been thought of during the journey from Malta. No sooner was the vessel tied up by the Canal side than the whole available crew set to work to bore blasting holes along the banks for a distance of two hundred yards on each shore.

For many hours they worked undisturbed. Two ships passed during the night, and, as they approached, the working parties temporarily returned to the *Hornet* to escape observation, and to be ready to use guns or torpedo against a possible foe. But the two passers-by were an English collier bound for Aden and an Austrian Lloyd steamer from India.

At last all preparations were made.

Twelve bore-holes had been driven into the banks to a vertical depth of ten feet, and several pounds of dynamite or blasting powder deposited at the bottom of each. Time fuses were affixed to the powder charges, and detonators, governed by long pieces of cord, controlled the dynamite.

When all was ready Rodney himself ignited each of the five-minute fuses, and saw that the men in charge of the dynamite sections were stationed, cord in hand, at the safest distance obtainable under the circumstances. Their instructions were to rapidly jerk the cord the moment that the first gunpowder explosion occurred and then run for their lives towards the desert, in order to escape falling stones and débris.

At the final moment the service telegraph wire of the Canal was cut as a precautionary measure, and then everyone waited anxiously for the *dénouement*.

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A loud roar announced the firing of the first time-fuse mine. Almost simultaneously there came a tremendous explosion from the dynamite charges. With a crash that seemed to shake the sky and loosen the firm earth, the terrific explosive tore thousands of tons of soil and rock from the solid banks of the canal. In a second a great cloud of smoke and dust rose into the air and spread around in impenetrable density, whilst a big wave raced along the Canal and made itself felt for many miles north and south along its length.

Two or three minor explosions followed, from the remainder of the powder mines, and when at last it was safe to make an inspection, Rodney found that the Canal was blocked in such fashion that it would require months of labour to make it passable for vessels.

He collected his ship's company, and there were no casualties, though Midshipman Fisher had been sharply rapped on the head by a falling pebble. The *Hornet* was about to proceed upon her way when a big steamer loomed out of the gloom and hailed the torpedo-boat.

"What ship is that?" said Rodney in response.

"Ze *Gretchen*, off Hamburg," was the answer. "Vot noise vos dat?"

"This is Her Majesty's ship *Hornet*," cried Rodney, "and as your country has declared war against England, we make you a prisoner. Do you surrender, or shall we torpedo you?"

"No, mein Gott, no torpedo," roared the astounded German captain.

Rodney then boarded the stranger, and told the commander that he and his crew might land their personal belongings, but as for the ship she would be run into the wreck of the Canal, and then scuttled, as an additional obstacle, and the German had no option but to submit to this rough usage.

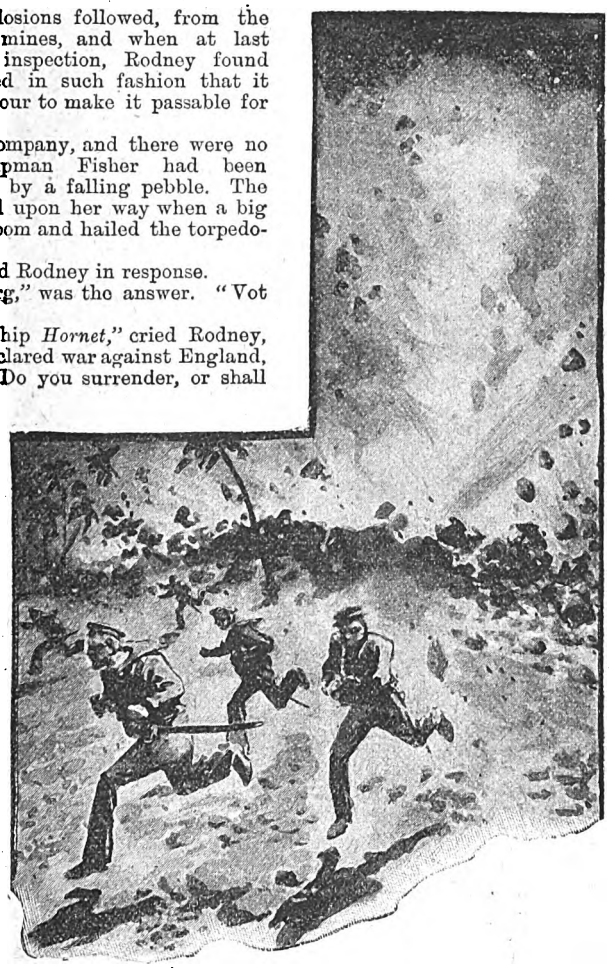
After the British vessel had replenished her coal supply from the tramp's stores, the other part of the programme was faithfully carried out and the *Hornet* steamed off to Ismailia and Suez to report that a German steamer had burst her boilers and sunk in the Canal, temporarily damaging the telegraph posts in her vicinity.

When, three days later, Rodney and Cator went ashore at Perim to obtain more coal, and to have lunch with the British subaltern in command of the hundred Sepoys who garrison the island, they entertained this worthy to a graphic account of the scene in the desert as the great cloud rose from the explosion.

"It must have been a fine sight," he said, "but I will knock it out here if any of the enemy's fleet comes along."

"How?" inquired Rodney.

"There are 30,000 tons of coal always in stock on this island, and my orders are to set fire to the lot when I consider there is any danger of its falling into the hands of an enemy. That'll be worth seeing on a fine night, won't it?"



A great cloud of smoke and dust rose into the air.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the Boulevards.

During the first days of the war Paris was in a frenzied state of exultation.

Along the boulevards and in the cafés excited groups, moved by the common impulse of national enthusiasm, gathered to discuss in extravagant language, and with all the heat of Gallic passion, this sudden swoop upon an unsuspecting foe. With every class of the community the war was popular. Work was laid aside and pleasure forgotten whilst *ouvrier* and patrician mingled in a common abandonment of rapture which showed how fiercely and deep burnt the fires of hereditary hatred.

"Agincourt is at last avenged!" screamed one heated orator from the pedestal of the statue of Jean d'Arc, to which he had climbed at the bidding of a tumultuous mob. "The hated Saxon is at our feet. We spared him at Waterloo, but it was only to sweep him in the end more cleanly from his wretched island!"

And this bombast was cheered to the echo.

The very *gamins* took up the cry and patrolled the streets shrieking insolent vaudevilles tossed off by the score by newspaper hacks, and all turning on some ribald jest at the expense of the enemy. One of the most popular, set to a well-known air, which Yvette Guilbert was then singing at the Casino, ran:

Ca y est, donc, en l'Angleterre,
Front de bœuf, et plein d'bière,
Trop de ventre pour s'enfuir,
V'là un homme, qui nous fait rire.

And crowds of people marched along the streets at night repeating, with inexhaustible delight, this feeble quatrain.

No Ministry had ever been so popular. The President—who took care to ride in the Bois—was followed by a cheering mob, and the Foreign Minister was carried bodily along the Champs Elysées from the Louvre to the Arc de Triomphe, where he was made to deliver a thrilling and patriotic speech.

"We win too early and forgive too late!" muttered a deputy who shook his head at the premature rejoicings of his countrymen.

Later in the day the Foreign Minister detailed his adventures to the President, and was jubilant at the course of events.

But the head of the Republic manifested anxiety on the question of supplies. "I hope that America may be impelled to take our side," he said. "We must conceal our desires with regard to Canada at present."

"The United States can always be counted upon to make

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a disturbance at the right moment, despite this show of friendship towards England," replied the Foreign Minister. "When Europe was apparently in line on the Turkish question, Russian diplomacy, backed up by more potent arguments, brought about the Venezuelan trouble, and diverted attention from Constantinople. I hear from Petersburg that the Tsar is endeavouring to arrange fresh difficulties between England and the United States on some point."

For a while the Parisians were too much occupied with celebrating their success to mark the absence of subsequent news. The telegram which announced the capture of Worthing had satisfied their vanity. But after a time came strange rumours that a hitch had occurred somewhere. Despite the persistence of the Press, which hour to hour flooded the streets with exciting information of an advance upon London, the flight of the Queen of England to Balmoral and the suicide of the Lord Mayor, there came a moment's pause in the general rejoicing.

Le Matin had announced that the French fleet had been sighted off Brest, and was making for the harbour.

At first the intelligence was received with incredulity, and the office of Le Matin was besieged by a furious mob, which broke the windows and would have torn the editor to shreds if he had not made his escape to the cellar.

When confirmation came, it was instantly declared that the return of the navy was only a subtle stratagem to lure the British to a more disastrous overthrow. No one believed that it could mean retreat. But the sage deputy observed with foreboding that the President did not ride in the Bois that day. Le Gaulois shrieked more fiercely than ever.

"England," it declared, "shivers behind her money-bags. This monster of injustice cares not that her honour is gone, but she trembles for her gold. Lord Chamberlain and Sir Balfour are quaking beneath the beak of the eagle, and our navy, triumphant, returns to bear us the glorious news."

But, alas! this false security could ill withstand the shock of truth.

On Friday morning the people of Brest witnessed a terrible sight. The shattered French ships of the allied fleets, crushed, maimed, and helpless, slowly made their way into the harbour, with sides ripped up and masts gone, with decks ploughed with shot and rudders almost useless. A horrified crowd assembled on the quay, and stood aghast and shuddering at these awful tokens of overwhelming ruin.

Along the narrow gangways were borne the wounded and dying.

But their grief and rage knew no bounds when along the narrow gangways were borne ashore the wounded and dying in agonising and what seemed endless file. The havoc of the fight had made unutterable wrecks of the splendid crews who a few days before had manned the vessels in the pride of perfect manhood. Horrible wounds and ghastly fractures, such as our modern shells cause, which leave scarcely a trace of human form and tear to fragments the frames of their victims, sent tremours through the crowd.

There could no longer be doubt. The fool's paradise in which a whole nation had lived for so brief a space was rudely demolished.

The fatal news spread apace, and in a few hours Paris lay prostrate beneath the blow. Nor was it long before the whole catastrophe became known, how two great navies had been crushed, and England, taken by surprise and scarce defended, still rose above the sea, calm and triumphant, unsoiled by the touch of a hostile foot.

Mercurial in its moods, quick to extremes of anger as to extremes of joy, knowing no mean between the two, and incapable of that phlegmatic courage which receives defeat with courage as it welcomes victory without undue elation, the Paris mob, when it had recovered from the stun of the terrible news, became frantic with ungovernable rage.

Wild crowds rushed through the streets in fury, maddened by humiliation and reckless with passion. An exultant people had in a moment become a savage mob. There was but one thought, that of revenge on someone, anyone, who might suggest himself to the disordered public mind.

As the day drew to its close the more peaceful citizens became alarmed. Paris was no longer under control. Violent speakers, foaming with fury, demanded a new government—a communism—a new reign of terror. The members of the Cabinet had fled to their houses, and the President was compelled to surround the Elysée with troops.

Instead of calming the public feeling, the Parisian papers fanned the flame of revolt.

"*Nous sommes trahis!*" exclaimed Le Figaro in its opening words of comment, "France is once more the devoted victim of the treachery of her own sons. She has been delivered, by base intrigue, to her ruin. English gold and German hatred have bought her rulers. We are sacrificed to their perfidy. Her trusting confidence and

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simple love have been the ministers to her destruction. Down with the traitors! *A l'Elysée! A l'Elysée!*"

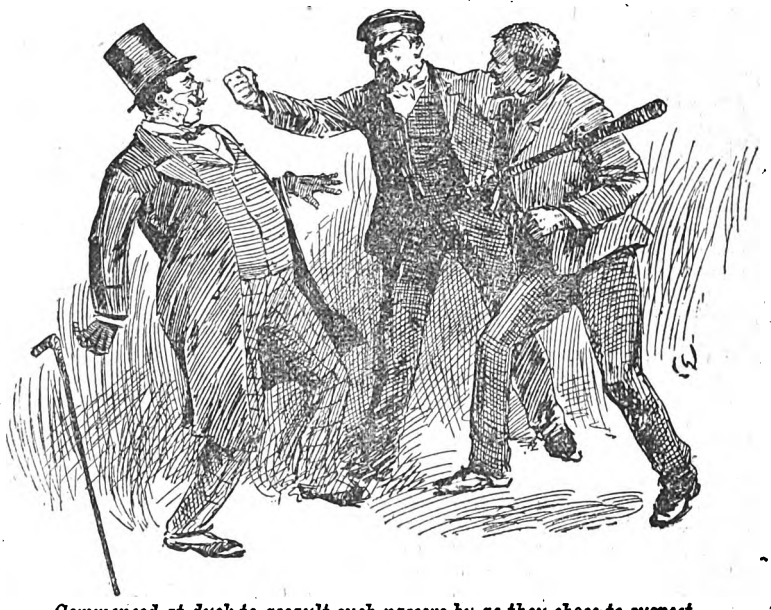
Le Journal boldly declared the Foreign Minister to be the ruling spirit of this betrayal, and the Minister who was shouldered along the streets on Thursday by an enthusiastic multitude was execrated on Friday as "*le second Judas.*" Not a member of the Cabinet was safe. It would have been death to any one of them had he appeared.

This rumour of treachery travelled like wildfire, and caused a panic. Fierce spirits, let loose by the general disorder, commenced at dusk to assault such passers-by as they chose to suspect; some of the shops in the Rue de Rivoli were looted, and an attempt was made to break into the Palais Royal, which had been closed early in the day.

But the more serious papers, excited and extravagant, yet not without some sense of responsibility, sought to allay the storm.

Beyond all, realising that their justification of the sudden movement against England lay only in its success, they displayed an anxiety to convince the world that it was inevitable and imperative, and this they found no easy task.

It was ominous that the Paris edition of the New York Herald had, during the first three days, contented itself with the bare chronicling of the dramatic sweep of events. There was no word of comment; the editor was studiously dumb. It was as if delicacy to the people over whom the newspaper exercised so potent an influence demanded silence—a silence that had all the force of a tacit condemnation.



Commenced at dusk to assault such passers-by as they chose to suspect.

Le Matin had confidently appealed to old alliances and a common foe. It recalled hysterically the ancient feud with England which resulted in the establishment of an independent country across the water. But the Herald was not stirred to response, nor even to quotation, and the imperturbability of a journal noted for its piquant and lively comment produced a serious impression upon the more responsible French papers.

But matters became worse later on, when the opinion of the native American press upon the situation was flashed along the Mackay-Bennett cable. If respect to the land of its adoption made the Paris Herald silent, at least it did not prevent the insertion of quotations from the newspapers published at home, and their tone was non-committal enough to cause misgiving wherever the hope of active sympathy prevailed.

On the Saturday morning the Paris edition of the New York Herald, under a demure heading which carefully avoided sensation, published the following:

"We have scrupulously refrained from passing an opinion on the sensational events of the past few days. An American journal on French territory should at least respect the obligations of a guest, and it is impossible for us, as it would be discourteous, to throw our weight into the camp of either belligerent. It is our plain duty to preserve a neutral attitude. We therefore print, without comment, extracts from some of the more influential papers of America which have reached us though cable to-day.

"The Boston Herald passes no opinion on the rights of the quarrel between England and those who are attacking her. But it insists that the policy of America is absolute neutrality, 'Under no circumstances,' continues that journal, 'can we depart from the spirit of the Monroe doctrine, which practically restricts the United States to her own shores. So long as her independence is in no way threatened, she has no possible justification for embroiling herself in European complications. America will witness the struggle calmly to the end.'

"The New York World observes: 'We are in horror of what has occurred. Civilisation stands aghast at the iniquity of the blow. It seems as if the Continent has swept away its centuries of progression, and stands stripped to the skin, disclosing the primeval savage. If France imagines that she can count upon the assistance of the United States because of past services, she has made a profound mistake. We do not forget the insults of France and Germany during our war with Spain. Liberty is the watchword of our constitution, and it is the interest, no less than the earnest desire of a great republic, to protest against a giant wrong perpetrated in the name of a giant greed. All Americans will abhor the outburst that threatens to overwhelm England, and in her time of need we frankly admit her to be the pioneer of freedom and peace.'"

America was clearly to be neutral, as international law compelled, and these words flashed across the sea were ominously suggestive of the vanity of French hopes in this direction.

There were several of the more dignified papers in Paris which laboured to excuse the action of the United Powers in the eyes of the powerful Republic and incite her to action.

The Débats had a statesmanlike article, endeavouring to show that the war was an act of necessity. The whole country, it protested, was suffering from want of colonies. Trade demanded expansion; there was needed a broadening of the dominions to satisfy the ambitions and the just aims of an active people. On all hands were signs of a suffering nation, searching in vain for a market; her sons, meanwhile, compelled to remain at home for lack of new fields for their energies. England had seized the earth, and force alone could secure a just balance.

But America remained impassive to these arguments.

Yet some good fruits accrued from these passionate articles. Paris, so childlike in her impulses, was brought round to a reasonable mood, and though there was no longer enthusiasm or hysterical fervour, there was at least a calmer spirit—a more resolute front.

On the following Monday a Council of war was summoned

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at the Elysée. It was a full meeting of French and German Ministers, and the conference was long and anxious.

The terrible repulse of the fleet had come upon them all with consternation; there was no longer the air of certainty which prevailed at first. The President of the Republic thought less of Whitehall, and Count Holbach had postponed his negotiations for the occupation of Gibraltar.

The Foreign Minister was still confident.

"The fleet is driven back," he observed; "but that is a bagatelle. We have in the Mediterranean a combined force of men and ships powerful enough to decimate the whole British Empire. Let us not be discouraged. Before the enemy is able to call together its scattered strength we shall have sailed through the Straits and formed a fatal cordon around the British Islands."

This sounded reasonable enough. The stupendous fleet of the two countries was already on its way. It was a gathering of giants, and the English defences seemed feeble and ridiculous before it.

"In five days," observed the German Chancellor, "we shall be once more in the Channel. We have delayed, not thrown away, the victory."

At this moment a special messenger arrived with a telegram. The President opened it, and turned pale as he read:

"Gentlemen," he said slowly, "this message tells us that the enemy has been forewarned. The Suez Canal is blown up, and we have no longer a road to India."

There was a dead silence. The news had stunned them.

At last Count Holbach essayed to deal with the situation.

"These English are full of resource," he said. "They mean to give us trouble. So much the worse for them. Meanwhile let us not be over-concerned. Our plan lies not just now through the Suez. We will cripple the island, and then let India do what it will. The boom of our guns will be heard by the shores of Britain before the week is out. Give me seven days and I will lay her helpless."

Another knock came, and another messenger with a telegram.

The President bit his lips.

"The Straits of Gibraltar are blockaded!" he exclaimed. "This is annoying; our plans must suffer delay. But, thank Heaven, it is nothing worse."

"Nothing worse!" It was General Gourko, hitherto silent, who intervened. "You regard this as of less moment?"

"It merely delays us," returned the President.

"Gentlemen," declared Gourko, "the first telegram was disturbing enough; the second is appalling. Do you not see what has happened?"

There were inquiring murmurs. Everyone turned an anxious gaze upon the Russian general.

"It means," he continued impressively, "that the Mediterranean is no longer a sea. It is impassable. It is now reduced to the condition of a lake, and your great fleets are imprisoned in it without possibility of escape. You are stripped of your most powerful arm."

"We can seize Malta!" stammered the President.

"Malta," observed Gourko, "is impregnable, and it is provisioned for three years. England has destroyed exit and entrance, and your splendid ships are of no further use to you!"

At this solemn pronouncement, which was so obviously true, there came into the breasts of the Council a terrible fear. For the first time it dawned upon them that their task was not so easy as it appeared, that, amazing to say, England might yet rise in her strength and smite them all!

(To be continued.)

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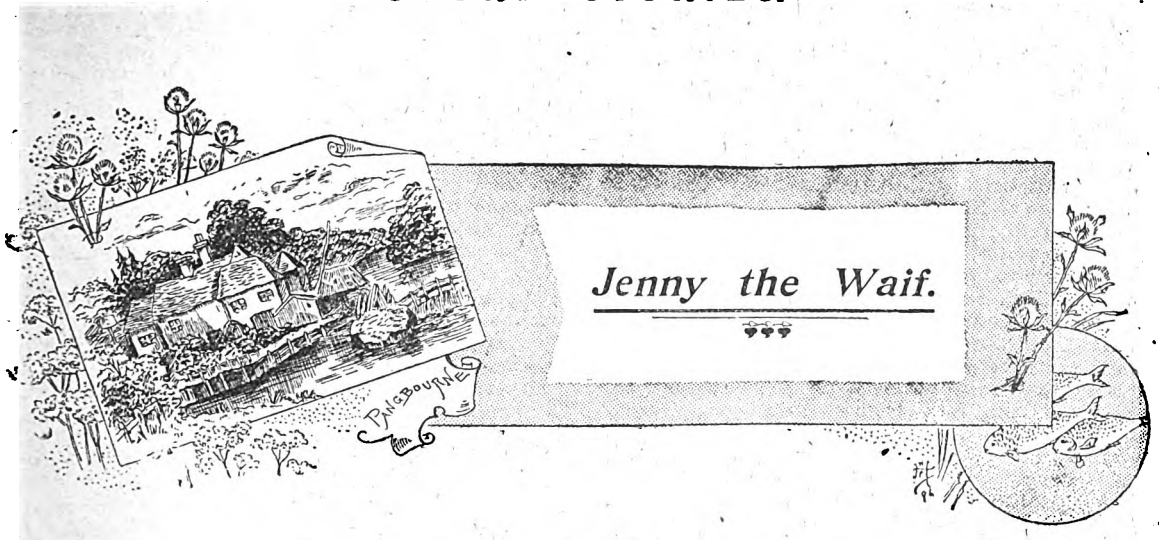

"I JUST hate being a drudge!" grumbled Jenny, giving a little cry of pain as a splinter from the dry firewood pierced her finger. "I just hate it! And I hate everything here."

She dropped the stick and began to pull at the splinter. It came out, bringing a drop of blood. The finger was hard and callous, the hands rough and red. The face was rough and red too, fiery red now with anger.

Everyone called her Crooked Jenny. This was because she was a dwarfish hump-back. Mrs. Hetherington declared that she deserved the name quite as much because of her crooked temper.

Jenny Low had been in the Hetherington home three years. Her parents were dead, and the uncle as well with whom she lived after the death of her parents. When this uncle died, Mrs. Hetherington brought Jenny home. There seemed nothing else to be done.

Perhaps she meant to do well by the girl. Certainly she expected Jenny to "pay her way," and was diligent in her efforts to see that she did.

Having extracted the splinter from her finger, Jenny picked up the offending stick and hurled it from her with fierce anger not noting and not caring the direction.

The door opened at that moment, and the flying stick struck Mrs. Hetherington on the shoulder, almost knocking her from her feet.

"I'll whip you for that, Jenny, see if I don't!" Mrs. Hetherington declared, her face aflame.

She crossed the intervening space before the astonished girl could rise to beat a retreat, and took her savagely by the shoulder.

"What do you mean by throwing that stick?"

She shook the girl violently. Jenny caught her breath, set her teeth and said not a word, though her contracted brows and the rebellious lines in her face spoke volumes.

"Why don't you answer me?" Mrs. Hetherington demanded. "Why don't you speak? Why did you throw that stick? Did you do it to hit me? I'm sure you did. You're the worst child I ever saw in all my born days! I've a good mind to thrash you to within an inch of your life!"

"I don't care," was Jenny's defiant assertion. "I don't care if you kill me!"

Mrs. Hetherington's anger appeared to gain volume She pulled the girl roughly across the floor, pushed her before her up the stairs, and locked her in a dark room.

It was a worse punishment than whipping.

Jenny paid no more heed to whippings than she did to the dropping rain on the grass and leaves, but she feared the darkness and loneliness of that room.

But it did not conquer her. It only roused her to fiercer defiance.

When Mrs. Hetherington retreated down the stairs Jenny was screaming, kicking on the door and shouting out her hate like a veritable little savage.

For half an hour afterwards, screams continued to issue from that upper room, and kicks to rain on the door. The furious little heart hated everything that lived. She knew the story of her wrong-doing would be told to Mr. Hetherington as soon as he stepped into the house, and she hated him for his expected condemnation. Above all things else, she hated herself, her crooked back, her homely, red face, and rough, red hands. Why was she born, she asked herself, to be an unloved and unlovely drudge?

Three hours later, when the night shadows were gathering, Mr. Hetherington pushed into the dark room, carrying a lantern. He had heard his wife's story and had a vague feeling that perhaps she had been hasty and harsh. As for himself, Mr. Hetherington had never given much heed to the little waif that the world's currents had drifted into his home.

He did not at first see the crooked form in the corner, where Jenny, having exhausted herself, had fallen asleep. When he did see her and observed the tear stains on the ill-favoured face, his lips twitched. She started up with a cry of fright as the light fell on her.

"It's only me, Jenny," he said softly. "It's time for you to go to bed, you know. You'll catch your death up here."

"I don't care," she declared, bitter memory reasserting itself.

"Tut, tut!" he cried, uncomfortably touched. "It's only foolish people who talk that way. You'll feel different in the morning. The supper's been cleared

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away, but"—hesitatingly—"here's an apple. I happened to have it in my pocket."

Jenny understood, but said nothing. To the torture of the dark room was always added deprivation of supper. However, she did not reach up to take the apple.

"What I wanted to say, though, and why I've come for you, instead of Mrs. Hetherington," he went on, "is that we've got company; they're down in the parlour now. I never give it much thought, but I s'pose it must be rather lonely for you here sometimes?"

Jenny maintained a perverse and dogged silence.

"They came over from the village an hour or so ago," he exclaimed, shifting uneasily to the other foot, "Mrs. Gordon and her baby, or rather her little girl, for she's about a year and a half old by now. Her husband died, you see, and being Mrs. Hetherington's own cousin, and no place to go, she come up here and we've agreed to do by her the best we can. I hope you'll like her, Jenny, her and the baby."

This last doubtfully.

"I don't want to see her," said Jenny, her heart icing again. She began to feel that Mr. Hetherington's unexampled kindness had its seat in a desire to keep Mrs. Gordon from knowing she had been badly treated. "She'll hate me, same's everybody does, when she sees my crooked back and red face, and finds out how bad I am sometimes. I know she'll hate me, and I don't want to see her."

"I dunno about that," argued Mr. Hetherington. "I don't hate you, and I don't believe she'll do anything of the kind, either. I fancy that she's going to like you."

He still held the apple in his hand. It was juicy and red-cheeked, and she loooked at it hungrily. A hard sob struggled out of the little throat, and a smiling look came into the eyes, but she did not take the apple.

"Now, I'm going to light you downstairs to bed, if you'll let me," he went on. "Things'll look different in the morning, when the sun's shining and the birds singin'. I've often noticed that they do. And you're certain to like Mrs. Gordon and the baby. Its name is Emmy. Emmy Gordon is a pretty name, I think."

His face flushed, when she was still silent, and he put the apple back into his pocket. The repulse hurt him. He took up the lantern and stepped to the top of the stairs, and she, getting up from the corner, followed.

At the bottom he left her without a word. She heard the sounds of conversation and laughter in the parlour, which was brilliantly illuminated, then scudded like a rat to the little back room where she slept.

The next day, the pink baby face, the toddling limbs, the big blue eyes and the cooing trustfulness of the child drew out Crooked Jenny's love in a surging wave.

The starved little heart gave to the baby all the love it had so long held in check, a love that in its power and depth was fairly worshipful.

"It's really wonderful how Jenny takes to your Emmy," Mrs. Hetherington declared to Mrs. Gordon before a week had gone by. "I've got to watch her or she'll steal the baby out or coax her upstairs when you ain't watching.

"I wish you'd just look at them romping now! I'm almost afraid to trust her, though. She's that changeable there's no depending on her."

At that moment Crooked Jenny was playing "camel."

She was down on her hands and knees, with the baby on her back, and she was plunging and prancing in what she conceived to be the true camel style.

"I'm a pretty good camel with that hump on my back, ain't I?" they heard her say; and somehow the tone and the question touched them.

Jenny saw them looking at her, and a great fear chilled her heart.

"I must be careful or they won't let me play with her at all," was her thought; and from that time there was a change in her demeanour toward the child.

Mrs. Hetherington observed this and duly commented on it, in her disparaging way, citing it as a proof of Crooked Jenny's fickleness.

One day Mrs. Hetherington and Mrs. Gordon sat in the kitchen, absorbed in talk.

The sunshine fell like a patterned carpet on the floor. The kettle sung a merry song on the stove. Little Emmy was momentarily forgotten.

A horse dragging a dog-cart dashed wildly up the road in a cloud of dust.

Crooked Jenny heard the clatter of hoofs and glanced out at the road. Her heart went into her mouth, and her pulse seemed to stand still.

Down in the dust of the road, unconscious of peril, little Emmy was playing.

With a choking cry, Crooked Jenny sprang through the open doorway. Her lips were parted and her homely face was white with a great fear. She saw the fiery-eyed horse, heard the thunder of his hoofs, and the rattle of the bounding wheels, saw the child. From her terror-filled heart a sobbing prayer went up.

The shriek that was torn from her when it seemed to her the horse's hoofs would strike the child to the earth brought to the women in the kitchen their first knowledge of little Emmy's peril. Then Crooked Jenny, rushing to the rescue, went down under the hoofs herself, and was beaten into the dust.

Crooked Jenny lay gasping and half unconscious, and her face was ashen when the women reached her, but the child was safe; Jenny had held it at arm's length, beyond the blows of the hoofs, and the wheels, and it was untouched.

Crooked Jenny came back to herself in a darkened room that made her think of the dark room upstairs. People were about her. She started up and cried out anxiously for little Emmy. The child, rosy and prattling, was placed in her arms by Mrs. Hetherington, whose eyes were red with weeping, and Jenny lay back on the pillow with a look of content. The pillow was not whiter than her face.

Mr. Hetherington glanced in a sort of dumb appeal toward the doctor, a spectacled gentleman who stood near the head of the bed and who had been very grave.

"You will relieve yourself of undue anxiety, Mr. Hetherington," he said. "Jenny will recover, though she has had a narrow escape."

Mrs. Gordon stooped and kissed the white face.

"I'm going to love you, Jenny, as if you were my very own," she promised.

The white face became pinkish with pleasure.

In a whisper and with painful effort came the answer:

"Oh, ma'am, if you only will!"

Then they began to understand what it was that Jenny had needed all those years, the simplest things, and at the same time the greatest things in the world, sympathy and love.

H. Harland.

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THE LAST RACE.

Morazan was a horse, white as to colour, and if I must be explicit, somewhat stiff as to legs, for he was now old, but even yet giving unmistakable evidence that his ancestors had been of no common breed.

There was something in the manner in which he occasionally laid back his ears and arched his beautiful neck, something in the flash that now and then brightened his eyes, which would have told even a stranger that he had once had a career. But that was long ago, when he had belonged to Carolos' father, the Señor Castello.

He belonged to Carolos now, and Carolos was at this moment astride his back. Morazan, the Mexican saddle, bridle and lariat, together with a minature of his mother, were all that Carolos possessed. It had been different once, but that, too, was long ago.

It seemed to Carolos as he rode leisurely down the broad avenue between the long rows of walnut trees, on the Señor Bertram's ranch, that it must have been a hundred years since the big ranch had belonged to his father, Enrico Castello; he could scarcely make himself believe that it was only six years ago.

The Señor Bertram had been very kind. His father had said so, and Carolos always remembered that. He had paid Enrico Castello, in gold, a fair price for the land, and had allowed him to live on the place the few remaining weeks of his life, and Señora Bertram had waited upon him with her own hands. And when he died she had comforted the orphan, Carolos, with gentle kindness.

After settling accounts, nothing was left for Carolos except the personal effects just mentioned, for although his father had been a gentleman of pure Spanish blood, after Carolos' mother died he had lived a reckless life. Carolos was too young at the time of his father's death to realise his financial loss. Had his fortune been left him, and Morazan and the lariat taken, he would have been wretched; but having these and the kindness of Señor Bertram, he was content, though a penniless orphan dependent upon the bounty of the English Señor.

One member of the Bertram family really loved Carolos. Ted loved him devotedly.

Ted was the only son and heir of the Bertram household, a merry, blue-eyed ten-year-old, who was at this identical moment sitting behind Carolos, astride Morazan's back, digging the horse's sides with his bare, brown heels, when he did not proceed at the speed Ted thought proper.

Like Carolos, Ted scorned shoes; indeed, he was pretty sure to scorn anything that Carolos looked upon with disfavour.

Carolos was a hero in his eyes, and whatever Carolos did, it became the sole end and aim of Ted's life to do also.

In spite of all Ted's digging with his sturdy little heels, Morazan showed no sign of increasing his speed, but continued to walk leisurely down the drive. He had received no intimation from Carolos to go faster, and he paid no attention to Ted's most vigorous hints.

Carolos, who for the last year had herded Señor Bertram's cattle, over in the hills, had been given a day off, and "John," the Chinaman who helped on the ranch, had taken his place with the herds.

Now Carolos was going back, and Ted after many entreaties was at last allowed to go for two days, when his father would drive over and bring him home. For Carolos might not be back again for weeks, as he had a camp in the hills.

Then, as he had reached the gateway leading to the road, he touched Morazan lightly, and he at once started off in a brisk walk toward the brown, irregular foot hills where Carolos' camp was situated.

* * * * *

It was the last day of Ted's stay.

It was the hottest day Carolos had ever known. The heat was excessive, and there was a strange sultriness in the air that was overpowering.

Ted succumbed under it and tumbled over under the big live oak where the tent was pitched, and was asleep before his head touched the ground.

How Carolos longed to lie down and sleep, too! The shade of the live oak had never looked so inviting, but he was uneasy about this sultriness and the murky hue that filled the atmosphere.

There must be a fire somewhere, but it could not be near enough to cause any uneasiness, surely, or he could see the smoke; perhaps the hills hid it. He brought Morazan up, and saddling him, rode round on the other side of the nearest hills, but could discover nothing.

Evidently the fire was not anywhere near, he concluded; and going back to the camp he tied Morazan near by to a large clump of green wood, that he might be ready should he deem it best to ride round presently and investigate further.

Meanwhile, if he only could lie down just for a moment! But he must not. If there was a fire anywhere in the hills, it might spread rapidly, and reach them. Carolos was troubled; what should he do in case it did reach them? Should he take Ted home and leave the herds—all Señor Bertram's fine Holsteins and Jerseys? Yes; he must if it came to the worst, but he must stay until certain that there was danger. How he wished the Señor would make haste and come for Ted, but it was so hot that he probably would not come until night.

It was strange that he felt so sleepy and stupid. It seemed impossible to keep awake, and his head felt so strangely. He went to the hydrant and plunged his head into the trough where the cattle drank, and then, coming back, sat listlessly down near Ted, under the oak.

He had only been sitting there a few moments, when his head began to droop, lower and lower, then he sank back unconsciously, and all things fled from his memory. His sleep was not a natural one, he was overcome by the excessive heat; yet, heavy as was his sleep, it was mingled with troubled dreams.

The sun beat down fiercely, the very wind seemed to scorch the dry grass round him. An hour passed, and still Carolos slept on, unconscious and unmindful of the tiny tongue of flame that was creeping round from the other side of the hills.

Nearer and nearer it came, growing in strength and volume, and filling the air with suffocating smoke. The horses and cattle down in the glen laid back their ears and huddled together for a few moments, and then

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with frightened snorts dashed madly away in every direction.

And still Carolos slept, unable to awaken from that deathlike slumber.

He was dreaming of his mother. He thought she stood over him, bending low and smiling upon him with her great, flashing, dark eyes. Lower and lower she bent, until the folds of her rebosa enveloped him—closer and closer it enfolded him—he was suffocating, strangling!

"Mother!" he cried thickly, "why do you stifle me?"

He could not hear her answer, but he heard something else.

A familiar sound fell upon his dulled ear.

It was Morazan's whinny. With a desperate effort he sat upright, and rubbed his dazed eyes. How strangely they smarted!

Again Morazan gave a long, urgent whinny. Ah, Carolos! but for Morazan neither you nor Ted would ever have awakened in this world.

In an instant Carolos was upon his feet, gazing about him with blanched face.

"Great Heavens! The fire is upon us!" he cried in a horror-stricken voice.

There was no time now to think of anything but to save Ted. The Señor Bertram had trusted the boy to Carolos and he would save the child or die with him.

Running to the hydrant he filled a bucket with water and, dashing it over the sleeping boy, succeeded in arousing him. Then catching up a blanket from out the tent and saturating it, he pinned it tightly round his neck, and helping Ted upon Morazan's back, he climbed up before the bewildered boy.

"Now crawl under the blanket, Ted; draw your feet up under it and hold tight about my waist; everything's dry as tinder and we must ride for our lives!" he said with compressed lips.

Ted did as Carolos commanded, and was entirely enveloped by the wet blanket.

Carolos let the reins loose, and, speaking an encouraging word to Moranzan, they were off like the wind. It was a difficult road out of the hills, in fact, only a steep, winding trail. How they ever clung to the horse in that mad race, Heaven only knows.

I have said that Morazan had had a career. In his young days he had been the pride of the country, and won many hundreds of pounds for Enrico Castello at the races. But never before had he ran such a race as he was running now. A race between life and death—a race in which Morazan's speed and strength were measured against the strength and speed of the fire-demon behind them!

Did the old horse remember the other days? Did his past glory and victory rise before him now?

It seemed so, for with head erect, ears laid back, and nostrils distended, he thundered on. He is on the race track again, his rival is close upon him—no need, Carolos, to whisper encouraging words; he knows as well as as yourself that two young lives are depending upon his strength and courage! The old horse is on his mettle and will save you or die in the attempt.

They have reached lower and flatter land, and have just entered a stretch of sage brush. Carolos' heart almost fails him, for he knows that when the fire reaches it, it will lick it up like tinder. Then there is a furious roar, and Carolos knows, although he dares not look back, that the fire has reached the sage brush.

Morazan gives a loud whinny, and fairly flies; his feet scarcely seem to touch the ground.

"Hold on fast, Ted," cried Carolos; then he set his teeth and, letting the reins fall, grasped the saddle pommel. With a wild, terrified snort, Morazan plunged forward.

There is a confused roar, a whirling cloud of smoke and flame, and the fire has passed over them and is licking up the grass and sage brush beyond. Now it runs round to the left and their way is clear.

Morazan half stops, shudders, staggers on, and then a dreadful cry rends the air, such a shrill, awful scream as nothing could give vent to but a horse in the throes of agony and fright.

Carolos' eyelashes and hair are singed, and his face is burnt, while his throat is full of sharp cutting pain, but he does not heed it, he hears only that dreadful cry, and again feels Morazan tremble, stagger, and then he is conscious that the brave horse is falling.

He throws his arms round Morazan's neck.

"*Adorado!*" he cries faintly, and then everything becomes a blank.

A carriage driven furiously up the road, down below, has held witnesses of this wild race; several men also are behind the carriage on horse-back.

It is the Señor Bertram with men he has gathered on the way; they have seen the fire and have hastened to the rescue of the boys.

When Carolos regained consciousness Señor Bertram was bending over him, his face working with emotion.

"Ted," whispered Carolos. His throat was so parched he could scarcely speak.

"Ted is all right, thanks to you, my brave boy," answered Ted's father unsteadily.

"And—Morazan?" Carolos asked faintly.

Señor Bertram did not answer for a moment, and Carolos covered his eyes with his hand, while a bitter sob burst from his lips.

"He is dead!" he said chokingly.

Bertram very gently drew Carolos' hand away and said kindly:

"He is not dead, my boy, and if money and care can save the noble animal, he shall live. Now our first duty is to you."

Kind hands lifted the brave boy into the carriage and he was taken home at once.

Some of the men went on to fight the fire and try to save the cattle, and the remainder stayed to attend to the noble horse whose courage and faithfulness had saved Carolos and Ted from an awful death.

And Morazan did not die. Indeed, he was well long before Carolos, whose burns were serious, and who will carry disfiguring scars upon his face as long as he lives.

During his illness he received the tenderest care, nor did he ever afterward lack for love, for the Señor Bertram adopted him and educated him as his own son.

Carolos is a man now, and in Central America he owns a fine home of his own, and a bright, dark-faced little boy calls him father. Among Carolos' most cherished treasures are the Mexican saddle, bridle, and lasso, and Morazan himself, now very old but tenderly cared for.

Frequently little Enrico goes for a walk with his father and beautiful young mother in the plaza and they invariably stop in front of the bronze statue of Morazan, the great general, and Enrico begs his father to tell him again the story of their own beloved Morazan, a story of which he never wearies; and Carolos relates for the hundredth time the story of Morazan's last race.

M. Dean.

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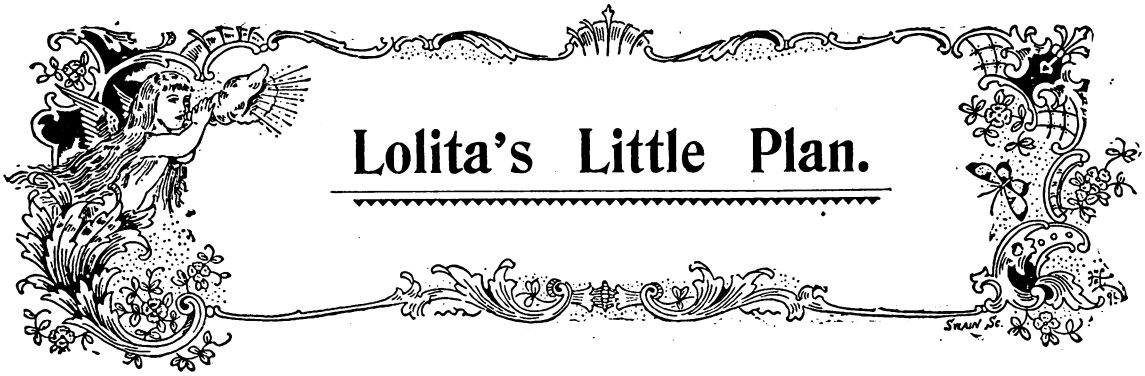

Lolita's Little Plan.

In the house of "El Chatto," ex-bull fighter of Madrid and at present performing before the Mexican public, there was dire dismay, owing to the low state—the very low state—of the family exchequer.

This sad state of affairs is common to many people among the members of the bull-fighting fraternity, who are not esteemed now as they once were.

This is, however, only in Mexico; whatever else may come and go in Spain, bull-fighting is always with them.

"El Chatto" (meaning "The Snubnose") had just finished taking his morning chocolate and roll, assisted by his pretty wife, Lolita, who also had been a member of the noble army of bull-fighters—in fact, first female *espada* in the big ring at Seville—but this was a secret.

A career that might possibly have been glorious had been cut short by "El Chatto," who had loved her, and married her.

But that was several years ago.

Successful, fêted and honoured in Cuba and afterwards in Mexico, "El Chatto's" prosperity had not lasted long, for soon had come the edict that bull-fighting in Mexico must stop.

A few desultory fights were still allowed, by which a torero could certainly not make a fortune.

This morning, the day before the bull-fight in honour of the fiesta of San Marcos, "El Chatto," needing some spare silver for the furbishing up of his costume, had turned out his pockets, with the assistance of Lolita.

Investigation revealed one big silver peso, one fifty-cent piece, one ten-cent piece and fourteen copper centavos.

Not enough to pay coach-hire, even!

Carramba! Here was a pretty mess! No wonder that "El Chatto" leisurely and calmly spoke some naughty words during the next half hour, the while Lolita tranquilly drank her chocolate, and then lit a cigarette, her dimpled face very serious all the time, as though in deep cogitation.

At last "El Chatto" glared about him, as though in search of some one to fight.

Lolita smiled at him sweetly, removing the cigarette from her pretty lips, as she murmured:

"Have you finished, my dear?"

A shrug of the shoulders was her husband's reply.

"Then listen, oh, most worthless husband, for I have a plan—a plan most magnificent; thereby we will make a fortune—sufficient for the voyage once more to Spain."

She stopped tantalisingly, and puffed at her cigarette, while "El Chatto" looked at her unbelievingly.

"This is how it is," she pursued, blowing a ring of smoke into the air; "the empresario pay you little—very little—only a hundred silver dollars—is it not so?"

"*Si*, that is all—the pigs!" growled at the torero; "and after this there will be no fight for weeks—no more money!"

"Then we will make more out of them—much more. But first, friend of my heart, will many rich people go to this fight—the president with his wife, the De la Matas, and those other rich Spaniards?"

"Yes, all of them," replied "El Chatto," who was as yet mystified, not understanding the subtle workings of his wife's brain; "but what have they to do with that wonderful plan of yours?"

Lolita smiled again, and playfully pulled her husband's ear.

"They have much to do—much!" she whispered, seating herself on the arm of his chair and pulling his moody face down to hers. "Listen, *marido mio*: this is the plan! But take care that no one hears us!"

No one hears—not even ourselves—it is whisper, whisper, whisper, and finally a loud shout of delight from "El Chatto." It must be something good—what a shame we are not let into the secret!

To-morrow seems such a long time in coming, but finally it is here—all balmy, blue sky, with never a white cloud to mar it; soft, warm breezes, laden with the perfume of roses and lilies that are just beginning to bloom.

On the cheap side—"the side of the sun"—white-garmented peons, with big sombreros, choke up every inch of space, and shout and yell loudly during the performance. As for the shady side, it is well filled—with rich Spaniards at that—for which reason the heart of Lolita rejoices; the more Spaniards, the more money.

"*Ojala* that there were nothing but Spaniards," she thinks.

She has purposely taken a seat just behind the first barrier of the bull-ring—not seven feet above the ground where her husband will kill his bull—"so that she can see him better," as she lisps to an admiring Mexican fighter, who wishes her to go into one of the boxes.

In her Sevillan costume, the silk mantilla exposing

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just enough of her Spanish eyes and dimpled chin to make people want to see more.

Lolita is by far the most admired woman in the Plaza, distracting attention even from the beautiful banderilla work that "El Largo" is going through in the ring. Many glasses are pointed at the little Española, as she so demurely watches for her husband.

Seated alone in his box, the prince of bankers, old Franquillo, drops his glass and sighs; perhaps if a girl like that one yonder had lived instead of passing away from him during the first poverty-stricken month of their married life, there in Barcelona, he would not now be a lone, forlorn man, without home, chick or child—only the money.

For though money is good, it doesn't always fill every chink of the heart!

Lolita, in spite of that sweet, shy demureness of hers, has noted the effect of her Spanish costume; she rejoices within herself, even though she is beginning to tremble a wee bit, and wishes it were not yet time for her husband to kill the bull.

She again measures the distance between herself and the ground; it is seven feet—*quien sabe!*

She is trembling from her dainty head down to her tiny Spanish slippers all the time that "El Largo" is torturing the furious, pawing bull with his sharp banderillas.

She clasps her hands tightly together, as, finally tiring of the banderilla work—which, in fact, has been somewhat long drawn out, "on account of the matador 'El Chatto's' sudden illness and faintness"—the public of the sunny side begin to shout:

"El matador! Kill the bull! We want the matador! El matador!"

The gate swings open at last, and "El Largo" still teases the bull as "El Chatto" moves forward slowly, and bows first to the president and then to the public.

In spite of his magnificent silver and violet costume, the gold lace and real bullion trimming, with cape of gold brocade, he looks deathly ill—his eyes show great black rings that extend almost half-way down his face.

Every one remarks it, and a foreigner, who has looked keenly at the bull-fighter, says sharply:

"That fellow ought to go home: he's in no condition to fight!"

But "El Chatto" is game if he is ill—perhaps the presence of his wife inspires him with fresh courage, for he unsheathes his bright, keen sword, nods briefly to "El Largo," who gets out of the way, smiles once at Lolita, who is, beneath her mantilla, far whiter than he; then he makes a tantalising movement at the bull.

That animal—one of the huge, fiery Andalusians that are the very terror of Mexican bull-fighters—comes on with a roar of fury, head swinging low to the ground, and the angry foam flying. "El Chatto" dodges, and places himself nearer the wall to meet the bull's return rush.

On he comes again, with an angry bellow, and "El Chatto" shakes the sword playfully in the brute's face, as is the Spanish custom—six or seven fancy passes, and then the kill.

After all, no one can fight a bull as does the Spanish matador. At least, during "El Chatto's" splendid work of the next seven minutes that is what the people think. All of them are on their feet, shrieking, some breathless with delight! Silver dollars, and hats, and flowers rain down into the ring, but "El Chatto" has not time to bow his thanks; he is too busy avoiding the plunges of the Andalusian.

On her feet, as is everybody else, for that matter, Lolita is watching every motion, her heart beating in great leaps, and so excited and wrought up now that she has forgotten to feel afraid.

Bull and matador are just underneath her, and twice her husband has glanced at her significantly; she is watching with her heart in her eyes. One pass of the sword before the bull's eyes; one leap over his back; one pass of the sword backward over the shoulder; now then, a-h-h!

In the twinkling of an eye there goes up from the thousands of people a loud groan of horror, pity, and terror.

For in a second it happens that the matador, suddenly reeling, after a fancy pass at the bull, has cast one agonised look up at his wife, and fallen prone on the ground.

The bull does not see, for the impetus of his last charge has taken him several feet beyond the matador. At the latter's side, on the ground, is the bright sword, that now will not save him.

The man was ill, unable to fight.

But before the people have well seen that, however, there is a quick leap and a flash; a slight childish figure is in the ring, her mantilla is cast back, the pink rose has fallen into the dust; her tiny white hands have caught up the sword.

As the bull swings madly forward, she meets him. He is an enormous beast, and to be on a line even with his shoulder she has to rise on tiptoe. She does it. Her face is white and calm as the brute rushes at her lowering his head. She springs forward and upward; the sword sinks out of sight in the bleeding shoulder—no fancy passes for her—the bull topples over on his knees, the blood gushing out in torrents. He is disabled—dying!

As for the spectators, they have passed from horror-stricken silence and terror into hysterical shouts, screams, applause, and even tears. Every woman in the audience is weeping copiously. Every man is shrieking, and stamping, and applauding at the top of his voice (in his heart envying the matador) as the girl, who has in some mysterious way revived her husband, rises to her feet, and the two stand together for a moment, bowing.

Then comes the exciting part of it. Out come purses and coins and even jewels from the rich ladies present, and masses of flowers. Amid shouts of "Bravo!" down it all pours into the ring. As for the great banker, Franquillo—who is so excited that he can hardly move—down goes his footman with a message to "La Española!"

Not waiting to bow or to thank the people, so overcome is she with her tremendous success, Lolita flies from the ring, leaving "El Chatto" to bow, and place his hands over his heart and bow again. It is all she can do to tremblingly thank the bearer of a message from the banker, Franquillo, who has promised her a cheque for five hundred pounds.

So that Lolita's little plan worked well after all—so well that five days later she and her husband left for Spain, where, having added much more money to the banker's gift, they have now retired and are great people.

And "El Chatto" says always that he owes his success to his wife—which is not understood, very naturally, by the Spaniards of Spain.

J. H. Horley.

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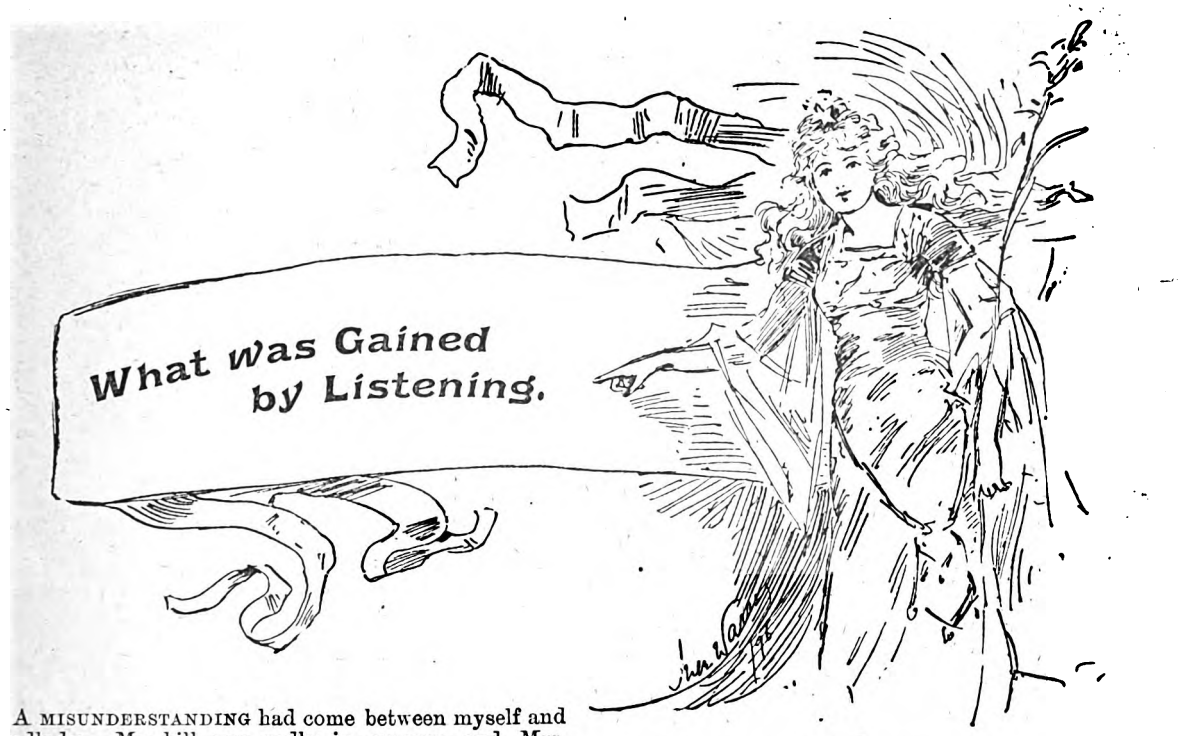

A MISUNDERSTANDING had come between myself and landlady. My bill was sadly in arrears, and Mrs. Ringwood, having passed from frowns to words and from words to importunity, had ended with a peremptory demand for payment.

Not being ready or having the ready money to comply with her requirement, I had nothing for it but to vacate my room and surrender my key, the former being wanted, I was given to understand, for Mr. MacIntyre, an old customer of Mrs. Ringwood, whom she was under a standing promise to accommodate, and whose arrival was hourly expected.

Mr. MacIntyre, I may here say, was Mrs. Ringwood's Mrs. Harris, a convenient myth, one who never came, but was always coming when a delinquent lodger was to be got rid of.

I had come to the town to be an author, but my efforts with the pen to scrape acquaintance with fame and fortune had not proved over successful.

Down to my last half-crown, with no immediate prospect of another, and wearied with a long search for a cheap lodging, where terms were not "invariably in advance," I sat me down in an out-of-the-way eating-house to face a tough beefsteak, and the still tougher question of what was best to be done.

A grave-looking gentleman sat opposite, dividing his attention between a bottle of wine and the evening paper.

"What a bungling set these detectives are!" said the gentleman, whose tone left it doubtful whether he spoke to himself or me.

"Why," he continued, addressing me this time, "here's that bank robbery nearly a week old, and with every clue to guide them; yet those who should have been hot on the scent within an hour, still stand gaping, with their fingers in their mouths. Things were managed differently in my day."

"You were a detective once?" I ventured to surmise.

He nodded.

"There is a reward—is it very large?" I asked.

"Five hundred pounds," he answered, "for the recovery of the property and capture of the thief."

"'Twould be a quick way to make money," said I, "if one knew how to go about it."

"Would you like to go halves in making the effort?" he queried, summing me up with a scrutinising glance.

"I fear I should be of little service," I returned. "I have had no experience in such matters, and am almost a stranger in the city."

"The very thing to render your aid invaluable! This crime is evidently not the work of a novice, and to your professional thief every detective's face is as familiar as a pal's. The mere sight of one puts the game to flight. Under skilful guidance you could work unsuspected. Now, if you'll put yourself in my hands for thirty-six hours, I believe we can bag the prize. What say you; is it a bargain?"

It was not exactly the road to fortune I had set out in, but it looked like a shorter cut at starting. At any rate, my circumstances were desperate, and I saw no better chance to mend them.

"I accept your offer," I said,

"Come along, then," said the stranger, rising; and having settled our scores we left the place together.

In the street he took my arm, and after a long walk through unfrequented by-streets my companion called a halt before a sombre-looking house, into which he admitted us with a latch-key. He led the way upstairs to a shabbily furnished apartment, in which a dim light was burning.

We sat down and my companion was beginning to unfold his plans when a knock was heard at the door.

He held up his finger in token of silence.

The knock was three times repeated in a peculiar manner, when my host got up and cautiously opened the door.

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A man stood outside with his hat pulled over his eyes.

"Excuse me a moment," said my companion, stepping out and closing the door.

I heard low and earnest voices in the passage, but only distinguish the words:

"Train for London at 7. Aberdeen train at 8.30."

Soon there was a sound of departing footsteps, and the door of the room opened and the proprietor entered.

"I've no time to explain further now," he said. "Meet me at the Central Station in time for the 7 o'clock train to London.

"But I have no money," I answered.

"I'll see to that," he replied.

There was little time to lose, and I rose to go.

"Would you mind carrying this bag?" said he. "I have a short stop to make by the way, besides having a larger one to look after."

I received from his hand the article in question, which was small and light.

As I was half an hour early, and it was rather chilly on the platform, I thought I would step just inside the telegraph office, while watching for my friend.

I had once been a telegraph clerk, and there was a fascination for me in the clicking of the instrument. Of course, I had learnt to read messages by the ear; I naturally fell to reading the clicks. It is said eavesdroppers rarely hear good of themselves, and the present case, though the listening was involuntary, proved no exception.

Judge of my amazement when I heard clicked off, in a language to me as plain as speech, a full description of my person and everything pertaining to me, down to the bag in my hand, in which latter it was said would be found a portion of the bonds stolen from the Amalgamated Bank. I did not stay to hear what followed, which was doubtless an order for my immediate arrest.

The truth at once flashed upon me. I had been made the dupe of the real culprit, who had sought to cover his own retreat by a ruse of which I was to be the victim.

I left the station and walked away rapidly, keeping to the side streets as much as possible, and had gone a considerable distance before venturing to stop a policeman and inquire the way to the police station or office where I could see the chief of the detective force.

Following the directions, I lost no time in presenting myself to Inspector White.

"I think I have discovered the man who is wanted for the Bank robbery," said I, as coolly as I could.

"It'll be money in your pocket and a feather in your cap if you have," said he, eyeing me curiously. "It's very queer, though," he added, looking from me to a paper before him.

I proceeded to give a complete narrative of what had occurred since my falling in with the pretended ex-detective, expressing the opinion that the latter would be found taking the 7 o'clock train for London.

"The telegram for your arrest," said the Inspector "was sent by myself on information coming from an unknown source, but which I did not feel at liberty to neglect. Your coming directly here speaks in your favour. But let us see what is in the bag."

It was speedily opened, and in it was found a package of the missing bonds, a description of which was in the possession of the authorities. In giving them up my late acquaintance had sacrificed but little, as there would have been small chance of disposing of them, while putting them in my possession was a cunning device to divert suspicion from himself to me.

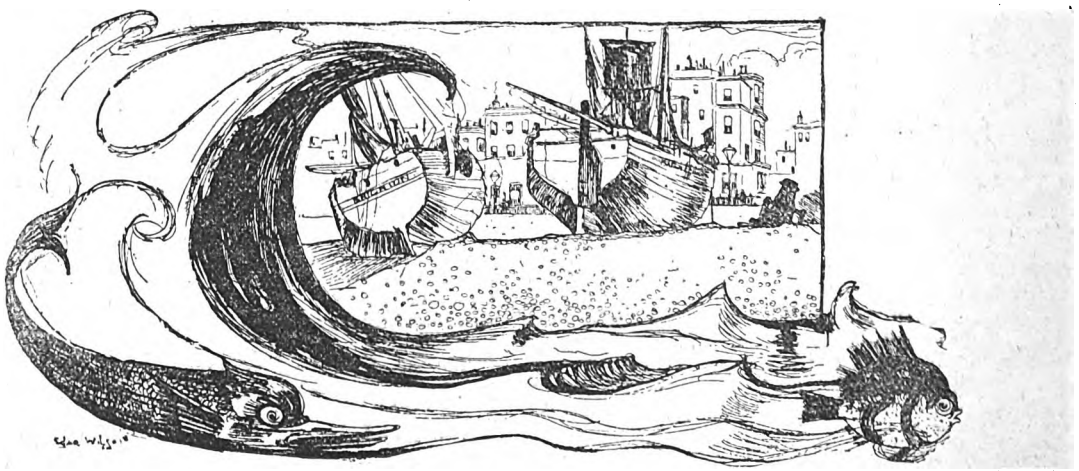
A cab was called, and in company with the Inspector and two subordinates I was taken to the Central Station, which we reached a few minutes before the departure of the train.

Snugly ensconced in a first class carriage, we discovered the object of our search, and in whom the officers recognised an old acquaintance. In his possession was found all the stolen money and securities except those he had placed in my hands.

I was formally detained till next morning when Mrs. Ringwood and two of her lodgers, the former being kind enough not to mention my little delinquency toward herself, gave so good an account of me, and proved so clearly that I was quietly at home at the time of the robbery, that I was discharged.

I got the £500, ceased to court the muses but married Nancy Walker, gave up poetry for journalism, and have found, if not fame, at least something like a fortune in it.

D. Hart.



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THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to **PRESERVE** both **HEALTH** and **FIGURE** without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

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Send **2/6** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Pinsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

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THE WONDERFUL **METAL POLISHER**

The Lustre Lasts!

Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.

Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates Free. Tobacconists Commencing. See Illustrated Guide (259 pages), free. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000. Tobacconists Outfitting Company, 186 Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years' reputation). Mgr., H. Myers.

NOSE

A RADICAL PERMANENT CURE.

Medically approved for Red Noses, **3/9**, post free, under cover. Pamphlet, "Red Noses, Cause and Prevent on," **1/-**; Machines for Ugly Noses, particulars for stamp.

LEES RAY,
SPECIALIST,
SOUTH CASTLE ST.,
LIVERPOOL.

MAKE PRIME BEER AT HOME

EXTRACT OF HERBS

6D. BOTTLE MAKES **8** GALLONS **BEER**

NON-INTOXICATING

The most palatable refreshing tonic drink producible.

IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 8d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

£10, £5, £3, £1 CASH PRIZES!

NO DIVISION. THE LOWEST PRIZE WILL BE NOT LESS THAN £1 GUARANTEED.

WOLFF & CO.'S NEW GENUINE COMPETITION.

In order to advertise the wonderful discovery of the JET BLACK and BRILLIANT RED "EGYPTIAN" MARKING INKS, we have decided to offer the above prizes to the Purchasers of a bottle of Wolff's Black or Red Marking Ink, post free, 1s. 6d.; Foreign Orders, 3s., payable in London.

WE WOULD SAY THAT OUR PREVIOUS COMPETITIONS HAVE GIVEN FULLEST SATISFACTION, AND WE HAVE MANY LETTERS FROM DELIGHTED PRIZE WINNERS.

Grasp this opportunity to win a prize. The Competition consists in filling in correctly the missing letters in the six following sentences relating to WOLFF'S EGYPTIAN MARKING INK.

1. W----S I----------E M-----G I-K
2. P--------Y F---D
3. A S----E P--------E
4. A-------S R----N U--------D
5. I----------Y U----------E
6. R-----S C-------E

Wolff's Imperishable Marking Ink is popularly famed. It has a simple procedure, and apparels marked with it remain undamaged. Wolff' Marking Ink is indubitably unalterable, and remains cohesive. It requires no heating or preparation, may be used with any ordinary pen, and articles marked with Wolff's "Egyptian" Marking Ink can be washed immediately, as this Ink requires no fixing.

THOUSANDS OF UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIALS.

The Cash Prizes will be awarded as follows:

TO EACH PURCHASER WHO FILLS IN CORRECTLY ALL THE WORDS, £10; 13 WORDS, £5; 11 WORDS, £3; 8 WORDS, £1. FOR LESS THAN 8 WORDS, NO PRIZE.

WHAT TO DO.—When you have found what you think are the correct words, write them out on a sheet of paper, numbering the sentences 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, as set out above, then send same, together with a Postal Order for 1s. 6d. (not stamps) for a bottle of our famous Marking Ink, saying whether you want Red or Black, and a stamped addressed envelope for results to

WOLFF & CO., 82 MILTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.

A little trouble will secure you a prize. Write distinctly and fully your name and address, put name of this paper at the top of your letter, and send in your order for the MARKING INK as soon as possible.

The Competition will close on October 30, 1893. The prizes will be awarded and results posted in the following week.

In connection with this exceptional and Genuine Competition, we would particularly point out that competitors will receive not only full value for their P.O.'s in the shape of a bottle of WOLFF'S IMPERISHABLE EGYPTIAN MARKING INK, but the bottle we supply for 1s. 6d., post free, contains three times the quantity usually sold by other makers for 1s., and is the largest bottle of MARKING INK in the market for the price. We are willing to spend a considerable sum of money in advertising our Egyptian Marking Inks, and we prefer doing it in this way to expending it on newspaper advertisements, &c. We ask all competitors who do not receive their Marking Ink in a week to communicate with us again, giving number of their Postal Order.

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

When I read the fourth of the Indian Mutiny stories, entitled "The Lights at the Delhi Gates," I was somewhat dissatisfied with the apparently abrupt finish, and wrote to the author asking him if he could give an explanation of the mystery. He replied saying that had the story been fiction, he could have created a mystery, and, after arousing the curiosity of the reader, explain it away; but these stories are truthful, and the facts stated in them are absolutely correct. The mystery of the Delhi Gate was a mystery to all those in Delhi at the time, and has remained a mystery ever since. If any reader can clear it up I shall be pleased to award a gold-plated pencil-case to the sender of what I consider to be the best attempt.

C. A.—On the whole, Ireland has the most equable climate of any country in Europe.

M. A. S. asks: "Why is it that, generally speaking, female criminals get off with lighter sentences than men?"———It may be that our inborn tenderness towards the weaker sex has something to do with it. But it may also be due to the knowledge that imprisonment has a more severe effect on women than on men, and that equality of sentence does not mean equality of punishment.

Rose.—No; roses never grow upon the tree which gives us the wood called rosewood. The name was given to that wood because, when cut, it gives off a perfume like that of roses.

T. H.—The obelisk originally represented a ray of the sun—the sun having been worshipped as the Supreme Spirit. They were erected in pairs, usually at the entrance to the temple; sometimes they supported a disc of the sun, and stood upon a pyramid, that combination presumably representing resurrection—life from the tomb. There were priests of the obelisk.

Jill would like to know if there is any daily paper run entirely by women.———The *Fronde*, of Paris, is the only paper in the world started, written, edited, set up, and printed by women. It is run on the same lines as any other daily, except that its object is to give prominence to women's share of work. A quarter of a million copies were sold of the first issue, and it has been a great success. The reporters are women.

Z. I.—The reading of romances is forbidden by the Koran; hence popular tales are not committed to writing, but are passed from one storyteller to another. No doubt this is the origin of many stories which, although differing greatly in substance, have a common idea as their basis.

F. T.—Small feet are not necessarily pretty feet. The pretty—that is the well-shaped—foot is usually short because the instep is well arched. Greek women had a longer foot than the ordinary man of the present time.

Weed.—Smoking is allowed in the prisons of Belgium only as a reward for good behaviour.

J. L.—It is estimated that only one person in fifteen has perfect eyesight. In many people the left eye is of a focus quite different from that of the right eye. The larger percentage of defectiveness prevails among fair-haired persons.

E. G.—In engineering enterprises there is one man killed to (approximately) every £50,000 spent on work.

Jovial asks: "What was the 'Friendly Club,' and is it still in existence?"———The Friendly Club was established in the City of London in 1695; it was afterwards called the Centenary Club, and appears to have died a natural death some few years ago. It was made famous by its eccentric rules. It had a "father," a "mother," and a high steward among its officers. If the members were honoured in any way, they had to pay a fine. In 1791, a member paid five shillings for enjoying the honour of kissing the hand of the Princess of Wales. As late as 1850 the Lord Mayor paid a like amount because he had the honour of receiving the Prince Consort at the Mansion House.

D. G.—Marseilles is the chief market for the sale and purchase of human hair.

Kah-tal.—It was noted as a curious fact by Sir Samuel Baker that a negro never tamed an elephant or a wild animal. "You might travel all over Africa," he said, "and never see a wild animal trained and petted by the native." It often struck him that the little children had no animal pets.

Art.—The longest artificial waterway in the world is the Grand Canal of China, extending from Pekin to Canton, a distance of about 1,000 miles.

Stone.—A ruby of the best quality, of more than three carats, is worth more than a diamond of the same size and weight.

Candle.—The smoke from the wick of a candle, after it has been blown out, is poisonous; it should never be allowed to vitiate the air of a room. Some men played a trick on a sleeping boy, placing the blown-out candle close to his nose; after half-an-hour the boy's breathing became hard, he had a fit of trembling and cramps, and he died in three days.

L.—Brazil furnishes about half the world's supply of coffee.

Piano.—Probably the earliest mention of the pianoforte in connection with public performances is that contained in a play-bill dated May 16th, 1767. The principle attraction is given thus: "Miss Buckler will sing a song from *Judith*, accompanied by a new instrument called 'the pianoforte.'"

K. T.—There is nothing extraordinary in the fact that the Eskimo has his kayak, or canoe, made to fit him; if the little craft were a misfit, he would feel just as uncomfortable as you would in a pair of tight boots or a hat several sizes too large.

W.—To drink wine without diluting it with water was regarded as a barbarism by both Greeks and Romans.

Moon.—In many Continental villages—chiefly among the Teutonic peoples—a child born at the time of the full moon is supposed to have the gift of oratory.

N.—The horse succumbs to cold more quickly than any other animal.

Sign.—Biblical signboards were common at one time, and even now there are no fewer than seven taverns in London bearing the sign of "Adam and Eve." One of these is intimately connected with Sheridan. "The Two Spies" refers to the two Hebrews who reconnoitred the Promised Land; this sign is still in use. "The Bible" was a sign used by booksellers, and up till a comparatively recent date there was a tavern with that sign near Temple Bar. "Samson's Castle" still stands in that part of the Metropolis known as the Borough. Absolom was used by wig-makers.

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Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
Double ,, ,, ,,	1	0	0
Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page ,, ,, ,, ...	5	0	0
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2 GALLONS FOR 4½D

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Try MASON'S

KILLCORN

The only painless corn cure.

IT HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO FAIL.

Thousands of Testimonials have been received from all grades of society.

READ THIS ONE. Painless Cure!

"Leeds, Mar. 17th.

"Dear Sir,—I had three most painful corns, which were PAINLESSLY REMOVED by using rather less than a bottle of KILLCORN. I now walk with the greatest ease.—Yours, O. B. CARR."

KILLCORN is sold by all Chemists, Stores, &c., in bottles at 1s. each, or sent direct on receipt of value in stamps by the Proprietor,

3, Guildford Street, Leeds.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM

(REALLY GENUINE.)

IN PATENT AIR-TIGHT TINS.

½lb., 9d.; ¾lb., 1s. 2d.; 1lb., 2s.

INCLUDING TIN AND POSTAGE.

Mrs. CONYERS,
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If not, please get a post-card, and send it to THE

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and you will get it by return, together with particulars of the most wonderful package of crockery the world has ever seen.

100 PIECES FOR £1 1s.

A Dinner Service of 50 pieces is included, which is guaranteed to be worth the guinea alone, and a China Tea Service of 28 pieces finished in gold, together with a lot of useful kitchen crockery.

THIS IS THE PATTERN OF THE DINNER SERVICE.

THOUSANDS SOLD ALL OVER THE WORLD.

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CHIMNEY CLEANER.

Cleans House Chimneys, Stove Pipes, Flues, etc., without the bother of Sweeps or brushes. A Cleaner placed upon a red-hot fire cleans the chimney in ten minutes without mess or dirt.

Beware of Imitations. Insist upon having HOULT'S CLEANERS. NON-EXPLOSIVE.—HOULT'S IMPROVED CLEANERS are the Strongest, Largest, and first in the field. Ask your Tradesman for them. If you cannot obtain them, we will send them post free for 8d.

PRICE

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THE "UNIQUE" MANUFACTURING CO., Rotherham.

Telegraphic Address: "Unique Co., Rotherham."

None Genuine Without

THE INVENTOR'S HEAD. (Regd).

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MALTATED

BANANA FOOD.

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 505. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 3RD, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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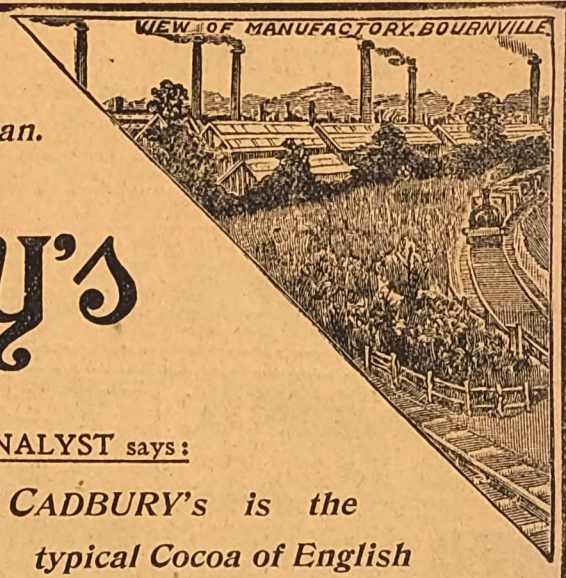

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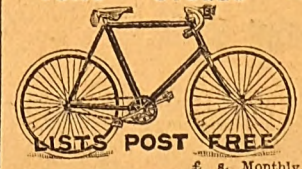

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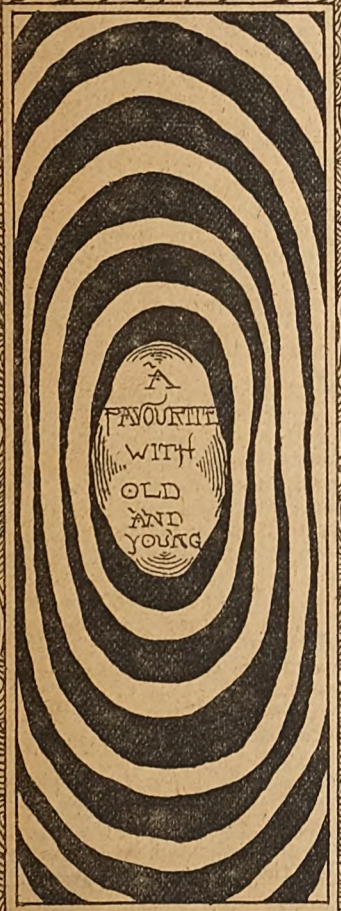
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 505. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending September 3rd, 1898.



UNTOLD TALES OF THE INDIAN MUTINY.

By H. HUNTER.

V.—AN UNREHEARSED TRAGEDY.

MEERUT—Friday evening, May the 8th, 1857, Lieutenant Harvey, of the 11th Regiment of Native Infantry, was standing in the veranda of his capacious bungalow reading a letter. His buggy was at the door.

He was descending the steps leading from the house when a messenger approaching had handed him a document.

It was inclosed in a long blue official-looking envelope, and the Lieutenant had taken it with all ill grace, a clouded brow, and a muttered expletive.

He was impatient to shake off the dust of the cantonment from his feet for a while—to forget in the dewy lips and laughing eyes, which would be sure to greet him in the pleasant bower whither he was bound, all the work and worry of the week; the troubles past, the fears present, the doubts of what might be to come.

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There had been a good deal of feeling exhibited in the station during the week.

The occasion for it had been the action of Carmichael Smyth, who commanded the 3rd Native Cavalry, in ordering a parade of his men. Many of the European officers had handled him without gloves at the mess tables.

Some had openly denounced him before mixed company at the Commissioner's.

"He was a hard man," said they; "harsh in manner, cold, unsympathetic, and uncharitable."

A few had not scrupled to abuse him in the Lines.

The General had gone about lamenting that the Colonel should have forced a crisis and shown how little confidence he had in his men.

There was no doubt that Smyth had made himself the most unpopular man in the station.

There was an uncomfortable feeling in the bungalows of the Europeans that there might possibly be an interruption to the social gaieties, the pleasures and amenities of the great military cantonment to the north of Delhi.

Lieutenant Harvey tore open the envelope in the expectation of finding some unwelcome duty interposing itself between him and his weekly visit to Guln reganj.

The general Court-martial on the eighty-five troopers of the 3rd Cavalry who had refused to take the new cartridge had found the men guilty, and a punishment parade of all arms had been ordered at daybreak on Saturday, May the 9th. This, of itself, promised to entail upon Lieutenant Harvey no inconsiderable hardship in the shape of a double journey with only a few hours between; since he would have to come in to attend the parade; and drive out to the village again in the evening, if he wished to spend Sunday in the scented garden, where lived, with her own people, Zinat, the native girl, whose youthful grace and maiden beauty had captured the Lieutenant's too easily surrendered heart.

"Another croak from the croakers," he ejaculated mentally as he extracted a neatly folded sheet of Regimental note from the depths of the big envelope. Without doubt the communication had something to do with the wretched piece of business for which Colonel Smyth was getting all the blame.

The personal inconvenience which he was likely to suffer from the "stupidity" of the cavalry colonel was the chief thing uppermost in Lieutenant Harvey's mind at the moment.

"No," said he, fairly surprised, when at last the letter was opened, and disclosed the familiar script of an officer in the 60th Rifles, who acted as stage manager to the Military Theatre, "from Taylor. Bah Jove!

'Final rehearsal,'" he read; "'full dress—6.30 a.m., Monday. Mrs. Craigie and Miss Chambers had been working like niggers to get the dresses finished for the women's parts. They have just sent me word that I may depend on having them to-morrow, before tiffin.

"'We shall have a swell house on Monday night, old man.

"'Commissioner Fraser, I hear, is bringing over a party from Delhi. Little Bobbie Brown, of the 20th, has been practising the dying fall till he's that sore he can hardly move. He does it beautifully now.

"'Mrs. Scandalmonger whispered that a certain handsome Lieutenant in the 11th was safe to be off to the dove cot early to-morrow, so I'm sending this to-day by Gholam Singh. You must make one of us at dinner to-morrow night, old chap. No refusals accepted. Miss C. will be your left hand supporter.

"'Your mare can take you out to the Peri under thirty minutes; and 'detained at quarters' is always an available excuse.

"'Herein fail not at your peril.

"'Beastly nuisance this P.P. at four in the morning, isn't it? Can't we work a 'gag' or two for the benefit of the disturber of the Pax Britannica?'"

"Humph!" muttered Harvey, who had a vivid recollection of the dismal wailings of Colonel Smyth after his return from the great fair at Hardwar, "Cassandra in boots and breeches, eh? Doing his best to bring his own prophecies to pass, of course. Yes, bah Jove! I have it—clean and classical. A line from the knights of Aristophanes; though I daresay the old man would appreciate it better if it was less Greek and more Gaelic."

Lieutenant Harvey chuckled, scribbled a few words on the flysheet of the letter, tore it off, folded it, wrote Captain Taylor's name in the corner, and gave it to the messenger who had been squatting on his hams at the bottom of the steps, impassive as a bronze statue; but silently studying every line and feature of the Lieutenant's face as he rapidly scanned the contents of the Captain's missive.

Gholam Singh placed the letter in his turban salaamed and departed. Lieutenant Harvey climbed into his buggy, whipped up his mare, and driving rapidly past the Sipáhi Cantonment huts, past the gardens and trees of the compounds, and along the great Mall which divided the station into native and European, finally gained the dusty road which led through hamlet and village down to the Calcutta Gate of the Imperial City, forty miles away.

Harvey however, had only a drive of five miles in front of him! and before he had gone two, the rapid motion and the grateful breeze had dispelled the blue devils which had oppressed him on starting and given him a new outlook all round.

He saw nothing in the picture to excite suspicion; heard nothing dropped that would excuse the cry of "wolf."

There was nothing to be seen or heard, but the usual sights and sounds of an Indian landscape—the watchman at the village gate, the crowd at the well, the naked mendicant by the road, the temple in the grove, the story-teller under the banyan, the juggler on the green.

Rural India was Happy Arcadia; and after this little breeze which Smyth had whistled up had blown over, the atmosphere might perhaps be all the better for the hurly-burly.

The Lieutenant flicked off the flies which were tor-

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menting the mare's neck and shoulders and let his thoughts wander.

He saw himself on the stage of the Garrison Theatre playing lover to Miss Chambers, the sister of his Adjutant.

The girl had only come out to India quite recently, having been brought over by her brother as companion to his newly married wife.

She was a tall, blonde beauty, with a marvellous complexion, and an abundance of animal spirits which made her the adored of the men and the envied of the women. The pitiless sun had not yet begun to lay its fiery finger on her youthful bloom and rosy freshness.

A good pianist, a better singer, she was much sought after by the hostesses of the great military station in Upper India, where her brother, Captain Chambers, was quartered. Fond of theatricals, Miss Chambers made a very clever actress; and having already achieved distinguished success in tragedy, had been cast for the principle female *rôle* in the piece that was down for performance on Monday night.

Lieutenant Harvey rather thought that he should enjoy the part assigned to him; for though the sweet English girl in her stage character had to inform him of her inability to return his affection, he would have opportunities such as many fellows he knew would gladly give a year's seniority to possess.

He fell a-musing, and found himself wondering how many times he had rehearsed the piece without once grasping the fact that the mimic tragedy of the stage would perhaps really require but a look, a gesture, a movement to convert it into the sordid tragedy of the street.

Thinking thus, his hand went to his pocket. When he drew it forth he had a curiously folded scrap of paper between his fingers. He looked at it for a moment with a queer dimming of the eye, passed the reins over to the native groom who was riding on the shaft, and slowly unfolded the small thin sheet he had abstracted from the pocket of his jacket.

"I firmly believe that girl would lay down her life for me," he murmured under his breath.

He gazed at the paper with eager attention for a long minute. It was covered in one corner with native characters, but the flowing Persian was as easily decipherable by Lieutenant Harvey as if it had been the most prosaic English.

"Lord of my life," it ran, "my heart panteth after thee, and refuseth to be satisfied until my eyes shall behold thee.

"Strange tidings have been brought hither. Come to me, my beloved, that I may satisfy myself with thy presence. Do not tarry but come swiftly, for one shall be taken and another shall be left.

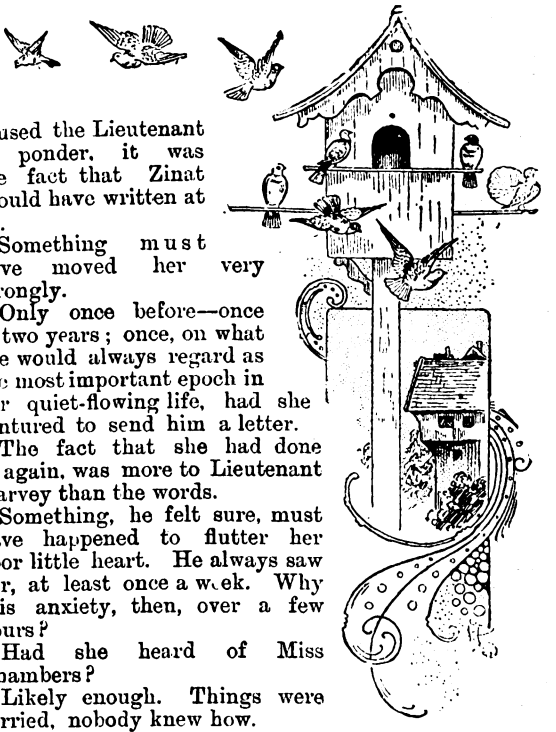
"Folly is at the finger ends of fools.

"They will dig up the house floors and level the cities.

"Come, thou desire of my heart; my soul will not fail to speak, and the daughters of music, the women who sit in the Meena Bazaar, shall be brought low."

The letter had been brought to Meerut by a dâk runner, who had delivered it before noon, saying that he was to take back an answer.

The exuberance and floridity of the language were the mere commonplaces of the Orient. They meant much or little, according to the speaker and the circumstances of the moment. It was not the phrasing which caused the Lieutenant to ponder, it was the fact that Zinat should have written at all.



Something must have moved her very strongly.

Only once before—once in two years; once, on what she would always regard as the most important epoch in her quiet-flowing life, had she ventured to send him a letter.

The fact that she had done it again, was more to Lieutenant Harvey than the words.

Something, he felt sure, must have happened to flutter her poor little heart. He always saw her, at least once a week. Why this anxiety, then, over a few hours?

Had she heard of Miss Chambers?

Likely enough. Things were carried, nobody knew how.

By the silent, salaaming, shadowy figures we call servants probably. Walls had eyes as well as ears in India. Night and day one was under observation by the natives. Dumb cattle with human passions.

The women in the harems were always well posted in all that went on outside. Yes, poor little Zinat was jealous of the *memsahib*; and now Taylor's letter would force him to inflict upon her still further pain.

He would certainly have to tell her that he couldn't possibly come over again till after gunfire on Sunday morning.

Two faces peered up at him out of the ghostly Indian twilight—one, a light golden brown with fathomless dark eyes; the other, a creamy white with a rose flush under the skin, and eyes of heavenly blue.

"Poor little girl," he said aloud. "I believe she'd die for me. But I wish—I wish to-night I'd never seen her."

He folded up the letter carefully, replaced it in his pocket, took the reins from the groom, struck the mare a quite unnecessary blow between the ears, and seven minutes later was at the end of his journey.

II.

MEERUT—Saturday night. Twenty-four hours after Lieutenant Harvey handed to Gholam Singh his reply to Captain Taylor's epistle.

The eighty-five troopers who had been stripped of their uniforms in the morning, and, fettered and shackled, had been marched out of the cantonment to the gaol, were safe under lock and key, in the great Civil Prison, two miles away.

In the European quarters dinner parties were in full swing.

Commissioner Greathed was dining with Colonel

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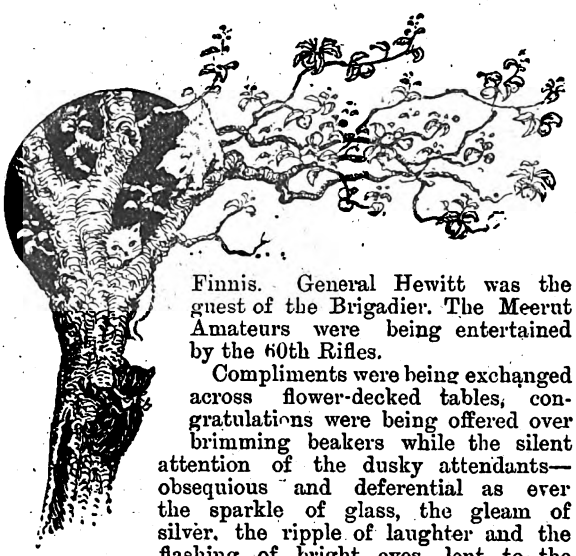

Finnis. General Hewitt was the guest of the Brigadier. The Meerut Amateurs were being entertained by the 60th Rifles.

Compliments were being exchanged across flower-decked tables, congratulations were being offered over brimming beakers while the silent attention of the dusky attendants—obsequious and deferential as ever the sparkle of glass, the gleam of silver, the ripple of laughter and the flashing of bright eyes, lent to the scene a sense of security as delusive as it was deadly.

Nothing had happened, nothing would happen.

To-day was the same as yesterday.

To-morrow would be a copy of to-day. It was "well over"; and now things, of course, would go on as usual.

The painful incidents of the punishment parade were already forgotten.

But across the deep nullah which cut the station in two, there was shame, sorrow, indignation, and resentment. The memory of that mournful morning had been burnt into the brain of every native in the Company's service by the stinging taunts and bitter gibes of the women in the bazaars.

On one side of the ditch, light and laughter; on the other, darkness and despair.

The native city was alive with rumour. The native lines were sullen with discontent. The emissaries of sedition had done their work well. They had secured the services of the women, and the men were meditating revenge.

"Bismillah!" growled Hoosein Duffadar, of the 3rd Cavalry, throwing himself on the bare ground, "that I should live to be chased and hooted by a slip of a thing out of the Chandni Chowk at Delhi."

He had gone into the city in the evening, but the story of the morning was all over the bazaars, and the cavalrymen had returned to brood and brawl in the Lines.

"Didst hear the greeting they gave us at the Gujar-Mahál?" asked a voice out of the darkness, and immediately began to hum a line from a vile gutter song.

"*Khamoosh!*" shouted the Jemadar of No. 4 troop, who was on his way to a muster of Cavalry non-coms.

"Be silent! Protection of God! Have you no respect for your beard then; or hasn't it grown yet?"

"Sure, the women, Jemadar," replied the man, "have not left a rag amongst the regiment. The moolahs have stirred up the bazaars, and they who look out of the windows make mock of us, while the eighty-five sit behind stone walls."

"See here," said a tall *sowar*, holding forth his hand in which lay two tiny circlets of shining metal, "Azee would not show me her face, but she sent me her anklets. 'Wear them,' she said, 'till you've proved your manhood by striking off the ornaments which the Feringhees have fastened on the ankles of your brethren.'"

"Inshalla! What say you, *sowars* of the 3rd? Are we who wear these," striking his sabre and clinking his spurs, "to be flouted in the bazaars and not have a word to fling back?"

"Nurfiz," put in the man whose singing had been cut short by the Jemadar, "and the fair ones who lodge in the Taumbi Bazaar, flung their *Burkas** over the men of Number Two troop, bidding them carry them back with them to hide in, when the Feringhees shall have got ready the two thousand bracelets which the smiths are busy making."

"*Alla Ke Qoodrut!*" exclaimed Hoosein savagely, starting up and stamping his spurred heel. "Coward, I am not; and I go no more to the bazaar till the eighty-five are brought back. The women are right. We are no men to let them stay in prison while the Feringhees are forging fetters for the rest."

"Hoosein has spoken," said a fresh voice. "To-morrow the Sahibs go to pray and sing in their temple. It will be a good time, Duffadar."

* * * * *

"It's all rot, you know, Jemmy. Moonshine and water, my dear fellow, moonshine and water. The old woman's been gadding about the bazaars, picking up the gossip of the gutter, and frightening the girl with her silly twaddle. The tales that woman has pitched are really past joking.

"The poor little thing's been just stuffed full of lies. Fancied I was to be set up as a mark for the men to shoot at.

"Sent for me on purpose to show me a hole in the wall—a secret hiding-place where she would conceal me from the *budmashis*.

"I gave old mother Fatmah the rough side of my tongue and a pretty big piece of my mind.

"There's nothing moving outside, old man. The niggers are as quiet as lambs and as scared as chickens.

"I didn't meet with a single experience, going out or coming in unless it be one to have seen the strange mollah who was turned out of the Lines and took refuge in the city.

"I saw him preaching to a small crowd on the outskirts this morning as I came in. You can never tell when these people will be asleep.

"The flock scattered, and the shepherd spat on the ground as I drove past. It's time those beggars were taken down a peg."

"Well, I'm glad we've got it over, anyhow. I was afraid there was going to be a row when I saw the chaps on parade. And I feel half sorry, you know, for those poor devils in 'chokee.' The blame isn't all theirs. Smyth's landed us in a fine mess."

The speakers were Lieutenant Harvey and Captain Taylor, who were enjoying a quiet smoke in the garden, while the band was taking a rest before tuning up for dance music.

"Would have spoilt Monday night's 'bill,' I guess, if we'd had any trouble this morning, Jemmy."

"Smashed up the whole show, Charlie, lock, stock and barrel. In that case, our little company would have had to play their part in an unrehearsed tragedy."

---

*A long thick veil which completely covers the figure.

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"H'm!—ain't this getting rather dismal, Captain? Suppose we join the ladies."

* * * * *

"Alla, illa, llah! There is no God but God, and there is no fighting against Fate The girl has gone," muttered old Fatmah, gazing helplessly round the empty room.

"In the night-time, wrapped in the veil of darkness she hath fled.

"The sahib will be killed and the money will stop, and Fatmah will have to go back to Delhi and find a new master—for the sahiblogues at Meerut will be all sent to Jehannum.

"Narfiz hath heard it from the mollah, who was sent by the Moulvie of Faizabad to preach the holy war.

"'The old times,' said she, 'are to come again, and the chief women are to have new bangles, bell bangles of silver, and rings, finger rings, and nose rings of gold.'

"But I am too old," crooned Fatmah, "too old, and Zinat has gone. Poor fool," she murmured softly. "God keep us all! The girl gave me no peace. I had to tell the little one that the men were going out to the gaol while the sahibs were at prayers, that the sahibs would be killed and their houses burnt. Why did she send me to the bazaar if I wasn't to tell?

"Then, she would have it, poor fool, there was the news that Gholam Singh brought about the tall *mem-sahib*.

"Bismillah! yonder's her writing-box. Plague take it! that she was ever taught to write.

"Mischief, mischief is all that can come of making women wiser than the Prophet permits."

She sank on the floor amid the soft folds of her draperies, her head aside, her chin resting in the hollow of her hand.

She was listening.

Through the lattice of the window came a glint of saffron coloured light which told that the dawn was breaking.

From the native city three miles away came a low, confused murmur, which as it rose and swelled, the woman leant her ear to catch.

The native population was astir.

"Alla hafiz! May God protect you, my Pearl of Pearls," murmured the listener, thinking of the "little one" who had insisted on hearing all the news, including the gossip which Gholam Singh carried from the European quarter. 'Nobody ever would die if it wasn't the will of God."

* * * * *

Zinat, divided between love and jealousy; assailed by doubt and urged by fear, had gone to the Native Lines intending to warn her English lover of coming danger. But the Lieutenant was dining in the European quarter at the other end of the cantonment.

It was the first time the girl had ever been in the Lines; but, having no one she could trust, and realising the magnitude of the danger from the reports of old Fatmah, whom she sent daily to the bazaars; she had written a few words, wrapped herself in a *burka*, and slipped out, intending to give Harvey the letter and return at once to the house.

Learning, however, that he was with the sahibs in the North Camp, she determined to follow him thither—perhaps she would see the tall fair *mem*, about whom Gholam Singh had talked with old Fatmah. It was a long way round, she hardly knew how to find her way in the dark. Old Fatmah's tales have made her very miserable. Her world seemed toppling about her ears. Everything had suddenly changed its aspect for her. She was afraid of every white face but one.

Jealousy gnawing at her heart, love animating her soul, desperation whispering in her ear, she set out for the British Lines.

"What was that? It came from behind the castor oil trees and has gone into that bamboo clump."

The voice was feminine and the tone betrayed alarm.

Miss Chambers had found the atmosphere within doors oppressive, and Lieutenant Harvey had proposed a stroll in the garden.

They were saunte ing idly along the winding paths under the peaceful light of the tropic stars. The band had just struck up the first bars of "God save the Queen."

"Didn't you see it?" she asked, laying her hand upon her companion's arm.

"I'm afraid my attention was wholly occupied elsewhere," he said, casting a look full of admiration upon the beautiful face whose pretty smile had suddenly given place to a look of gravity. "What was it like?"

"Oh! I don't know—something white. It came out of the castor oil trees. I believe now, I saw it some minutes ago—on the other path."

"The breeze stirring the leaves often gives one the idea of a turban amongst the castor oil trees. It's been noticed by lots of people."

"Oh! but I saw it before. Yes, I'm sure I saw it before; and it wasn't a turban. It was—somebody's been watching us," she said abruptly. "I have a distinct impression that somebody's been watching us, and it makes me—uncomfortable."

He laughed scepti ally. "Nothing to be alarmed at, my dear Miss Chambers. Some native gardener, probably. These people are about at all hours, you know; and flit from pillar to post like shee ed ghosts.

"One gets used to it after a while. Hark! Confound their politics. Frustrate their knavish tricks. That sounds all right, doesn't it? Shall I take you in now—Nellie?"

Zinat meanwhile, having fled from the castor oil trees on the approach of Harvey and his companion, was flying she knew not whither—anywhere, anywhere, so it be away from the fair white faces of the *mem-sahibs*.

"I hate them, oh! I *hate* them," she cried; and, flinging herself face downwards in the long grass, the undelivered letter clutched close against her breast, she sobbed bitterly—so bitterly that oblivious of aught save the pain at her heart, she never felt the pin prick inflicted by that cold slimy thing which, gliding swiftly across her feet disappeared amongst the yellow blades of the tiger grass.

III.

Monday—mid-day May the 11th, 1857, round the doors of the Garrison Theatre at Meerut a small knot of men had gathered. They were conversing in low tones and subdued whispers. The grave looks they exchanged and the unmistakable air of depression which hung over the group, told all too clearly of calamity and disaster. Something untoward had happened.

The doors of the theatre had been open since before six o'clock. Men had been continually passing in and out. Frequently they were bearing a burden which

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they carried in mournful silence and handled with reverent care.

By mid-day, the boards of the pretty house, which was to have witnessed a mimic tragedy that very evening, were occupied by a silent company, a company who had been called upon without notice to play their part in the opening scene of the Great Unrehearsed Tragedy on which the curtain went up on the morning of the previous day, Sunday, May 10th.

Over a dozen mangled and mutilated bodies lay upon the stage; amongst them that of Mrs. Chambers, wife of the adjutant of the 11th Sepoys.

At 6 p.m. on Sunday, Major Whish had driven into Brigadier Wilson's compound with the news that the native troops were in mutiny.

The cavalrymen had broken into the gaol, liberated the military prisoners, and brought them back to the lines. Their action had stopped there, but the infantry was in open revolt.

Alas! while Brigadier Wilson was receiving the report of Major Whish, Colonel Finnis of the 11th was falling from his horse riddled with the bullets of the 20th.

In that great struggling cantonment, broken up into blocks and sections, and covering an area five miles in circumference, it was difficult to know what was passing on the other side of the wide mall which lay between the European barracks and the native lines. The native city itself, lay still further to the south and from every lane and every alley in that crowded area men were then pouring.

Butchers, porters, watercarriers, cutlers, all scenting plunder, and each ready for slaughter.

The *budmashis* of the bazaars, finding the gaol open, had released the convicts, and 800 cut-throats went forward with the rest, to help in the fiendish work which the young May moon was soon to look down upon.

The mutineers after throwing off their allegiance and shooting whatever officers happened to come in their way, had started in hot haste for Delhi. Most of the burning, the butchering, and the plundering of that memorable Sunday night was the work of the Hindoo and Mohammedan mob from the bazaars.

The men at the door of the Theatre moved aside as another mournful little procession passed in. They looked in dumb surprise at the motionless white figure which the bearers were carrying.

"Yes," said the officer who accompanied them, "she's a native. They picked her up this morning between the 60th Mess-house and the Dragoon Barracks."

"What was she doing over there?" queried one.

"Coming to warn us for a certainty," replied the officer, "and got bitten by a cobra. "Anybody seen Harvey? I've a letter for him."

"You'll find him inside, Taylor," from several.

"He went in ten minutes ago with poor Chambers," volunteered the man who had asked the question about the girl. "Lucky for Miss Chambers that she was with Mrs. Cragie when the mob broke into the Captain's bungalow. He's taking it badly poor fellow."

Captain Taylor passed on, leaving the group still lingering at the door.

They put the native girl in a corner by herself; and, Captain Taylor, drawing Lieutenant Harvey aside whispered a few words in his ear.

Harvey stooped down, and peered under the veil which concealed the features of the silent one. When he rose his eyes were wet with tears.

The Captain handed him a letter. "It fell out of her bosom when we turned her over," he said, looking down sorrowfully at the dead girl.

"She died for me, Jemmy," murmured the Lieutenant, with a break in his voice, as he caught the full meaning of the queer Persian characters. "If I'd only had this on Saturday night. . . . My God," he broke out vehemently, gazing with passionate burning eyes upon the white robed figure at his feet, as the remembrance of something Miss Chambers had said in the Mess garden came back to him with terrible new distinctness.

"Jemmy!" his eyes wandered over the shrouded forms lying there so still and quiet in the dusky light of the silent stage. "I feel very like a murderer," he gasped.

His mouth was at the other man's ear, and he continued to speak for some minutes:

"You've nothing to blame yourself for in this matter, old man," said the Captain, when the Lieutenant had finished speaking. "It's a woman's way, whatever be the colour of her skin. The little one was jealous poor thing. If it hadn't been for that 'damned vermin' she'd have returned when the fit was over. But I've just heard that B—— had a wife from Delhi in the evening which ought to have put us on the *qui vive*, but it came at an awkward moment and he slipped it into his mess jacket—and, straightway forgot all about it."

"I'd shoot myself if I were he," exclaimed Harvey, with savage earnestness. "Let's get outside, Taylor, the air in here is stifling. I shall never enter a theatre again without thinking of the Great Unrehearsed Tragedy at Meerut."

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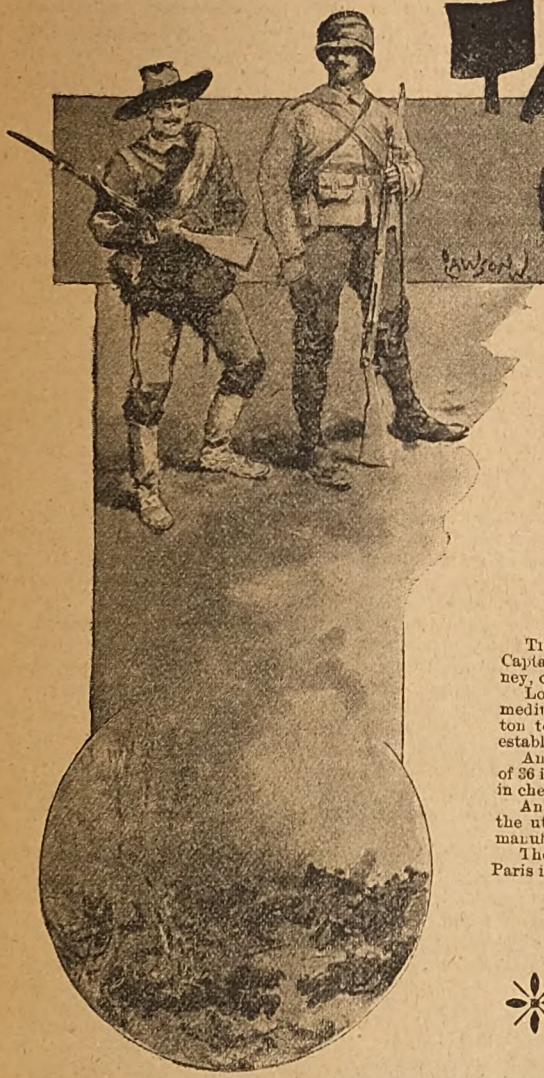
Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.



THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpedo boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of fermentation owing to the repulse of the Allied fleet.

CHAPTER IX.

IMPREGNABLE GIBRALTAR.

When Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour surveyed his fleet under the lee of the Rock, he felt that few British naval commanders had ever looked upon so goodly a company.

His flag was hoisted on board the *Ramillies*, and that of his second in command, Rear-Admiral Compton E. Domvile, on the *Trafalgar*. The other first-class battleships in the roads were the *Anson*, *Barfleur*, *Camperdown*, *Collingwood*, *Hood*, *Howe*, *Nile*, and *Rodney*. The torpedo-ram *Polyphemus*, the cruisers *Hawke*, *Arethusa*, *Cambrian*, *Fearless*, *Scout*, and *Sybille*, and the gunboats *Ardent*, *Trial*, *Hebe*, and *Skipjack*, were valuable additions to the British fighting force.

In the path of any vessels coming from Toulon, the *Cockatrice* and *Surprise*, fast dispatch vessels, kept watch and ward some sixty to seventy miles away.

Some French ships of war approached the Straits a few hours after the Mediterranean fleet had reached Gibraltar. They appeared vastly surprised to find such an array of heavy metal in their way. Without any effort to try conclusions with the British ships, they promptly executed a *volte-face*.

It was the general opinion on the Rock that these vessels constituted a small expedition, with some specific purpose in view, which was forestalled by the unexpected departure of the British fleet from Malta. As, in any case, the enemy could hardly expect the English to remain quietly anchored at Valleta, it was further argued that a very strong combined fleet must be massed near Toulon, and its advent might be speedily looked for.

Both of these surmises proved to be correct, and subsequent inquiry showed that the expeditionary force that had been frightened off was intended for operations in Canadian waters.

On Sunday afternoon the *Seahorse*—Commander Tully, having successfully run the gauntlet of the Bay—brought definite intelligence of the fight at Worthing. Great was the jubilation throughout the fleet, and greater still when the battleships *Australia*, *Alexandra*, *Colossus*, and *Benbow* arrived on Tuesday to reinforce the Mediterranean Squadron, conveying newspapers and letters detailing the effect of the

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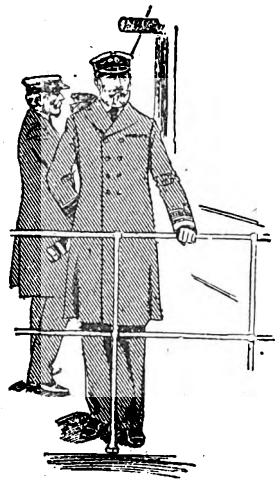
repulse and the national preparations for a gigantic war.

But if hesitation and doubt prevailed at Paris and Berlin, these fearsome qualities were absent from the hearts of the French and German admirals who commanded the combined squadrons at Toulon.

Having long foreseen the necessity of effectually disabling the strong force of Great Britain in the inland sea, they had assembled eighteen fine battleships wherewith to smother the ten English vessels of similar calibre which formed the fighting-line of the Mediterranean fleet.



Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour.

Owing to the threatened bankruptcy of Italy, that country had been compelled to sell nearly one-third of her navy to Germany at the commencement of the year, whilst wholesale expenditure on the part of the allied Powers had already given them a considerable preponderance in armour-clads and first-class cruisers over the naval forces of England.

No fewer than twenty-one of the latter type of useful warship and fourteen torpedo gunboats were with the heavier vessels.

Against such odds it would seem, theoretically, that the British fleet, even when strengthened by four additional battleships, had no chance, as it must not be forgotten that surprise on either side was out of the question—and surprise was the prime factor in the success of Lord Charles Beresford's attack at Worthing.

When, therefore, early on Wednesday morning, long before the sun had cast the shadow of the Rock over the Bay towards Algeciras, the *Surprise* and *Cockatrice* steamed in to announce that a fleet of the dimensions just described was treading fast upon their heels, there is little wonder that Sir Michael Seymour's hurried conference with Rear-Admiral Domvile and the captain of ships was grave and serious. The problem before them was perplexing enough.

The Admiral's whole thought was given towards the best plan for forcing the enemy under the guns of the Rock, which command, it must be explained, the Bay, and the tongue of land connecting the peninsula with Spain, and not the Straits themselves, which are some fourteen miles wide at that point.

"I propose, gentlemen," said the Admiral, "to form the fighting line of battleships in a crescent, concave towards the enemy. The *Ramillies* will take the right of the line, and the *Trafalgar* the left, and ships will take interval at twelve cables' length apart. As soon as the action commences ships will echelon four points to the starboard, still preserving the crescent formation, until the right of our fighting-line rests upon the Rock and the left tends towards Algeciras. When this position is reached and the attack pressed home we may safely leave all ships within the crescent to the care of our friends on shore, and give our immediate attention, if possible, to such of the enemy's cruisers as may be in the Straits. Our cruisers and gunboats will take station on the right and immediate rear of the *Ramillies*, to prevent torpedo attacks from that quarter.

About the same time Vice-Admiral von Grüdenau, to whom, by virtue of seniority, the command of the combined squadron had been assigned, was consulting with Contre-Amiral des Vismes de Monthier as to his plan of attack.

"It is above all things important," he insisted, "that the cruisers should get to sea and reach Brest intact, if this absurd rumour about a contemplated invasion of France by England be correct. I, therefore, my comrade, ask you to command the assault upon the battleships, and I would recommend that you should endeavour to draw them into the Bay of Algeciras. When the fight is well advanced I will dash past with the cruisers through the open channel, but I would pray you to keep from beneath the guns of that infernal fortress. In the open bay you should have little difficulty in dealing with the Lord Seymour. After destroying his fleet you can leisurely follow me, leaving Gibraltar to itself, and sending your disabled ships—for the English will assuredly fight hard—back to Toulon for repairs."

The French officer, as fine a sailor as ever stepped on a quarter-deck, cordially assented, and, as it transpired, "Lord Seymour" would also have agreed to the Frenchman's part of the programme had he been present.

The shadow of the Rock fell across the path of the British ships as they steamed out, in magnificent array, to take up position in the Straits. It was a fine summer's morning. The coasts of Africa and Spain, with their green slopes merging into the brown hues of rocky headlands—capped by the deep blue of distant mountains—were clearly visible in the pellucid atmosphere, and a slight haze over the ultramarine horizon of the Mediterranean gave promise of a burning hot day when the sun rose high in the heavens.

Above all, thrusting its majestic pinnacles into the sky, towered the Rock of Gibraltar, grim, menacing, grandly typical of British power and dignity, whilst a Royal salute of twenty-one guns thundered a message of sympathy and fortitude to the passing flotilla.

As the last cannon pealed forth its solemn note over the bay, the band on the admiral's ship struck up "Rule Britannia," and the poetic midshipman in the foretop of the *Collingwood* was so overcome with the varied sensations of the moment that he turned for communion with a kindred spirit to a Scotch middy named Malcolm Macdonald.

"How do you feel, Scottie?" he inquired.

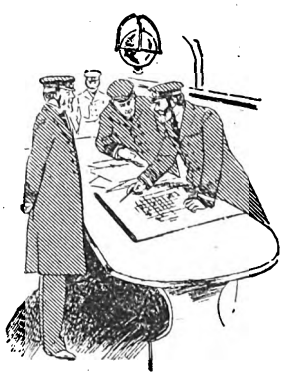
"I feel as if I wanted my breakfast," was the reply.

"Oh, I don't mean that," said the other with infinite scorn. "Doesn't your soul throb with the influences of the scene?"

"I'm minded to leave Froggy to think about his soul," said Macdonald. "I can smell the ham and eggs from here."

And even the poetic youth agreed, with a hungry look towards the deck, that it was time the relief came.

At nine o'clock the enemy was sighted, and des Vismes de Monthier formed his eighteen ships into a wedge-shaped array when he saw the disposition of the British fleet. At 9.30 the first shot was fired by the *Ramillies*, and the action was general a few minutes later.



"I propose, gentlemen."

Admiral Seymour was surprised at the ease with which the enemy allowed himself to be driven into the Bay of Algeciras. Under other circumstances the fact might have aroused his suspicions, more particularly because he had seen—from his favourable position on the outer horn of the crescent—the mass of cruisers and gunboats some miles in the rear of the attacking squadron. But outnumbered as he was, with a superior weight of metal against him, and a very much larger number of men on board individual ships than he possessed, it was utterly impossible to pay attention

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to any other concern than the matter in hand, which was pressing enough in all conscience.

The French Commander had a slice of luck at the outset.

His ships being in closer formation than the British vessels he was able to concentrate his fire from the apex of the triangle upon the centre of the British line. The *Camperdown* and *Alexandra* were smashed into absolute wrecks in a few minutes, and the former was only able to ram and sink the *Admiral Baudin* efore she herself commenced to fill and settle down—barely giving the remnant of her crew time to jump into their boats and pull for their lives out of the maelstrom she created as she went to the bottom.

"How do you feel, Scottie?"

By this time the two horns of the crescent had closed well round the allied fleet, and the terrific fire of the British ships, aided by the tremendous current that swirls round the southern face of the Rock into the bay, was steadily driving the enemy into the position desired by Sir Michael Seymour.

At the base of the Rock, in front of the little Mall where the rank and fashion of Gibraltar assemble at eventide to listen to the strains of a military band, a small group of anxious gunners stood in the bastion of the 110-ton gun. This brown monster was lightly poised on its powerful hydraulic carriage a few feet above sea level. For the first time in its history it was about to finally determine the vexed question of its value in marine warfare.

Only once in its existence—on the occasion of its gunnery trials, after leaving the foundry—had a full charge of powder been used in propelling its enormous shell, weighing nearly 1,000lb., and capable of smashing its way at a distance of some miles through the body of the most heavily armoured vessel afloat. The great damage done to the rifling of the gun by that discharge led even its most sanguine supporters to allot it a life of but thirty rounds, and the opponents of gigantic ordnance predicted complete failure for the weapon when used in active warfare.

For purposes of annual target practice only a half, or even smaller charge of powder was used, and the lapse of years under these less trying conditions had not improved the rifling.

But Major Humphreys, R.A.—a tall, stern-looking soldier, with the reputation of a scientist even in the scientific arm—who was in charge of the gun that day, believed in it fully and fearlessly, and his cold, impassive face relaxed into a lover-like interest as he cast an approving glance over the superb contour of the placid giant which was so soon to bear testimony to its worth.

The opposing squadrons drew momentarily nearer. In the heat and fury of the combat, the French Admiral did not note the skilful manner in which he was being driven into the eastern portion of the bay.

Within the bastion the knot of men drew back in response to a quiet command from the Major. The latter, paying no heed to the actualities of the conflict from which the others could hardly tear their eyes, calmly scrutinised a small mirror which lay in the bastion, and formed the object glass of a species of camera obscura on which the Bay of Algeciras was outlined in quaintly diminutive but wonderfully distinct manner.

Another low-toned order, and the great gun swung round on its pivot to a determined point on the horizon. A slight depression of the muzzle brought it to bear upon a definite spot in the waste of waters—every superficial yard of which has long been triangulated within that bastion.

Then those who were near enough peered with the Major into the depths of the mirror, and saw the stern of a German battleship slowly cross a meridional line shown in the picture.

Major Humphreys placed the forefinger of his right hand—without the slightest apparent tremor in his frame, though every other man in the battery was shaking with excitement—upon a small white electric button at the side of the mirror. When he funnel of the warship intersected the vertical line he pressed the button home.

In that instant an appalling crash rent the air. Several heavy stones were dislodged by mere shock from their firm beds in the casement. Large masses of turf and grass grown earth fell into the sea from the top of the bastion, and a great cloud of dust and smoke momentarily obscured the view.

When this had cleared away, the stern of the *Kaiserhof* was seen to rise high in the air, with twin screws spinning madly round as she dived through the swirl of waters caused by the explosion of her boilers, and disappeared from sight.

A loud cheer went up from the other officers and men in the small inclosure, but the Major only took his handkerchief from his breast and carefully dusted the face of the mirror, upon which some specks of dirt had fallen.

The colossal cannon listlessly dropped back into the bastion by the force of the recoil. It was sponged out, reloaded, and rapidly hoisted into position.

Again a ship, the *Sadowa*, drifted across the fatal line, and again the enormous steel-faced projectile shrieked through the air. Striking this time a little above the water-line, it smashed right through a 13-inch armour-plate, through protective coal-bunkers, through two immense boilers, and passed out of the other side of the ship, to fall into the sea some hundreds of yards farther on.

The *Sadowa* did not sink, but drifted helplessly away to the Spanish coast, and remained there, her officers and crew reaching France by train some days later.

Major Humphreys looked slightly annoyed, and he sharply told the subaltern in charge of the regulating vernier to be more careful with his distance calculations.

The subaltern *was* more careful, and the next French ship in the enemy's line went down with commendable exactitude.

These incidents did not escape the notice of the belligerents in the bay. During a brief interval the firing actually slackened, so astounded were both parties with the effect of this new element in the fight.

Admiral des Vismes de Monthier gave imperative orders for a dash seawards, and even as the signal-flags fluttered in the breeze, and a German battleship succumbed to one of those demoniacal blows from 1,000lbs. of metal travelling at almost meteoric speed.

A German battleship succumbs.

Sir Michael Culme-Seymour saw the signal and guessed its import. He had lost two of his ships, the *Camperdown* and the *Anson*, and the *Alexandra*, *Howe* and *Rodney* were disabled. But six of the hostile fleet, not including the four accounted for by the 110-ton gun, had gone beneath

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the waves with all hands, and the British ships plunged into the contest with renewed vigour, as the battle was now won to all intents and purposes.

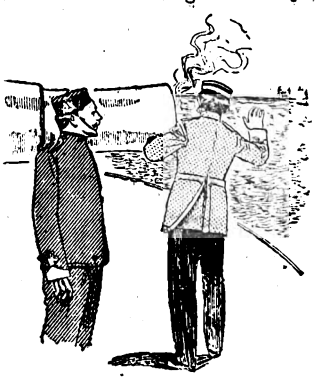
The French commander was as brave as a lion. When he found that he could not break through the encompassing ring he anchored his ship, so as not to be driven within range of that irresistible destroyer on the shore, and resolved to fight on to the bitter end.

A fifth of the allies' ships was rendered useless by a thunderbolt from the battery at the base of the Rock. But the effect of the shot called forth another sharp reprimand from the Major, and the gunner to whom he spoke replied respectfully, but firmly, that he had made no mistake in the range calculations of that he was quite sure.

The Major himself adjusted the vernier before the sixth discharge, and a great hole was knocked in the side of the *Sans Pareil*, but she did not sink.

The self-control which Major Humphreys had so far exhibited now deserted him. His hand actually shook as he pressed the electric communication for the seventh time, intending to finish the business of the *Sans Pareil*. But to the trained ears of the artillerymen in the bastion the explosion from the gun had a different sound, and the shell was seen to fall into the sea a thousand yards short of its object.

As the monster dropped back on its carriage the Major sprang hastily forward to the muzzle and gave a glance into the interior. Then he flung his arm round the grimy mouth of the gun and burst into tears.



Gave a glance into the interior.

The rifling had been ripped to pieces by the last shot, and the 110-ton gun was now an inert mass of iron and steel. The deep grooves were mangled and serrated with metal from the shells. The inside of the monster had been literally torn out of it, and the "Gibraltar Baby," as it was familiarly known in the Service, was completely disabled by its own superb power.

But it had nobly done its duty. Its cost to England was some £30,000, but its cost to France and Germany was more than three millions sterling, besides converting a possible victory into a certain defeat for the Allies.

The guns in the galleries of the Rock now joined in the fray, and there are 700 of them, big and little, new and old.

Common humanity impelled Admiral de Monthier to strike his colours, and he took such scant comfort as he could find in the fact that his colleague had slipped through the Straits, whilst the British fleet was unable to stop or pursue him.

The *Polyphemus*, *Hawke*, *Fearless*, and *Hebe* started off after the enemy's second fleet, it is true, but they were promptly recalled by Sir Michael Seymour, who ordered the *Seahorse* and *Cockatrice* to follow up the enemy, note his direction, and report at Portsmouth at the earliest possible moment. He also forwarded the *Surprise* with a brief dispatch announcing the result of the engagement.

When des Vismes de Monthier met the British Commander-in-Chief the latter promptly offered him his liberty on parole through the war, and the gallant Frenchman, after some demur, fell in with this magnanimous proposal.

"But," he said, speaking in broken English, "I would one leetle ting to ask."

"What is that?" said the Admiral.

"I would see ze *grand canon*," he replied; and he was taken to the bastion by the British Commander-in-Chief.

CHAPTER X.

A Journalistic Ally.

Unknown to the British Government, a new and terrible danger threatened one of the greatest of her colonies.

It was Russia who dealt the blow. This enormous power, which had so cleverly kept in the background whilst her allies were suffering the torments of defeat, had moved in the secret channels of diplomacy. Her powerful arm was being stretched forth in the East in an unseen and deadly manner.

Since the victory of Japan, Russia had seized her opportunity, and with fine cunning and dissimulation had advanced a step in her sleepless designs against our Indian Empire. A private treaty gave her a foothold upon the coast of China.

By dint of promises, which were never intended to be fulfilled, and partly by threats which were far more real, she had succeeded in obtaining for herself the important harbour of Port Arthur, and a railway which was being constructed across the vast country of China gave her ready admission to the Pacific Ocean. It was this private arrangement which put into her hands a formidable weapon against England

She had broken her faith, and had entered into perfidious alliance with Japan.

Adept in wild tricks of diplomacy, the Russian Government had induced Japan to hire it out to her entire navy. The bribe was no less than a solemn promise to hand over to the strong and ambitious young country, Port Arthur, with all its fortifications. Japan, still nursing her military glory and her ancient feud with her neighbour, was not slow to swallow the bait.

And thus Russia had disarmed the two nations, one by the treaty that she had already foully broken, and the other by means of a promise which she would only laugh at when she had gained her ends.

And thus, when England was driving an insolent foe from her waters, and, cut off from communication with her distant colonies, was helpless to serve them, the powerful navy of Japan, tried in war and efficient as if manned by Europeans, and led by French and German officers, was stealing through the waters to fall upon Australia, unprepared and undefended save by a few vessels which held watch and ward around her coasts. The world was now to see how far the enterprise and courage of a British Colony could prove itself when left entirely to its own resources. And a splendid example of resolution and fearless patriotism it was destined to witness.

For now a well-organised and simultaneous attack was being made upon the rich possessions of Great Britain throughout the world. And it was at just such a time that Englishmen and their enemies alike were able to comprehend, what peace had often been allowed in part to blur, the extent and wealth of a noble dominion, more fruitful and more widely strewn than even the Roman Empire itself.

There was Canada, stretching from ocean to ocean, and pressing through immemorial snows towards the Pole, loyalest of the loyal, cherishing her kinship with the mother-land as her dearest inheritance, oft suffering for her patriotic zeal, yet untempted by those who would seduce her from her allegiance or bribe her into independence.

Toward the south, too, was the Cape of Good Hope, with all the rich territory which lay to the north, the golden garden of Africa, scarcely yet tamed from barbarism, yet smiling in prosperity the home of a new and sturdy English race which could not be dazzled by its riches into forgetfulness of the country from which it sprang.

Vaster still was Australia with its neighbouring islands of New Zealand, the noblest pasture lands of earth, stirring with the restless activities of lusty enterprise, an empire in itself.

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These splendid colonies, long the envy of ambitious nations who coveted their wealth and rich possibilities, were scarcely protected against the danger that so suddenly threatened them. A few ships lay in their waters, but on land there were only the volunteer and militia battalions, who had now a first and unexampled opportunity to display their valour.

India alone was secure. That great country had for centuries attracted to herself the most daring enterprise and energy of England. The countless multitude of natives had been long won over to loyalty by wise government and by obvious motives of interest. But, threatened on all sides save the sea by enemies on its borders, India was occupied by what may justly be called the finest army in the world. The opportunities for active service it afforded showed the road to distinction, and most English officers who were fired by ambition or military ardour sought to find employment there. And thus by process of natural selection, all that was most brilliant and most resolute in the British military genius characterised the splendid army of India. Always ready for action, often called to the exercise of arms, experienced in every manner of warfare, it was enough to daunt the most courageous foe.

And daunt them it did. For Russia knew and feared the discipline and valour of the British troops in India. It was for this reason that she had treacherously concealed her participation in the great war. She hoped that the stress of circumstances might render necessary the withdrawal of the troops homeward for the purposes of defence. Thus shorn of her strength, India, she fondly believed, would become a ready victim to her schemes.

England, indeed, had already to contend with the most exasperating difficulties so far as her Colonial empire was concerned.

Whilst she knew that preconcerted attacks must be then in operation against every part of her empire, she had no means of communicating with them and giving instructions for the general scheme of defence. They were everyone isolated, and the War Office was distracted at the formidable obstacles that lay in its path. There seemed nothing to do but rely on native resource. And yet, even then there could not but be such terrible dissipation of strength through lack of a general organised plan.

It was at this juncture of affairs that the British Government found, in her hour of need, a new and strange ally, whose aid was more valuable, inasmuch as it was given unconsciously.

On Friday morning Lord Salisbury was in consultation with Lord Lansdowne and the Commander-in-Chief at the Foreign Office when a well-dressed, somewhat nonchalant young man came along Whitehall, walking at a brisk pace.

His keen eyes, his face, thin and a trifle sallow, his quick and restless manner, all betokened the American. Mr. Henry P. Chauncey had indeed crossed the water only six months back to undertake the responsible duties of London correspondent to the New York World. His piquant and brilliant articles had already made him well known in journalistic circles, and the power of his pen and of the journal in which he exercised it had made him a welcome addition to London Society.

He turned as he got to the Foreign Office, and sprang lightly up the steps. Advancing to the inquiry room he stirred up the clerks considerably by what appeared to them to be the most audacious request in the history of English politics.

"I want to see Lord Salisbury," he said coolly.

The clerk he addressed looked at him in amazement. He almost expected him to faint at such an announcement.

"Lord Salisbury!" he stammered. "What are you thinking of? You must be mad."

"I reckon not," replied the American. "Take him this card. I represent the World."

"The World! exclaimed the clerk. "I don't care if you represent the Universe! Do you think Lord Salisbury is going to admit reporters to his conferences?"

"Look here, young man," insisted Mr. Chauncey, "I have no time for a general debate on hypothetical questions. I don't think you know the methods of American journalism in this sleepy institution. You're a clerk here, are you not?"

"Yes."

"Then kindly do what I ask you. *I'll* take the consequences."

"But Lord Salisbury is engaged on urgent war business."

"He is?" exclaimed the American gleefully. "Why, that's exactly what I want to see him about. Just you skip in and tell him a representative of the New York World requests an audience, and that he'll not keep him five minutes."

Lord Salisbury was by this time alone. The War Minister and the Commander-in-Chief had just left him for Pall Mall.

He was pondering over an awkward problem which had puzzled all three, when Mr. Chauncey's visit was announced. He turned the card over automatically in his hand for a moment, and then suddenly his eye lighted up.

"Bring Mr. Chauncey here at once!" he ordered. The clerk, amazed, stared at him blankly a moment, then turned quickly on his heels, and, subdued and deferential, though seemingly overwhelmed, he ushered the journalist into the Prime Minister's private room.

The great statesman met him with grave courtesy.

"Sit down, Mr. Chauncey," he said. "Such an interview as this is extraordinary, and, I should think, unparalleled."

Mr. Chauncey bowed.

"The New York World is honoured," he said, and his alert mind conjured up the most startling "exclusive" that America had ever known.

"I do not know," continued his lordship "whether you are aware what the precise position of yourself and your colleagues is in this country at the present moment."

"My lord," replied the journalist with quiet dignity, "I am quite aware of it. If you choose to regard our presence here as likely to militate against the safety of England you would be justified in requesting us to leave."

"That is so," replied the Premier. "But you need fear nothing. I believe in candour to the Press. It is too mighty a power for us to affect to neglect or despise it. What I propose is this—and I ask it as a favour. You shall call each day at the Foreign Office, where certain *bona-fide* and important news shall be given you. Call later on, sir, and an official shall give you such news as I can afford to make known. I shall trust largely to your discretion. A journalist of your standing and experience needs no word of caution."

Mr. Chauncey was profuse in his thanks, and was almost inclined to pity the Herald. Lord Salisbury also had reason to be satisfied with result of interview.

Next day war intelligence from American papers was flashed over the entire globe, save to South and East Africa, which were alone unconnected. And with it was dispatched the following simple paragraph:

"The Minister for War has sent to every Colonial governor where possible a cable containing the single word 'Britannia.' At the Admiralty word is hourly expected from Canada announcing that the fleet stationed there has sailed for England."

This item of news was read in all English colonies and dependencies, and the cabalistic word, making the message obviously authentic, was read aright by British representatives, who grasped at once the stratagem that had been used. And thus, in a moment the British dominions were prepared for the shock of war and knew the line of defence.

It was the first time in the history of nations that a Prime Minister had recognised the value of journalism as a force in war, and had used its stupendous organisation to save the fortunes of an Empire!

(To be continued.)

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Asa Fleetwood's Story.

"WHAT was the queerest thing I ever seed?"

We five were lounging in the little cabin after a long day's tramp over the Canadian hills; the dogs lay sprawled on the rough boards, with weary limbs toasting before the fire; and the smoke from our pipes was poisoning the sweet September air with every degree of smoulder ng long cut, fine cut, and mixture.

The guns had been cleaned and polished and put away; the cartridges were oaded for the morrow; and we four de'egates from civilisation had been whiling away the last drowsy hour l efore rolling up in our blankets by the rec'tal of adventures real or imagined—such tales as hunters love to tell and oth r hunters love to listen to. Then the doctor, with a sly wink at the rest that signified something of interest, had called upon our guide, old grizzled Asa Fleetwood, for his contribution to the marvellous.

"I dunno if I kin give you anything that'll strike you, gentlemen, as worth the hearing on. I've seed some strange things out yere in this lonesomeness—yes, and beed in 'em too; but I can't tell you of no sich things as you've been telling on—no deers killed with popguns"—Asa s disrespectful name for our silver-trimmed revolvers—"nor no wild hosses ketched by salting of their tails"—and the old fellow grinned at his own joke—"but I kin tell you jest a plain, every-day story of something I seed onct, that I'll never forget—not to my last minute on this earth."

He paused, with a "by your leave," to fill his corn-cob from the nearest box and tapping the "bright Virginia" into the bowl, looked round at the faces silhouetted against the fire, pulled a moment at the pipe to get it well alight, settled himself back into a more comfortable position, and began his story:

"About the time I first located in these parts, when deer and b'ar, and wolves and game was p enty, and every thing a feller needs could be had for the taking on it, along over the trail one day, pack on back and a whole gun-shop of wepins stuck on all over him, kinder singing so tly to hisself as he walks, up comes a littl chap what says to me: 'Howdy, stranger?' allows as how his name was Marlow—Jim Marlow—claps hisself down by my fire like as if he was coming to a party, and jest makes hisself to home.

"He weren't much to look at; jest an ornary, homely little chap, but clear grit and a heart o' gold, as I found out arterwards. Well I won't bother you with telling how it came about, but anyway, we become pardners, Jim Marlow and me, an worked our traps in cahoots, and took turns at the cooking and dish-washing. Oh, you needn't laugh, we washed 'em all right when we wasn't in too much on a hurry.

"Bimeby—maybe two weeks, maybe more—he lets on as how he has another pard in the East, a-following him on the trail; and if I ain't convenient—which I wasn't noways—he'd be glad to have him kinder join in and be one of us. And I allowed the woods was big enough for three, and anybody as Jim had tied to would go all right with Asa Fleetwood.

"And sure enough, afore the month was out, along he comes jest of a nightfall, a leading of one hoss and a-riding of another: and when he sees our camp smoke, out he lets a great 'halloo' that sets the woods a-ringing, and when Jim hears that, up he jumps and tears away down the hill like mad; and this other he off his hoss and runs to Jim; and sich a shaking of hands and clapping each other on the back I never did see in all my days!

"Well, presently along they come up the hill, and Jim allows as how I was Asa, and this other, he was Rube; and we onpacks his hoss and stows his kit comfortable-like, and inside of two days we might ha' been three brothers, Reuben Weathersbee, Jim Marlow and me, so snug and smooth everything was a-running.

"And one day, along in the fall, and the leaves turning brown, and some on 'em red on the trees, and the squirrels a-lining up their winter nests with acorns and a-chirp-chirping all the day long, and the chick-partridges a-skurrying arter the old birds pretty nigh under your very feet—which I s'pose made him think of his own little chicks—Rube says: 'Boys, this yere thing is gelorious, and I don't want nothing better than for to spend my days right out yere along o' you and in this yere clearing.'

"And we was agreeable, sure enough, and he goes on to say as how he'd a mind to build hisself a little home and slick everything up fine, and when he got her done, why he'd send away to the States for his wife and little ones. Well, sirs, that thing gave me a kind of turn, for let alone the building of a house out thar in the woods, and a rough feller like me a-sleeping anywhere but out o' doors like I'd been used to, I weren't much on a hand for women folks noways.

"But when I looks at Reuben, and sees his face all

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lit up and the tears a-shining in his eyes, I jest gives in right thar, and lets on as how this yere thing was downright mostly needful for to perfectify our little camp.

"And every spare minute arter that we was a-working on the litt e house and a-widening out the clearing. And sich a chopping down of trees, and sich a hauling of 'em yere and a histing of 'em thar, you never hearn tell on. And bimeby she beg ns to look like a house; and Jim Marlow and Rube and me was a-riding over to the settlement, twenty mile away, and a-swopping pelts and sich for doors and windys and pots and kettles and fixings; and a-toting 'em back over the hills, and a-bumping 'em agin the trees, and a-yanking 'em through the brush till it was a wonder we didn't smash the whole outfit.

"And all this while we was a-guessing, Jim and me, how he was a-going to let 'em know ab ut it, away off thar in the States for, bar making a good black mark on a paper when we took up the land, we was no scholars, neither on us, nor had no book-larning, though I've picked up maybe a smattering since. And we knowed a whole wilderness of them little black crosses wouldn't tell her nothing of the little house, nor of Jim Marlow nor me, nor how to get whar we was, unless she was to take 'em for blaze marks on the trees.

"You see I was dreadful ignorant in them days. But Rueben, he was eddicated, and when the time comes, but he gets a bit of board by the firelight, and a piece of paper, and a thing he calls a envyloop, or some sich name, with a little pictur pasted in the corner, all handsome and convenient, and he falls to a-writing of his letter; and Jim and me, we helps with our idees quite promiskyous, and when at last he gets her done, and folded up, and sticks her in the envyloop, all hands takes a lick to wet the gum, and seal her up, so as to say, the whole on us, for this yere invitation was our sentiments.

"Then we gives three cheers for the little house and for the little family a-coming out to live in it, jest for luck and g od feeling, you know, and next morning Reuben rides away over the trail to ketch the Wednesday stage and post his letter.

"Well, about a month afterwards—and Rube a-riding in to the settlement every time the stage comes through to get his answer—one night, back he comes a-whooping and a-le ting out halloos and hollerings for very joy; and when he comes in sight o' us, he waves a little white thing in the air; and then we see he'd got his letter.

"But we had a time a-reading on it, for it's a durn sight easier for to write a letter—what we said ourselves—than to read a letter—what other folks said? And Jim and me a-helping all we could, and a-looking at it wrong side up, and hind side afore—I knows be ter now-a-days—and a searching for crosses, which thar wasn't nary one in the whole letter, and all on us mostly skipping the long words; anyway we made out the sense of it, and she was a-coming, she and the little ones, in the next stage to foller.

"Well, I don't s'pose you ever see sich fools as we was a-trimming up that cabin in and out with spruce boughs and a-nailing up shelves and women's fixings: and it was jest hammer, hammer, hammer, all the day long, and pretty much all the nig t, too, and then up at it a in in the morning, till our fingers was that sore with missing the nail-heads and a-pounding of ourselves—and the cabin that stuck full of nails I don't believe you could ha' clapped a squirrel-skin up anywhars without you'd touch a dozen 'n 'em.

"And when the time comes nigh and the hours was getting shorter. Reuben was a-running out-door to take a look, and a-running back in-doors to take a look, and a-changing this yere and a-moving that thar, and a-fidgeting about the whole place till Jim and me was near druv wild.

"And the day afore they was to come, and Rube sorter standing all by hisself and a-thinking, and a-thinking, all of a sudden he says, along o' nothing: 'Boys, I—I can't go down thar in the settlement and meet 'em first—afore all those folks—I—jest can't do it. Why, I about know I'd make a varm nt of myself, a-hugging and a-kissing 'em, and like as not I'd go to crying and disgrace 'em—when I sets eyes on them babies.'

"And Jim and me, we sees his heart wa- in it, so Jim, as knowed 'em anyway, why he allowed he'd go down and meet 'em at the stage and borry a waggon, and bring 'em out as far as the trail would let a waggon come.

"And Reuben and me was to walk over and meet 'em at the big divide, jest where the trail dips down into the ford and then falls a zig-zagging up the foot-hills. For you see when you gets a-top of them hills, the trail was fair and straight for quite a piece, and we could see 'em coming a long ways off.

"And so we fixed it.

"And that night the snow came, and in the morning it was a-laying so t and white all over the trees and over the trail, and everything jest a-shining in the sun, sorter joyful like. And Jim, he says as how we needn t be surpr sed to see him coming back a-sledding, and if thar was any jingle-bells in the place, why he would have 'em. And he rides away on the old roan hoss, a-leading of the bay, and both on 'em a-swish-swashing through the snow, and we a-dancing and a-shouting on the hill to keep him company as long as he could hear, jest like two children.

"Well, sirs, thar was more come with that snow than we first thought on; for along about two o'clock, jest arter we'd lit the first fire in the fireplace, and was a-standing out-o'-doors to see the smoke pour out the chimbley, we hears a howl, and then another—long and shrill and dismal-like. And Rube turns white as the snow thar, and jest says one word: 'Wolves!'

"Now a wolf ain't no great critter for a man what's well and strong, and got a gun, and, maybe, could climb a tree, to be afeard on, but when he's got a wife and babies coming through the woods to meet him, and they not knowing the ways of wild things anyway, and Jim with nothing but a little popping six-shooter for to defend hisself on—then I tell you wolves is different! And every time they yelled away off thar atwixt us and the settlement, some way our hearts jest clim' right up in our throats and stuck thar, and we a-pant ng.

"Gentlemen, it takes a tidy while to tell about it, but it wasn t two shakes afore we was in the little cal in, and we grabs a gun yere and a hatchet thar, and I don't know what all, and then away we goes a-tearing down the trail, teeth shet hard and nerves and muscles braced for a long race over the white snow. And all the while that wild howling a-getting nearer, and a-getting nearer, and the cold chills a-creeping up my back and a-shooting down agin' and the agony in Reuben's face a-deepening, ever' time we hears that distant yell.

"The good Lord only knows how we got thar, so scared and tremblyous and all onfit for running as we was, but anyway we reached the last hill over the ford, and jest as we was a-going to plunge down the trail, Rube stops short and throws up one hand, and says with his lips as plain as though he'd said it with his voice—

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for we had no breath left for talking with—'Listen!' And sure enough, away off that we hears, faint and distant-like, a little 'crack!'—and then another and another—six of 'em—about as loud as snapping of a little twig. But we knowed what it meant: it was Jim's six-shooter a-speaking bravely for the wife and little ones, a-coming on the trail.

"Then down we goes over the hill, and splash, splash, into the ford, up to our knees, up to our waists, up to our arm-pits in the icy water—but a-holding our arms up high and a-keeping our guns and amynition dry for to do death on them yelping fiends! And when we gets atop of the hill, we hears 'em coming 'round the bend, the little gun a going zip-bang—agin—six times; and then a little space for him to load, and then onot more, six times.

"And all the while the wolves a-keeping up that yell, howl, and yell agin—that turned our blood to ice; and we a-going on, a-staggering, and a-stumbling, and a-straining of our ears to listen.

"And jest then they comes in sight, a good mile away, but seeming nigh almost enough to touch 'em in the cold, clear air—the hosses all alash, the low sled a-bumping on the fallen logs, Jim a-standing up and laying on the whip—and every little while a-throwing back his arm—and then would come a little puff of smoke—and then we'd hear the piff-bang a-floating on the air; and in the sled, all of a huddle on the floor, a tumbling, bouncing heap we knowed was Rube's wife and babies.

"And Rueben gives a awful groan, and stops, and throws up both arms, dead-beat and all unnarved, and looks at me appealing-like, but I could only shake my head, and drag him on. I knowed they never make it to get in shot of us the way it looked, afore the wolves would be upon 'em; for they was gaining now—and coming up with every stride—and we so helpless.

"And jest then Jim fires two shots, snap-bang, at a wolf as was a-getting up abreast of him, but only twice, and part of the pack stops and pitches on this dying one; but the rest keeps on, and Jim flings something bright and sunny in the sun squat in the face of one a-coming up on t'other side; and then we see his last shot was gone, and he'd throwed away his wepin—for every pound counted. Then presently, out goes the buffalo-skin—and then something else; and each time the pack stops, and some on 'em rolls over and goes heels up in the sudden check, and back agin and take a sniff, and when they finds their bite don't draw the blood, then bark back arter the chase, and a-getting nearer, nearer all the while.

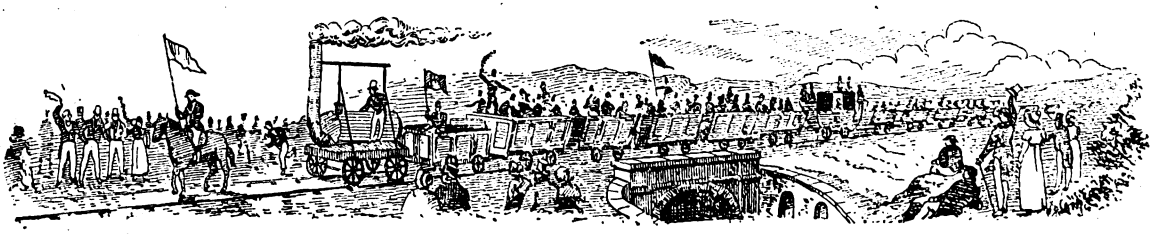
"And now we kin see Jim's white face, kin hear him shouting to the horses, and shouting at the wolves a-gaining grim and deadly—and Rube kneels down and throws up the barrel of his rifle—but drops it quick agin and gives a moan; he darsen't fire for fear he'd hit something else, dearer a thousand times than his own body.

"And then it was, gentlemen, I seed the strangest, queerest thing I ever see in all my living days; for Jim, he sees he'd never win the race with all on 'em, and he jest up and stands on the seat, sharp and clear ag inst the white sky, gives the horses a last clip with the lash, kinder kiss s his hand to the sunshine he never was to see agin, whips off his hat, and waves it—jest like this—twice or maybe thrice around his head, gives us a ringing cheer across the snow, and turns and vaults back among those yelping, shrieking fiends. They climb on him and tear at him; he fights 'em with his bare hands, strikes 'em with his clenched fists, and jest then, while we was glaring at it all, so helpless and so hopeless, along come the panting horses and kinder slows up.

"Some way or other I bundle Reuben in and he grabs the reins, flings me his gun and cartridge-belt, and then away, away with his wife and babies for the home on the distant hills, while I goes rushing back, shouting, screaming, but too late. I never seed dear, old, trusty, homely Jim agin; never heard his bonny voice arter that one cheer; jest seed a shapeless something on the bloody snow, heard them fiends a-crunch-crunching that I hear again in dreams until this day. Then all the snow and trees and hills and sky turns kinder black afore my eyes n I give one yell to Jim that I'm a'coming—and knows o more until I finds myself, knife in one hand and hatchet in the other, a-hacking and a-stabbing and a-chopping those hounds of Satan—shouting, drenched with blood—theirs, and his, and mine.

"But I'm alive to tell on it. And—Jim—don't mind an old fool's tears—I—I've seed the winter snows fall soft and white this twenty year upon the little pile of stones that marks the spot; but Jim don't need no monument, for in our hearts he's living still—and loved—and unforgotten."

CHARLES BURTON.



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HOW HE WON.

When a girl puts both arms round your neck and buries her face on your shoulder and tells you that she can never, never care for you in that way, you don't feel absolutely discouraged. Heaton didn't, anyway. He kissed her hair, very mildly, so as not to call her attention to her position, and asked for an explanation.

"Why, it's all so light and jolly, what I feel for you," she said unhappily. "I never have cried about it, or lain awake over it or anything. When you come, I m so happy I could jump up and down, but when you go, really, I don't much care."

"Don't you miss me?" he asked.

"If you are away long, I may think about you a good deal, but I don't miss you with an ache. Why, when you're nice to another girl, I only feel a vague prick or two. I don't in the least want to scratch her eyes out."

"Did you ever care the other way for any one?"

"No. That's the worst of it," she sighed. "I used to think I hadn't found my soul, but now—oh, my dear, I'm afraid I haven't got any. Perhaps I'm just naturally shallow. If a little, cheerful, easy going, half-a-crown love like this is all I can feel, well then, I won't marry at all."

And she drew herself away, to drop down into the big chair.

He came and sat on the arm unrebuked. She even leant against him a little, as though refusing a man gave him privileges.

"Isn't it possible, Amy, that you care more than you think?" he ventured. "Perhaps if it were tested——"

"But I have tested it, a hundred ways. For instance, I play that I meet an acquaintance, and she says, 'Oh, by-the-way, did you know that Mr. Heaton was engaged to be married?' I feel a queer little squinch, but I can always answer instantly, 'No, indeed, who is it? Do tell me about it,' and listen to all the details without giving a sign. If I cared the right way, why, I'd be simply overwhelmed. No amount of pride could make me hide it. You see, I'm perfectly honest with you."

"But I'd rather be loved laughing than crying," he protested.

"And you may like sunshine better than shade," she answered; "but it's only on the surface of things, and doesn't last. Darkness goes right to their centres. There's no use arguing. It isn't real love if it can't hurt. If you can make me unhappy about you, then——"

"Then?" he repeated, lifting her face. Her eyes were as frank and innocent as a child's.

"Yes, then," she said.

Heaton had always thought wooing was merely a matter of loving, but he now turned to artifice and did his clumsy best to awaken his princess by worked up effects, since the simple, time-honoured kiss had failed. Remembering a hackneyed saying, he tried for pity first, but it refused to come to the aid of its kin.

When he sat looking at her in moody silence, turning away occasionally with set lips and deep, quick breaths, Amy found him "too sleepy to be interesting" and sent him home.

And when he flattered himself he was becoming effectively pale and wan, she told him he was losing all his good looks.

Jealousy was equally disappointing. After he had bored himself by making a beginning with another girl and flaunted her in the face of his lady-love, entirely for the latter's own good, the two girls took a sudden violent fancy to each other, and spent all their spare time talking in low, intense voices that dropped back into commonplace on his approach, so that it was he who felt *de trop*. The jealousy all came back on his own head, and Amy was frank and friendly and fond, but nothing more.

He alternated weeks of devotion with weeks of neglect, and she did not seem to notice the difference. Nothing piqued her, and she refused to quarrel.

Neither moonlight nor firelight affected her mood, and when he caught her hand with sudden fierceness she smiled serenely and said he was a dear boy. It was like trying to cut a hole in water.

At last, utterly discouraged, he gave up. He could

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not hurt her, could not even touch her inner self. He flung aside his poses, bravely accepted his failure, and met her as he had before, without ruse of any kind.

This went on for a week. On the night of the seventh day, Amy faced herself in the mirror with a new expression.

"Well, he has given it up," she said. "He has decided that I'm not worth winning, and he's not going to try any more. I hope you're satisfied."

She turned out the light and crawled into bed.

"Oh, I don't blame him!" she said to herself. "I wouldn't be sorry for him, and I wouldn't be jealous, and I wouldn't understand. I was simply hateful. And he has given up trying. He doesn't care any more. It's —it's all ended."

And now she was groping under the pillow for her handkerchief. An hour later she gave an impatient sigh

"If this is the way it hurts, I wish I'd never found out," she said.

The night went by very heavily and in the morning her eyes were lame. When he came she was cool, distant, and inclined to sarcasm, and the stupid man thing went away hurt. Then she sent him a little note, and after it had gone burnt with shame and resolved to meet him more coldly than ever. But a glimmer of sense was dawning within him, so he kissed her before she could show her attitude. And after that she didn't have to.

"So my wooing wasn't altogether wasted," he said later.

"Yes, it was," she answered. "It was the stopping it that did it." And she never understood why he laughed.

MARIAN WEST.

Revealed by Accident.

I MET Louise Elkins in the street to-day. Louise is an old maid now—she must be, for she is older than I, and I am nearly forty—and nobody would believe that she was ever pretty. Yet she was once called a beauty.

But I did not intend to say anything against Louise. She was my intimate friend once, then my "intimate enemy," then the object of my unmitigated and outspoken displeasure and contempt, but for a long time even the last phase of emotion connected with her has subsided into the most perfect indifference. She cannot harm me now, and she, doubtless, has long lost all desire to harm me. Once, however, it was different.

I first met Louise Elkins when I was a girl at school. We became intimate, and I learnt to love her, to feel a want when she was absent, and to enjoy perfect satisfaction in her presence. She was my confidante, and I thought that I was hers. The time came when I knew that she had never confided in me, but had shown me only the surface of her thoughts, and deeds, and purposes.

How many times she comforted me with words and caresses, hypocritical as they were sweet, for the very disappointments that she had carefully and remorselessly prepared for me. How many times I was tempted to believe that a malignant fate pursued me, thwarting all my most cherished plans, when it was my "friend" who thus coolly and silently stood ever between me and the accomplishment of my desire.

But the final act came after school life.

Two years after I left school, Louise paid me a visit. We had met but once during this period, when I paid her a visit of several weeks at her father's house, in a pretty suburban town. This visit she had come to return; but in the meantime, our correspondence had been so frequent and uninterrupted, that my affection for my dearest friend, as I loved to call her, had never flagged.

I welcomed her with delight. There was but one person whose presence had ever given me deeper joy, but even my love for Guy Carleton, absorbing as it was, had not weakened this long cherished, but widely different affection.

We had much to tell each other and we had to hurry away, finally, to dress for dinner.

I had scarcely finished when Guy was announced.

I stole down for a moment before going to Louise. It was to tell him of her arrival; how disappointed I was to perceive that he did not share my delight, and that his fine face clouded as I spoke rapidly and joyously of the long-desired pleasure of introducing my two loved friends.

I checked myself in alarm as I saw this.

"What is the matter, dear Guy?" I asked anxiously. "Are you not well, or does that horrid business trouble you again?"

"I am quite well, Dolly," he replied, "and the business which has given me so much annoyance will soon be satisfactorily settled. But I am sorry this girl has come. Forgive me, dear, it may be selfish, but I cannot resist the premonition that she will come between us—perhaps to destroy our happiness for ever."

I laughed gaily.

"Louise come between us—the best and dearest of girls to destroy our happiness! Why, Guy, can you believe any friend of mine, anyone so loved and trusted could do that? But you do not know Louise. She will rejoice in our happiness as if it were her own—she is the most unselfish creature, the most——"

"There, that will do!" interrupted Guy, with a laugh. "I did not mean to set you off in defence of your friend, but might have known what I would draw down upon myself. I am sorry I annoyed you, but I cannot think of having a third person always in our way, for weeks perhaps, with every patience. Pardon me, dear, for if I had loved you less, I should not have cared."

Louise made a decided impression upon Guy Carleton.

His opinion of her changed even during the first

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evening of their acquaintance, for as we parted he whispered that she was a charming girl, and would be a most agreeable addition to our small circle.

Imperceptibly the change increased. Guy was our constant visitor, and was necessarily much in the society of Louise.

He paid her marked attention, but she was very quiet, and I said he owed it to me to do so.

Still, when in our walks I was suffered to fall behind, alone and unheeded, it required all my affection for my friends to look calmly on, and see them so absorbed in their conversation as to forget my very existence.

Louise had a rich voice, the rarest I ever heard from one who was not a professional singer, and Guy was passionately fond of music. I could not sing, but I played well, at least so I have often been assured. In the early period of Louise's visit I often accompanied her upon the pianoforte, but at length she discovered my accompaniment did not suit her voice, and Guy joined in her criticism. I relinquished my seat to her, and never again was asked, or offered to play while she sang.

Nor was I missed, apparently. I used to sit for hours in some obscure corner, or out upon the vine-shaded verandah, while Guy bent over the instrument, so close that his dark locks seemed to mingle with the brown curls of Louise.

Guy was not less kind when we met alone. He was even more demonstrative than of old, as if thus he would atone for enforced neglects. I remembered that Louise had sneered at lovers and their absorbed ways, living for and thinking only of each other, and tried to believe that this was the cause of all that gave me so much suffering. But our next meeting, when I remained apparently forgotten for hours, would destroy this illusion.

At length a slight illness of my mother compelled me to attendance upon her for many days. While I was thus employed, Louise and Guy were left almost entirely to each other's companionship. Sometimes Louise would creep into my mother's room, and in her soft, caressing manner insist upon sharing my watch, but invariably, ere half an hour had elapsed, Guy would come to remind her of some forgotten engagement, and with a promise to take good care of my lover, she would run away to join him.

I seldom saw Guy during this time, and then, in one of these rare meetings, instead of noticing my pale cheek he chided me for allowing Louise to spend so much time in the sick-room.

I was too much surprised at this, as well as grieved, to tell him the truth at once: and before I could speak, the opportunity was lost. Louise had called him, and he had moved to her side.

But my eyes that had before begun to be unsealed were now fully opened.

I saw that Louise was false, that she was putting forth every art, even to imputing to me selfishness, to deprive me of the affections of my lover.

The revelation gave me the hitherto hidden key to her character. In all our intimacy of years I had never read, never known her before. But now, clear as if traced upon the printed page, I saw the record of the long series of her deceits and shameless perfidy.

I watched her more closely, and, with my new comprehension of her character, saw more clearly her motives, and the malignant triumph with which she beheld her victim each day more inextricably involved in her toils, while the friend for whom she still professed the warmest affection, was suffering agonies.

I prepared myself to what I believed must come. The period of Louise's visit as first arranged had passed, but she did not speak of departure, and I felt sure that she only delayed until Guy should be lured on to the point of proposal.

But an accident, one of those strange *contretemps* that even the most wily cannot always avoid, at last intervened to destroy her plans and reveal her character in all its deformity.

One morning I was passing languidly through the wide entrance hall, and saw Guy's small office boy, his Mercury, standing there, and holding two bouquets, which he presented to me. One was for Louise, and a little note accompanied it. With mine there was no message.

I called Louise from the parlour, and gave her the note and flowers. A wicked glance of triumph, disguised by a smile, was my reward, and she ran away upstairs to answer the missive.

Half an hour passed before she came down, and I saw her give two notes to the boy, telling him that one was for his master, and asking him to drop the other at the post office which he had to pass on his way homewards.

Another hour had passed, when from my post by my mother's bedside, I saw, through the open window, Guy Carleton coming hastily along the avenue. Louise was playing and singing in the parlour, but to my surprise he did not join her, but sent a servant to ask if he could see me for a few moments in the breakfast room.

"She has accepted him," I thought, "and he has come to be released from his vows to me."

But I was mistaken.

It was to the confessions of a penitent I had to listen. Louise had betrayed her true character to him.

The letter she had inclosed in the envelope to him had been intended for another, and had exposed her plot, and dilated upon her triumph.

Guy had read enough to show him all, before he recovered from his surprise, and comprehended how that letter had fallen into his hands.

So small a mistake revealed all, and set my lover free.

Guy inclosed the letter to her without comment, and that very afternoon she left us, without even the ceremony of a farewell.

I could not offer to see her, and she did not ask that I should.

Much as I loved Guy I could not readily forgive him for all he had made me suffer; but our great mutual happiness has long since eradicated every root of bitterness from my heart; and I can now only look with pity even upon the forlorn spinster, Louise Elkins.

GORDON MASTER.

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BY HER OWN HAND.

THE Cowes week had been over a good four days, and the party that had been g thered together on board the *Cynthia*, Lord St. Ervan's cruising yacht, had had such a very good time of it so far that they had unanimously fallen in with their host's proposal to take a run round the Channel Islands, and then to St. Malo, and up the Rance, instead of scattering, as most of the other yachts' companies were on the point of doing, either to Homburg and Spa, the Italian Lakes, or the Scotch Moors.

The *Cynthia* had left St. Peter's Port in Guernsey, and was slipping along quietly over a smooth sea under the long slanting beams of the setting August sun, on her way to St. Helier.

The guests had disposed themselves in little groups about the ship's deck, according to their fancies, their social preferences, or their little designs upon each other.

One of the groups was composed of a dark-eyed, distinguished-looking man of thirty-eight or so, and a pretty *petite* Frenchwoman in a delightful sea-costume, whose complexion was so excellently preserved, whose general *tenue* was so perfect that the casual observer might well have been excused for knocking half-a-dozen years off the thirty-five which she was a long way from owning up to.

Madame de Bonneville was the semi-detached wife of a French diplomatist, who was just then pursuing his vocation at the other end of Europe. She was a good little soul, as Frenchwomen of the *grande monde* go, and though she was capable of holding her own in any sort of fun or adventure that was not hopelessly compromising, she was not more unscrupulous than the majority of women of her nation and position in life.

Her companion was Major Denver, of the ——th Regiment of the Line, in the forces of Her Britannic Majesty. He was a man who had seen plenty of service in different parts of the Empire; a thorough gentleman, with no more of the man of the world in him than was absolutely necessary for him to hold his own among his fellows. In addition to being a smart officer, and an altogether charming man in society, he was the possessor of a very considerable private fortune, and no less considerable personal advantages.

In fact, if Madame de Bonneville had only been the well-dowered widow that she would be some day and wanted to be at once, there was no other man she had ever seen with whom she would so willingly have tempted the lottery of marriage a second time than this dark-featured, strong-natured Englishman, who seemed so strangely, and yet so politely, indifferent to his very obvious opportunities in the matrimonial line.

The two were watching another group, seated aft near the wheel, composed of a very pretty English girl, who seemed to be still in her teens, l the of form, brown of skin, and of very manifest vivacity of character, and a couple of men, one youthful, almost to boyishness, and another well on towards middle age, with whom she was considerably more than holding her own in what seemed to be an undisguised three-cornered flirtation.

If Madame de Bonneville had been paying less attention to the girl and more to her companion, she would have noticed that every time he looked towards the other group his brows contracted almost imperceptibly, and a dusky sort of shadow, as if of repressed anger, stole into his dark blue eyes, turning them almost to black for the time being.

Even if she had noticed this, she gave no sign of having done so, and rattled along with her share of the conversation, which was naturally the greater, because the woman's share, in a pretty medley of good English and appropriately French idioms, that made her chatter a good deal more entertaining than it appears when necessarily translated into simple English.

"Really, Major, you know I find it quite impossible even yet to understand the extraordinary way in which you always extraordinary English bring up your young marriageable girls. Now, that young lady yonder, Miss Maud Driscoll, just look how she is carrying on with those two men! Of course it is all perfectly proper according to your ways, but, *ma foi*, it would be enough to turn the hair of a French mother grey with anxiety, and here you don't seem to think anything of it at all.

"Your English misses must really have the most charming life imaginable. They go about quite untrammelled, they talk as they choose to any men of their set that their fancy selects, they walk, they ride, they go boating and cycling without being worried in the slightest by chaperonage, and generally seem to carry on according to their own sweet will.

"Now, if that young lady had been born and bred in France she would now only just be coming out of a convent school, she would scarcely know how to waltz. A picnic or a boating party or a bicycle-ride would be a revelation still in store for her, and her knowledge of men would be confined to the male members of her own family and their most intimate and respectable friends —while here, she is at liberty to flirt to her heart's content, and have as many men in her train as her fancy dictates. But I am afraid that even among English young ladies, that Miss Driscoll must be something more than ordinary of what you call a flirt. Is that not so?"

"No," replied the Major, concealing his desire to say something rude under a drawling affectation of lack of interest in the subject, "I don't think Miss Driscoll is exactly a flirt, at least not more of a flirt than her opportunities compel her to be.

"You see, if men will openly proclaim themselves the willing slaves of a very pretty girl, it's a difficult thing for her, without making herself absolutely unpleasant, to avoid the appearance of flirtation, in fact she is almost driven to it; she must play one man off against another to a certain extent, if only in self defence, and to keep the balance of favours fairly equal. At the same time, I must confess that there is something about Miss Driscoll that I don't at all understand.

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"I don't know any other girl who has refused as many and as good offers as she has during last season and this. She has had two or three coronets laid at her feet, and quite half a dozen very respectable fortunes, usually with very decent fellows attached to them, and yet I think she could honestly say that she has steered her course so well, to use a yachting term, that she has never given any one man real reason to believe that she has in any sense trifled with him.

"The girl's a perfect mystery, and—well, I don't think there's anything more to be said on the subject, for, after all, the same description applies pretty equally to all the members of your delightful sex."

"Very charming, if a trifle vague, Major," replied Madame, looking up with a pretty little *moue*; "but I suppose the explanation of the mystery, after all, is that she is in no hurry to marry, and has not yet found what the modern novelists call her affinity."

"Very possibly," said the Major, with the air of a man who has had enough of the conversation, "very possibly; I don't suppose she'll be found more intractable than any other woman when the hour and the man arrive."

"No, I don't suppose she will, provided always that the hour does not come too late, and that the man is possible."

"Ah!" The Major let out the ejaculation involuntarily, and Madame distinguished a ring in it that told her quite as much as the plainest of words could have done. With the perfect tact of a well-bred Frenchwoman she promptly changed the subject, and the conversation ran along on more trival matters, until Miss Driscoll caught the Major's eye, and beckoned to him with the pretty assurance of a girl exercising a privilege which she knows will not be disputed.

Madame de Bonneville at once rose from her seat, and said, as though she had not noticed the signal, "Well, I must go into the saloon, for I promised his lordship that I would superintend the decoration of the supper-table, and after supper, you know, we are going to get out the roulette wheel, and indulge in a little pleasant wickedness at each other's expense. You don't gamble, I believe? but I have no doubt you will find something more interesting to do."

With this parting shot Madame vanished down the companion-way, and in another minute the Major had obeyed Maud Driscoll's summons. With dainty tact she somehow managed to give her two admirers to understand that their audience was over, and as soon as they were out of ear-shot she turned to her companion and said:

"May I ask, Major Denver, why you were regarding me with such an obvious air of disapproval from over yonder? Was that spiteful little Frenchwoman drawing any unpleasant comparisons between the freedom of the English girl and the artificial propriety of the French damsel in leading-strings?"

Denver laughed much more pleasantly than he had done a few minutes previously, as he replied:

Divination would seem to be one of your many accomplishments, Miss Driscoll, unless you heard what she was saying, for that is just what she was doing, only I can assure you, in the pleasantest fashion possible.

I think you are rather prejudiced against her. If I am any judge of female character, she is one of the best natured little women alive, and I believe would do almost anything to oblige anyone that she had really taken a fancy to."

"Then, if ever you stand in need of her assistance, I should think you are pretty sure of it, for she certainly seems to have taken a very strong fancy to you."

"Nonsense, child!"

The words came almost rudely from Denver's lips, and then, seeing a curious, half-scared expression on the lovely face that was upturned to his, he went on in strange confusion for so self-possessed a man, "On my honour, I beg your pardon a thousand times, I quite forgot myself. I——"

"Oh, never mind, I'm not at all offended; in fact, I suppose you do really look upon me from the altitude of your superior years as a sort of spoilt child, whose behaviour shows that she ought still to be in leading-strings herself. I suppose that is why you always treat me so differently to all the other men I know.

"No, no, that is by no means the reason," he replied with sudden vehemence, that hardly seemed warranted by the circumstances.

Then he checked himself and went on more quietly, but with an earnestness that looked very like strongly repressed passion.

"I do not treat you as other men do, because—because—I—that is—I mean to say you——"

"Are quite indifferent to me, and you are not so to some of the other men," she broke in almost petulantly, and with a sudden blush that turned the clear, healthy glow of her cheeks into a deep, rosy red. "Is that what you were going to say?"

He looked at her in undisguised amazement for a moment.

The words spoken otherwise might not have meant very much, but they were spoken in a tone that sent the blood flying through his veins as it had never done before, and showed him that what he had scarcely permitted himself to dream of, either was, or might be made into a fact—a fact that was at once delightful and yet horrible beyond measure for him to think of. The few petulant words, spoken in a moment of unguarded haste, had told the secret, which otherwise might never have been uttered.

True, nothing specific had been said; for Maud Driscoll was a girl who would have bitten her tongue in twain—as she now wished she had done—before she would have given him a hint as to the truth. But it was out now, and their eyes had met in a glance which told both of them that there was no further need, or even possibility, of disguise between them.

Denver drew a deep breath, as he might have done under sudden and intense physical pain, and then he put his hand on her shoulder, and said slowly and almost solemnly:

"I see that I must tell you the reason you ask for. It is not the one you imagine, or expect, but there is no time to tell you now. We shall have to go down to supper soon, and those fellows will be back in a few minutes.

"They are going to play roulette after supper, in the cabin. I'm not going to play, and I don't suppose you are. If you will come up on deck as soon as they are settled with their game, I will tell you what, after all, it is better that you should know; nay, what I fancy you now have a right to know, and then—well, then I will go ashore at St. Helier and the Fates must take their course."

While he was speaking she had looked him full and unflinchingly in the eyes, but with her little hands clenched, and her pretty lips drawn tight over her

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closed teeth. She knew that something that would be terrible for her to hear was coming, but she felt that it was inevitable, and she was too brave to shrink an explanation, which, if left unsaid, would leave even more torturing doubt in its place, so she simply said, in a low, steady voice:

"Yes, I will come," and then she got up and walked slowly and not very steadily towards the companion-way.

As soon as supper was over, and the table cleared, the roulette wheel was ready to spin, Madame de Bonneville was installed as banker, and in the brief confusion of the players taking their places round the table, Denver and Maud Driscoll found no difficulty in leaving the saloon to keep their tryst on deck. It was dark now, and the deck was deserted, save by the man at the wheel and the look-out in the bows.

Both knew what they had come there for, and there was no need for any preliminaries, so Denver went straight to the subject at once, speaking in the slow, deliberate tone of a man who was forcing himself to say that which he would infinitely rather have left unsaid.

"Maud—for I am going to call you Maud to-night, if you will let me—you said before supper that I looked upon you as a child; well, now I am going to talk to you as a woman, and you must listen to me as a woman. But tell me first, as a woman to a man, am I right in concluding from what you said just now, or, rather, I should say, from the way in which you said it, that—well, if I had behaved to you as some other men have, you would not have dealt with me as you have with them?"

As he spoke he felt her hand laid upon his arm; it closed with a firm, nervous grip, and she said:

"No, Frank, I should not, and—and—after that, there is no need for me to tell you that that is the explanation of what most people have, no doubt justly, considered to be my flirtations."

"Even so," he said, putting his hand on hers, and after a single pressure removing it again. "No sweeter words than those could have been spoken to me, and yet I would have given all I possess to have avoided the necessity of your speaking them. Now, listen, and, for Heaven's sake, don't interrupt me or I shall never get said what must be said now, in justice to us both."

"Go on," said she, "even if it be a death-sentence, let me hear it and know the worst."

"A death sentence it may be, so far as I am concerned and, if it is, all the better, for I have loved and lost even that which I can never possess. To-morrow I am going ashore at St. Helier to go back to Southampton, for before we left Cowes I had a letter telling me that my regiment is under orders for Burmah, and we are to sail in a week. There'll be some pretty smart fighting out there and—well, never mind that—that's only the least important part of what I have to tell you."

There was a deck chair under the bulwarks opposite to where they were standing. He crossed the deck, and brought it over. He put her unresisting and still silent into it. Then he sat down on the deck with his back against the mast, and began the story of the ruin of the life that he would so gladly have devoted to her in return for the unsuspected love which she had confessed for him.

He began at the beginning, and spared himself nothing in the recital, so that she might, at least, have the poor consolation of knowing fully the whole chain of miserable circumstances which was drawn like an impassable barrier between them.

He told her how, when he was a young subaltern fifteen years before, he had been entrapped into a marriage with a pretty, fascinating and worthless woman, who, after five years of wretched married life, had taken to drink, and who, for the last ten years, had been drinking herself to death by inches.

For the last four years, he had been separated entirely from her, and all he knew of her was that she was living in Paris on an allowance that he made her, a mere wreck of what she had been, and yet with an indefinite number of years of life before her, life that she clung to tenaciously, even to some extent restraining her passion for liquor in order that by going on living she might, as she told him with brutal frankness, revenge herself on him, for, as she called it, his betrayal and his desertion of her.

Told in detail, as he told it, it was a long and terrible story, which occupied nearly an hour in the telling.

Maud Driscoll listened throughout in silence, broken only every now and then by a quick, half-choked gasp of pain, that she could not altogether stifle, and so engrossed was he in telling and she in listening that neither of them noticed a light foot-fall on the other side of the sail, or was aware of the presence of a listener.

When at last the story was ended, there was silence between them for several minutes.

Then they both rose to their feet and Maud slipped her hand through his arm and led him towards the companion-way, saying as she did so:

"It is enough, it is the inevitable, and neither you nor I can struggle against it. I have loved and lost in the same moment, so have you, and now we must say good-bye."

Yielding to the ungovernable impulse of the moment, he caught her in his arms, and kissed her once, and so the good-bye was said.

Maud went below and at once retired to her own state-room, and to the surprise of the rest of the guests, Denver did what he had never been known to do before, joined the roulette-players and punted with a recklessness that won smile after smile from fortune until the growing pile of notes and gold before him prompted a lady loser to say somewhat spitefully:

"If there's any truth in the proverb 'Luck at cards, unlucky in love' Major——"

"It's a lie, like most proverbs!" laughed Denver with a savage ring in his voice that made everybody at the table look up at once. "If it's true here's a challenge to the Fates!"

As he spoke he put the whole of his pile on 13—and lost.

You would have broken the bank, *mon ami*, if you had won that coup," said Madame de Bonneville's voice at his elbow. "I wonder if that means a turn of luck both ways? I am glad I got sick of the bank before you began your plunging. You would have ruined me before this. Happily, I had more prudence than you, for when I had won twenty pounds half an hour ago I retired on my laurels."

"Would you like to try again?" said Denver, moving back from the table. "I have had enough now, and am off for a smoke on deck."

Madame yielded to the temptation, and the Major went on deck again to smoke the smoke of bitter reflection. The next day he went ashore at St. Helier, and took the first boat back to Southampton.

Three months later he was hard at work in Burmah. Maud Driscoll had refused two more brilliant offers of

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marriage, and Madame de Bonneville, with the assistance of a private detective agency, had made the acquaintance of Frank Denver's dipsomaniac wife in Paris. She seemed to take a strange fancy to the wretched creature, and listened without apparent weariness to the story of her wrongs, told over and over again with the half-incoherent garrulity of a mind steeped in alcohol, and always ending with the same savage sentences:

"Yes, I must drink—I can't live without it—but I won't drink myself to death as he wants me to, though I often feel I should be glad to be done with it all. I am his wife, and he may cast me off, but he cannot get rid of me that way. I will live for years yet to spite him, and keep him chained to me. I dare say he has often wanted to marry someone else, but he shan't. I'll live to be a curse to him yet."

But in spite of this resolve, the miserable woman drank very hard at times, and before Madame de Bonneville had known her a month she was turned out of her lodgings for a worse drunken bout than usual. As a sequel to this, she was arrested for making a disturbance in the street, and would have been sent to the Salpetrière, had Madame not come forward, and, on the plea that she had known her in her better days, persuaded the police to hand her over to her, so that she might make one more attempt to reclaim her.

She gave her a couple of rooms in her own house, and armed with the police authority, kept her confined to them for a week, with the exception of necessary exercise under her own supervision. She did not allow her a drop of alcohol, and, replying to her passionate appeals for 'just a little with her meals for the present,' she told her that she must choose between total abstinence with her or the règime of the asylum. The dread of what was really prison enforced submission, but it did not quell her terrible cravings. On the contrary they grew fiercer and fiercer as each day of enforced sobriety passed.

This discipline had lasted seven days when Madame went to Versailles to spend two or three days with her sister.

Before she left home she gave strict orders that "Madame Denver" was not to be permitted to leave the house until her return, and that she was not to be allowed even to catch sight of any alcoholic drink. To make assurance doubly sure the housekeeper locked the outer door of her apartments, determined not to allow her to cross the threshold until her mistress returned.

The prisoner bore her confinement fairly well until the evening of the second day, and then she got restless.

There seemed to be something unaccustomed in the air of her room which excited her almost to fever point.

Some subtle aroma kept stealing to her nostrils, and she sniffed at it as a wild beast might have sniffed the taint of its prey on the air. The housekeeper brought her her supper, and then left her for the night, locking the door after her as she took the supper things away.

Still that faint but penetrating aroma in the room! It seemed to grow stronger after the lights were lit.

The dipsomaniac sniffed eagerly at it, wandering about the room to try and find its source.

Before long she found that it was most pungent near a little cabinet that stood in one corner of the room. She opened it and looked in, still sniffing. Then she put her hand in and when she took it out the fingers were tightly closed round the neck of a daintily chased decanter full of a bright green liquid.

She took out the stopper. Ah! there was no doubt now what the faint subtle smell had been. She stared with glittering eyes wide open in wonder at her fatal good fortune. Her nostrils dilated and her breast heaved as she carried the decanter to her trembling lips, muttering:

"Absinthe! absinthe! I wonder how it got there? They can't have known anything about it or they would have taken it away. I must have just a drop. I can fill it up again with water, and they'll never know. But I mustn't take too much, no not too much, for I have not had any for so long, and it might be dangerous. Absinthe is terrible stuff when you're not accustomed to it. Stop, I'll get a glass and take it comfortably. Just a drop, only a little drop!"

She went into her bedroom and got a glass off her dressing-table. She poured out about a couple of tablespoonfuls of the green liquor and tossed them off. She gasped for breath and stifled a cough for fear she should be heard and someone might come to see what was the matter. Then she got some water to fill the decanter up again. As she was going to pour it in the pungent smell rose to her nostrils again.

She paused irresolute for a moment, and then she put the water down and poured some more absinthe out into the glass, put a little water in and drank it. It was a bigger dose this time, and it was barely swallowed when the starving drink demon within her woke into frenzied and irresistible longing. She didn't think of filling up the decanter now. Even her revenge was lost sight of in that mad moment of re-awakening passion, tenfold intensified by the privation of the past week.

She drank again and again, taking more and more every time, till her throat was burning and her brain reeling, and her shaking hand could hardly carry the glass to her bloated lips.

They found her in the morning lying dead and stiff on the floor with the empty decanter still clutched tightly in her hand and the fragments of the shattered glass beside her. Madame de Bonneville was at once telegraphed for, and as soon as she got back and learnt the news she dismissed the housekeeper on the spot and rated the other servants furiously for leaving the wretched woman alone.

It was in vain that they denied all knowledge of the liquor. Madame vowed that she had left it safe under lock and key, that only the housekeeper had access to it, and that she must have been bribed to betray her trust.

Major Denver's agents, through whom his wife's allowance had been paid, were at once communicated with, and the next day a quiet funeral at Père Lachaise ended the last chapter of the story that Madame de Bonneville had overheard on the deck of the *Cynthia* between Guernsey and Jersey.

Frank Denver did not find the fate he went to seek in Burmah. "The luck had turned both ways" after all, and he came back with the Victoria Cross to find Maud Driscoll still waiting for the man and the hour—both of which arrived very soon after he landed in England.

Madame de Bonneville was invited to the wedding, but, to her very great regret, other engagements prevented her leaving France just then. She sent wedding-presents to both, and the bridegroom's was a pretty silver-mounted spirit-case, containing three beautifully chased little decanters.

LEVIN CARNAC.

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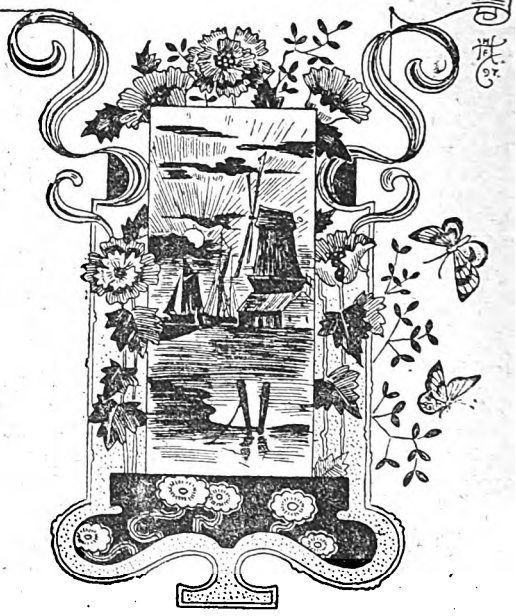
AVENGED BY A SERPENT.



WHEN I got George's letter, telling me that all was now ready for our reception and we were to come at once, I was delighted. Within a week we—mother and I—were on our way out, and in about three weeks' time found ourselves between the swampy shores of the Essequibo, nearing Georgetown in the United States, where on the quay the dear fellow was waiting to take us up to the home he had made for us on his plantation.

George Haden and I had met a year before during his visit to England and the big, quiet, sunburnt man and I, who tell his story, had fallen in love with one another almost at the first sight.

We were to have been married before he returned to Guiana, but he was recalled suddenly by the death of his only brother at Rio, and it was arranged I should follow later with mother.

You can—or, rather, you can't—imagine how delighted I was to see my sweetheart again. But I was startled and a good deal troubled by his appearance; he looked thin and worried. At first I put it down to his grief at Harry's death; but later, after our quiet wedding, on the way to my future home, I gathered by degrees there was more than that.

His brother Harry had married a Spaniard—a beautiful woman—who had died nearly eighteen years before, leaving him with one daughter, Teresa. It was chiefly on this girl's account that George had hurried back, and he had mentioned in writing to me that he had brought her up from Rio to stay with him in Guiana until other arrangements could be made. Since then I had heard little of her, and almost, indeed, in my own happiness and excitement forgotten her very existence.

Now my questions elicited from George that she was not a pleasant tempered young woman, or easy to get on with, but my worst anticipations did not touch the reality.

We came up the river in a small steamer, which dropped us at my husband's very wharf, and we three walked up a slope through a wonderful tropical garden to where a long, whitewashed, green-shuttered house shone clean and bright in the evening sun.

On the veranda stood a tall figure in a pale yellow gown, her black hair crowned with crimson hibiscus. A splendidly handsome woman.

She looked at me in a half-disdainful way.

"So you're my new aunt?" she said casually. "And how do you do, Uncle George?"

Her calm assumption of superiority was unbearable. George—big, steady, good-tempered man that he was—flushed with anger.

He whispered to me:

"Never mind, my dear. She knows no better; and it won't be for long."

But it was for longer than we reckoned. She was to have been sent to her godmother, who lived in Madrid. But the old lady was ill, and begged us to keep the girl a while longer.

It was trying to a degree, and each day got worse and worse. Teresa's temper was something unbearable, and her general lack of manners only equalled by her sweetness when there was anything to be gained by it. Still, for my husband's sake, I bore with her.

Toward the end of the cool weather our old English overseer died, and, as a stop-gap, George took on a young Spanish-American, Ramon Martinez.

Ramon was a smart-looking fellow, but there was something in his black eyes which repelled me. I always felt a shrinking repulsion for the man, and George didn't much care for him. Still, it was necessary to have some one who understood the sugar, and men who knew anything were so scarce you couldn't pick and choose.

Teresa, who loved the cheap gaieties of Rio, had been simply bored to death all the winter. Ramon was a godsend to her, and the two used to chat in Spanish every evening over their coffee on the veranda.

Sometimes I blame myself for letting them be so much together, but, to tell the truth, the relief of getting rid of her even for an hour or two was very great. And how could I know what a scoundrel the man was, or what unspeakable wickedness those two were brewing together?

And now I must pass over the events of the next ten months, and tell you what happened on that dreadful day which so nearly proved fatal to all my happiness.

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Old Juan, a half-caste Indian employé on the place, came up that morning wanting to see my husband. They talked for a time, and then I saw George go out with a gun on his shoulder.

He saw me at the window and called out something, but I could not hear what it was.

He was a keen collector, and I supposed it was some rare bird or beast he was after.

The day passed, and the short, tropical twilight was closing over the forest when I saw George returning. He was followed by two negroes, who slowly dragged some long, heavy object up the path to the house. This they pulled along, trailing in the dust, round to the south end of the house, where George's big so-called study, really a sort of museum, opened by two French windows on the lawn.

I was dressing for dinner, so did not go out.

Soon I heard George's long stride pass upstairs by my door to his dressing-room, which lay beyond my room at the extreme north end of the house.

To make you understand what followed I must partly explain how the house was built. It was from north to south, long and narrow, with a verandah all the way round.

A wide hall ran through from east to west, and a long narrow one from north to south. The dining-room was the front room at the north end, under my room; George's study at the south, under the room Teresa occupied. There were two staircases, one at each end of the house. A couple of hundred yards away, higher up the slope at the back of the house, was the cottage where Martinez lived. He, Martinez, generally dined with us, and was to have done so that night.

Now, so far as I know, and judging from what we made out afterwards from letters we discovered in the cottage and in Teresa's room, this is what brought about the tragedy that followed:

Ramon must have long before this have made up his mind to marry Teresa. Her small fortune was an irresistible bait to the indolent Southerner. The only thing that troubled him was that she was not of age for another three years, and George was her guardian and sole trustee.

He knew well enough what George would say or do if he once heard of his pretentions. With a man of Ramon's type—almost conscienceless—the next idea was simply to get George out of the way. Once get rid of the uncle and what was there to hinder his making off with Teresa and her money?

Undoubtedly he instilled these ideas into Teresa's mind, and she, her sullen temper already aflame at the hint of opposition, was soon ripe for any mischief. Whether this precious pair had already concocted any definite plan I don't know, but that they were only waiting a chance what follows proves.

On this particular evening Teresa had dressed earlier and gone down. For some reason—I don't know what—she went to the study and opened the door.

A French window was open, and in the moonlight which had already succeeded the dusk she caught sight of something moving through it, undulating in rustling coils up from the grass beyond.

Terrified, she closed the door and stood an instant panting with fright.

What was it?

Suddenly it flashed across her.

She had just before seen from her window the men bringing in her uncle's spoil, a great anaconda, or water-boa, the largest and most powerful constrictor in the world.

This was his mate. Her chance had come.

Always before dinner her uncle would go to his room to fetch the cigar he lit immediately dinner was over. He would go once more—for the last time.

How I can imagine her stealing quietly away from the door back with stealthy footsteps up the stairs to her room and sitting there watching the clock, counting every moment till the gong should summon her uncle to his fate behind that closed door.

Closer and closer crept the hands to eight o'clock, and still she sat and watched.

Suddenly in the hall below sounded footsteps across the polished boards.

Unnaturally loud they seemed as they passed slowly down the passage beneath. There was the sound of a turning latch, an instant's pause, and then—one long, horrible sound, half shriek, half yell, which grew shriller, then muffled and then abruptly ceased.

The shriek I heard with almost equal distinctness away at the other end of the house. To this day I can sometimes hear it, and it comes back to me in dreadful dreams.

I heard my husband rush from his room and his flying feet down the stairway. Other sounds I heard—cries of terror and alarm, hurrying footsteps and slamming of doors.

Then I summoned courage to follow. As I ran through the hall two shots rang out in rapid succession. A frightful pounding, like a dozen sledge hammers going at once, ensued; and next I heard a scream of maniacal laughter, and Teresa rushed by me and out into the night.

The next thing I remember is George's voice, in tones of strong command:

"Keep back, Marian!" he called; "it is no fit sight for you."

I stood there in the middle of the passage, while round the open study door stood a little knot of our black servants. Their faces were ashen with terror, and the whites of their eyes goggled horribly. A thin smoke floated out of the room and the keen smell of gunpowder filled the air. The throbbing beat had almost ceased, and George passed into the room, while I staggered back, and, sinking into a chair in the hall, fainted dead away.

I need hardly explain what had happened.

The wretched Ramon had come in earlier than usual to dinner; had, contrary to his usual custom, gone to the study, evidently to leave the pass-book for the day, and had walked straight into the trap set for another. Those horrible coils had crushed him to death long before even George could reach the spot, while the great snake in its terrible death agonies, had rent the wretch's body in a shocking way, leaving an unrecognisable mass.

That was what Teresa had seen. The shock no doubt had driven her mad.

When she ran out she went straight to the river—at least, we suppose so, for we never saw anything of her again.

There are alligators in those waters.

Since then my husband and I have almost forgotten the tragedy. We are very happy alone together in our sunny tropic home.

C. T. H.

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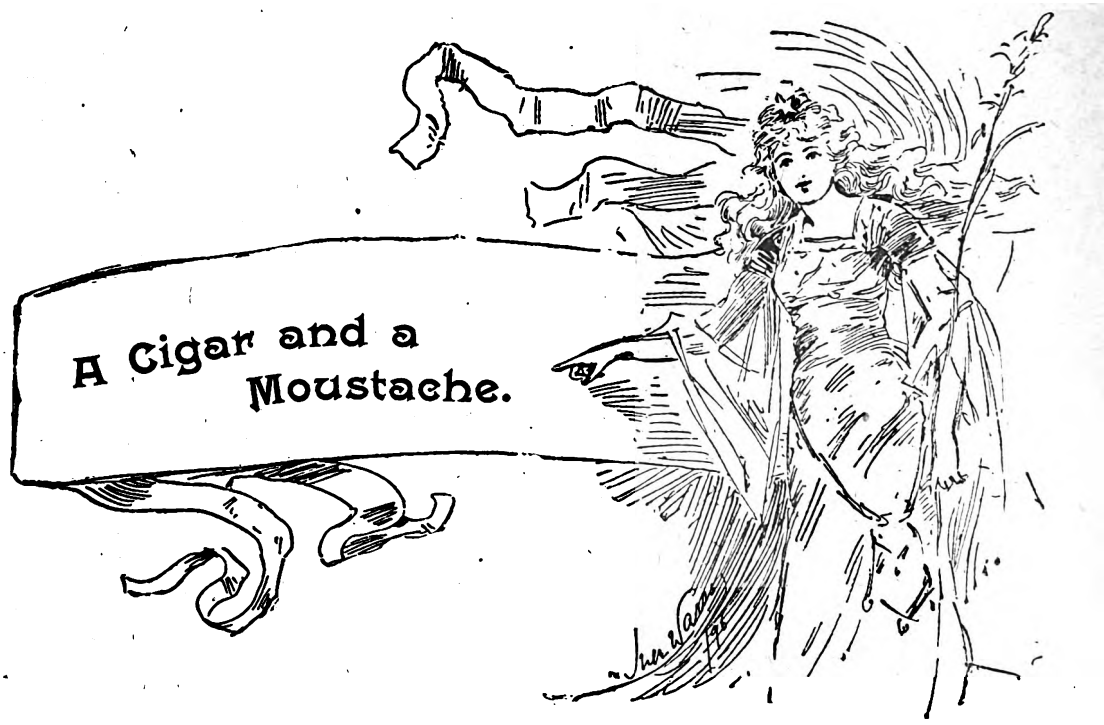

A Cigar and a Moustache.

As the coffee was being served, the lady of the house said: "You need not refrain from smoking, gentlemen, it is not in the least disagreeable to me," at the same time making a sign to her husband.

He left the table, and in a couple of minutes returned with a box of magnificent cigars, which was passed round from guest to guest. When my turn came I tendered it to my neighbour on the left, he gently declined, saying:

"Thank you. I do not smoke."

"You do not smoke," remarked our hostess, "how has that come about?"

"It's a penance, madam."

"A penance! I do not understand. Can you explain the mystery?"

"Certainly. Here's the story!

"Twenty-five years ago I was, at least so people told me, a fine-looking young man. I had at any rate a pretty fair moustache. It was quite thick in the centre, and graduated into two little sharp points at the sides which I used to twist cavalierly in the air. My friends said that no lady's heart could resist such moustaches. They perhaps, exaggerated, but I certainly captured a few.

"At last, one fine day, or rather one fine night, for it was at a ball—I fell in love. She was an adorable young girl. I danced three waltzes with her, and from the first I knew my heart was lost.

"When I made inquiries about her next day I learnt she was the daughter of a millionaire—a very honourable family—and that her parents expected something wonderful in the way of a son-in-law—a pearl in fact.

"A pearl! I was too modest to expect to realise the ideal demanded; and even though I were a pearl, as I had very little money I thought it better to abstain from all further advances.

"When one is in love it is rare—it is not easy—to keep the secret hidden. In short, mine went from friend to friend, and salon to salon, until at last it reached the ears of Mlle. Genevieve that a young man with a fair moustache was dying for love of her. It seems I had made an impression on her too."

"Your moustache?" I interrupted.

"Yes, my moustache. Whatever it was, Mlle. Genevieve made her papa understand that she wished to marry me.

"Our engagement lasted six weeks. Six weeks of paradise for me! Six weeks during which I was willing to sacrifice the world for Genevieve!

"Her saying, one evening, 'I beg you, my dear, not to smoke any more,' was enough to make me throw away at once the cigar just commenced, and I even determined not again to touch the box I had broken into that very morning.

"I expressly left it open within reach of my friends, of my *concierge*, of my servants, and I must say all these good people, as if they guessed my desire, did their best to diminish my chances of falling into temptation.

"At last the great day arrived, I mean the day of our marriage, before the Mayor.

"It was arranged that I was to meet Genevieve at her home at half-past one. I got up early, I shaved, dressed, breakfasted, put on my new dress coat, made expressly for the occasion. Then ready, having given the fancy twist to my moustache, I looked at my watch—twelve o'clock. An hour to wait. I was burning with nervous impatience. I went backwards and forwards. I sat down, I jumped up. Looking for some distraction to help to pass away this hour of waiting. My eyes fell on the mantelpiece and the cigar box. Mechanically I went towards it. I opened it. One cigar remained in the bottom. I took it out. I fingered it. It was of the

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choicest quality. I let it fall quickly back into the box again, and moved out of the way of temptation! I looked at my watch half a quarter past twelve. More than three-quarters of an hour still to wait. I returned towards the chimney, again took out the cigar, and bit the end off with my teeth. I lit it, and, stretching back in an armchair, I commenced to smoke. It was delicious, I leant back my head, closed my eyes, and in a couple of minutes I felt that sweet sensation, neighbour of sleep when thought ends, and dreams begin.

"I was suddenly roused by a slight smell of burning. I got up, examined everywhere hurriedly—the curtains, the draperies, my coat, waistcoat! Nothing! I must have been dreaming. I looked at my watch—twenty-five minutes past one. I rushed out, drove like fur to the house of my intended wife—both the concierge and coachman were trying not to laugh at my haste.

"When John, the porter, opened the door for me, he almost fainted with surprise.

"'Everyone has gone, monsieur. You are to follow on to the Mairie, so Mdlle. Genevieve told me to tell you. She did not seem pleased, monsieur.' I saw that the fellow could not keep from laughing.

"'Is it at me you are laughing, boy?'

"'Monsieur knows I will not do any such thing. Besides, he knows what pleases Mademoiselle, and if she admires them like that!'

"As I hastened off I heard a general tittering.

"At ten minutes past two I was at the Mayor's.

"'The registry of marriages? Not for yourself, perhaps?

"'Yes, for myself,' I replied.

"'For you?—Ah, she must be very good, very good!' And he fell on to a bench holding his sides with laughter.

"I don't know how I kept from boxing his ears. However he showed me the registry.

"I ran towards the door indicated, and entered.

"'Ah! Here he comes at last!' exclaimed my father-in-law.

"I advanced towards the table. Shrieks of laughter arose on all sides, The Mayor seemed smothering in his chair. Genevieve buried her face in her hands. Her mother gesticulated indignantly. As to her father, he came towards me, and said in a tone which showed he meant it:

"'Monsieur, everything is over between us.'

"'But what's the matter?'

"'The matter is monsieur, that marriage is a sacred thing—and that we are not going through the Carnival.'

"'But I cannot understand!'

"'Look in the glass, then!'

"I went to the glass and uttered a cry of surprise and horror at what I saw. All the right side of my moustache was burnt off.

"I made my escape as quickly as possible. Do you understand now why I never smoke cigars?"

"And is that all?" said I to the narrator.

"No. Six months after I met Genevieve again!"

"And we had an explanation, Monsieur," said a handsome and attractive lady opposite.

OSWALD K.

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The Deceiving of Mère Marchette.

I.

It was half-past eleven on a hot July day in Paris. The sunlight lay over the whole city, and shone nowhere more strongly than upon the great hospital of the Salpêtrière. Nobody was stirring unless forced to activity by some pressing duty. In the long white wards the patients were asleep or lying quiet in exhaustion under the burning fervour of the summer heat.

Down one of the corridors, where it seemed refreshingly cool after the warmth of the outer air from which he had come, a young man was passing. His step, though rapid, had the noiseless quality which bespeaks familiarity with the sick room and the hospital. His figure was compact and nervous, his glance clear and keen. Dr. Jean Lommel was one of the house physicians of the Salpêtrière, although that he was not now making his regular rounds was evident from the fact that entering a certain ward he passed quickly to a bed near the middle of it without stopping at any of the others.

On the bed lay an old woman. Her face was one which showed great strength of character. It was of a marked peasant type, and for all its innumerable wrinkles, its sunken temples, the coarse texture of its skin, and the shrunken lips which showed the lack of teeth behind them, it was full of a nobility and kindliness which no ravages of time or disease could wholly hide.

The hair that straggled in thin locks from beneath the white cap was hardly less snowy than the material which covered it; and when the patient opened her sunken eyes, as the doctor stopped beside the bed, they were bright and shining with a lustre which was not all either fever or anxiety. Her glance was one of intense and pitiful inquiry. The young man touched her white hair with the tips of his long fine fingers in a pitying caress, before he took hold of the withered wrist, shrunken and marked with blue veins, that lay outside the coverlet.

"In an hour, Mère Marchette," he said, answering her look—"in an hour he will be here; keep up a good heart. You do not suffer?"

The old woman feebly shook her head. The ghost of a smile, faint, but full of happiness, shone in her face. She did not speak, but she thanked him with a look before she closed her eyes, and lay as motionless as she had previously been.

The young man looked at her a moment, an expression of pity in his brown eyes; then with a sigh he turned away, and moved softly down the ward again. By the door he encountered one of the nurses, who had risen and come forward to speak to him.

"Will she live, M. Lommel?"

"Yes," the doctor answered. "She has given all her energies for days to keeping alive till her grandson gets here. It is very singular," he went on, in a voice of low distinctness that could have been acquired only in sick rooms, "how her instinct has taught her to save her strength. She never moves nor speaks; she simply lives."

"She has been that way," the nurse returned, "ever since we told her that Pierre was coming. Will he be here by twelve?"

"Not till half-past twelve," Dr. Lommel replied. "I will return before then."

And he went out into the hot sunshine.

II.

Everybody connected with the ward of Salpêtrière, wherein she was, held a kindly feeling for poor old Mère Marchette. The doctors and the nurses could not have been more kind or more tender had she been of their own blood. She was one of those who always win affection. She was so patient, so simple, so kindly.

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She was a peasant woman from Normandy, who had in her old age drifted to Paris with her grandson Pierre, a lad of sixteen years.

All the rest of the family were dead. Pierre's father had been a soldier, and it was with the hope of securing a pension for his son that Mère Marchette had left her home and the life in Normandy she loved, to throw herself into Paris as into the sea. The dead soldier, however, had been mustered out before the malarial fever, contracted in the swamps of the Landes, had developed itself, and the pension could not be obtained. The disappointment was a bitter one, made worse by the fact that Mère Marchette had been told by one and another that the claim would have been granted had the case been properly managed.

The poor old creature could not escape a feeling of self-blame in thinking that it was her want of keenness which had deprived Pierre of his pension. Her grandson for her represented the world, and to him she devoted all her energies. She toiled for him, and watched and suffered with that unselfish egotism possible only to the old and lonely.

Fortunately Pierre was a good lad, who returned his grandmother's love with a devotion hardly less complete than her own. They lived together in two attic rooms, where they passed the evenings sitting in the dark, and talking of their Normandy home. They recalled the past, and built endless air castles of the time when they should be able to return. They had grand plans of repurchasing the old cot where both of them had been born, and which had been lost by the foreclosure of a mortgage after the long illness of Pierre's father had ended.

They were never tired of talking of what they would do then, and of devising little ways in which the worn-out old farm might be made more profitable.

In the daytime Mère Marchette went out to do work as charwoman, while Pierre had been fortunate enough to obtain a place as assistant in a little grocery in Rue M. le Prince. It was in connection with this that Pierre gave his grandmother the only real grief he ever caused her while they were together. Suddenly the boy began to stay away in the evening, and when Mère Marchette sought to know the reason, he put her questions aside.

One evening, as she was making her way home, she saw her grandson chatting with a girl at the door of a milliner's shop. The heart of poor old Mère Marchette sank within her. The castles in the air, from whose glittering towers had shone delusive lights to strengthen and encourage her, fell in ruins before her eyes. In a moment the burden of her age, her poverty, her weariness, seemed increased tenfold.

She had all the peasant's instinctive distrust of Paris; she had not been able to live in the Latin Quarter without comprehending something of the evil about her, although, happily for her, the worst features of Parisian life would have been so unintelligible that she might have seen them unmoved. She thought no evil now of Pierre but she was seized with a terrible fear lest he might fall a victim to one of the sirens of the Latin Quarter, who, to Mère Marchette's thinking, destroyed soul and body alike.

Mère Marchette did not tell Pierre of the discovery she had made. She was only more gentle with him, while in secret she prayed more fervently. For some days longer the lad's mysterious absence continued, the sad hours of the evening stretching like long deserts of agony, over which the soul of Mère Marchette walked painfully with bleeding feet. And then one night Pierre came home with eyes aglow, and all was explained. He put into his grandmother's hand a little pile of francs—a sum pitiful enough in itself, but large to them—and told how a milliner in the street beyond had employed him in moving boxes and clearing out the attics of her house, which were to be remodelled into lodgings.

This had been his secret, and in his thought of the joyful surprise he was to give his grandmother, he had forgotten the pain she might endure by misunderstanding his absence.

It was such trifles as this that were the great events in the life of Mère Marchette and Pierre. There was a tenderness, an unselfishness, an idyllic devotion in their love which no amount of wealth, or culture, or rank could have heightened; but in the lad's veins was the blood of a soldier, that stirred hot with the currents of a vigorous youth. Of the army he had dreamed from his cradle, and strong as was his love for Mère Marchette, the force of destiny was stronger. It was the old tragedy of youth and age, of the absorption of maternal love and the restless impulses of the boy's heart.

Pierre justified his desire to himself with the excuse that he could earn more money in the ranks; but his grandmother knew only too well the force of the instinct he had inherited. She had seen the same struggle in the life of his father.

When Pierre was eighteen he shouldered his musket and marched away, leaving poor old Mère Marchette as much a stranger in Paris as when she had come to it two years before, to weep and pray alone. It would hardly be within the power of words to paint the anguish which lay between Pierre's departure and that hot July noon when Mère Marchette lay dying at the Salpêtrière.

Always in Paris she had been like a wild thing, caged and bewildered, confused by the life that swirled about her in the great city, even when she had been sustained by the presence of Pierre. When he was gone the gentle old soul began to die of home-sickness and heartbreak.

For two years she fought death stolidly, but persistently, refusing to acknowledge to herself that she was breaking down under the stress of loneliness and sorrow. She came of a race that died hard, and although she was past eighty, she looked forward hopefully to the time when Pierre should leave the army and come back to live with her again.

But the struggle for existence in Paris was hard, even when the joy of working for Pierre sustained her; when he was gone it became intolerable. At the end of two years the strength and courage even of the sturdy Norman peasant woman were exhausted; and then a dreadful disease, which had before shown itself in her family, seemed to take advantage of her weakness to spring upon her. She had been a charwoman in the family of Jean Lommel's mother, and so it came about that through the influence of the young doctor she had been admitted to the Salpêtrière when she was already dying of cancer in the stomach.

There was no patient in the ward who was not of better birth than Mère Marchette. She was of all most deficient in education, in knowledge of the world, in the graces of life; and yet of them all it was only the poor old peasant woman who awakened in the minds of the attendants a glow of genuine affection. There are some people who are born to be loved, and when these rare beings remain worthy of it, neither age, nor poverty,

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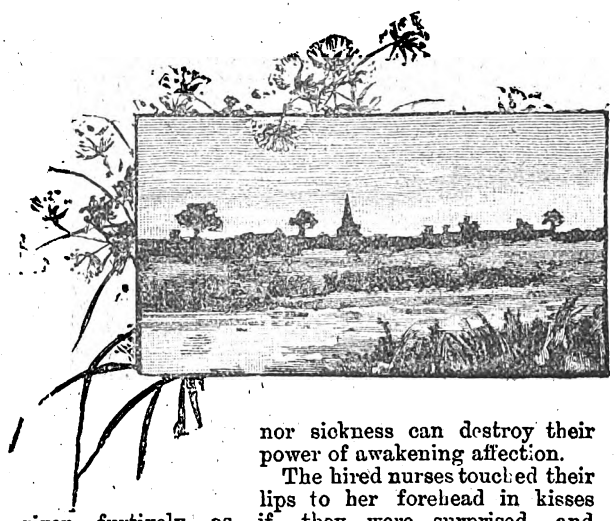

nor sickness can destroy their power of awakening affection.

The hired nurses touched their lips to her forehead in kisses given furtively, as if they were surprised, and prepared to be ashamed, of the emotion which called from them this unwonted display. The doctors spoke to her in tones unprofessionally soft, while Dr. Lommel, who had charge of the ward, treated her with an affectionate courtesy scarcely less warm than that he would have shown to his own grandmother.

They all knew that Mère Marchette must die, and from counting the time in weeks they had dropped to days, and then to hours. Indeed it seemed only the old woman's will which kept her alive now until Pierre should come. She had borne all her sufferings without a murmur, but she had not been able wholly to repress the cry of her heart.

The young soldier's regiment was in Algiers, and there had been difficulties about his furlough. Had it been any other death-bed in the hospital to which he had been summoned these difficulties would hardly have been surmounted, but in behalf of Mère Marchette the physicians had worked so zealously that all obstacles were removed and Pierre's leave of absence granted. From the moment she had been told that her grandson was on his way she had been perfectly quiet, and, as the doctor said, had devoted her whole body to keeping alive untill Pierre should come.

And on this hot July noon the train which was bringing Pierre was drawing nearer to Paris, and Mère Marchette lay so still that she seemed scarcely to breathe—so still that one might fancy she would not even think, lest in so doing she exhausted some precious grain of strength, and so should die without the blessing of that last embrace.

III.

Whoever keeps himself informed of the course of modern scientific investigations is likely to be aware that especial attention has been given at the Salpêtrière to that strange physical or psychical fact known as hypnotism.

To the outside observer no feature of this strange power is more remarkable than the influence the hypnotist may exert over his subject after the trance is broken. A hypnotised person may be told to perform any act on awaking, and when seemingly restored to his normal condition bears the impress of that command so strongly that he is urged to obey it by an irresistible impulse. It is quite as easy, moreover, to foist upon the patients the most extraordinary delusions. The subject is told that upon awaking a bottle will seem to be a lamp, a blank card a picture, or any other deception which comes into the mind of the hypnotist; and so perfect is the working of this mysterious and terrible law that the delusion is accomplished to its minutest details.

Dr. Lommel, like all his young *confrères*, had become intensely interested in all these researches, so like a scientific realisation of the fairy tales of the Orient. He had even tried some experiments on his own account; and when the sufferings of Mère Marchette became pitifully intense he had ventured to attempt the substitution of hypnotism for opiates in relieving her distress. The old woman had not easily yielded to this influence. Susceptibility to hypnotism is more apt to be found in hysterical or nervously sensitive subjects than in such sturdy characters. By degrees, however, Dr. Lommel established control over her.

In the end, to throw her into a hypnotic sleep, he had only to hold his forefinger an inch or two from her forehead, so that her eyes, in looking at it, turned upward and inward a little. He did not experiment with Mère Marchette; he felt too tenderly toward the old woman to make her the subject of scientific investigation outside of the direct line of treatment.

He simply said: "When you awaken you will be free from pain, Mère Marchette;" then he would breathe lightly on her forehead, and the sick woman would awaken, to lie as peaceful as if no terrible disease was gnawing like a tiger at her vitals.

The case had attracted a good deal of attention at the Salpêtrière, and, although Mère Marchette was utterly ignorant of it, her sick-bed was a point of interest toward which were turned the thoughts of physicians over half of Europe. The unlearned peasant, to whom the simplest terms of science would have been unintelligible, was furnishing data for future scientific treatises; and people of whose very existence she was unaware read the daily bulletins of her condition with closest eagerness.

IV.

It was a few minutes after twelve o'clock when Dr. Lommel re-entered the ward. Mère Marchette lay apparently sleeping, but as he approached her bedside the old eyes opened with a piercing and eager question. The young man shook his head, smiling tenderly.

"Not yet, Mère Marchette," he said. "There are still some minutes to wait."

He sat down beside the bed, and laid his fingers on her wrist. The pulse was so faint that he could scarcely feel it, but it was steady. For some minutes he remained quiet, with his eyes fixed on the poor old face before him. There came into his mind the thought of what this woman's life had been—her childhood and youth in the hut of a Norman peasant; of what her own home might have been when she became a wife and mother; of the desolation which had come upon her in the death of all her family save only Pierre; of the strange fate that had brought her to Paris; of the terrible wrench which her old heart must have felt when her grandson was taken from her; and of the pathetic patience with which she had borne privation, loneliness, and suffering.

He knew only the outlines of her history, since Mère Marchette had spoken little of herself. What her feelings might have been he could only imagine; the old

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woman could not have told her mental experiences; she had never even analysed them. Unless he had been a peasant and a mother himself, Lommel could not have divined Mère Marchette's emotions; he could only reflect what he should have felt in her place. He said to himself at last that, after all, the circumstances which made Mère Marchette's lot so pathetic must also have deadened her sensibilities, and so have softened her suffering.

He sighed and looked at his watch. His assistant had gone to the railway station to meet Pierre, and the time he had fixed for their return was already past by five minutes. He felt again his patient's pulse, with a terrible dread lest after all the young soldier should arrive too late. The artery throbbed more feebly, but still steadily, and at his touch the sick woman opened her eyes with the old questioning look.

"Patience, Mère Marchette," he said, nodding encouragingly, "all goes well."

She did not speak, but she gave him a look so eloquent with gratitude that words were not needed. Then she lay quiet again, and the silent watch went on. Five minutes passed, ten, fifteen; the young doctor became extremely uneasy. At last in the distance he heard a clock strike one. At the sound Mère Marchette opened her eyes with a quick, startled glance.

"Pierre!" she cried, in a voice of intense love and terror.

"Victor has gone to the station to meet him; patience yet a little."

The old woman regarded him with a look of terrible pathos.

"God could not let me die without seeing Pierre," she murmured.

At that moment through the still afternoon was heard the sound of a carriage. Mère Marchette's eyes shone with a wild and fevered express on.

"You must be calm," Lommel said, "I will bring him to you."

He administered the little stimulant she could take, and passed quickly out into the corridor.

V.

Dr. Lommel closed the door of the ward behind him and started down the corridor, but at the first step he stopped suddenly with a terrible sinking of the heart. Victor was coming toward him, but alone, and with a white face.

"Victor," Jean cried, in a voice intense but low, "what has happened? Where is Pierre?"

"There has been an accident," Victor returned. "A bridge broke under his train."

"But you do not know—" began Lommel.

"Yes," the other interrupted; "M. de Brue, who was on the train and escaped with a broken arm, was in the same compartment with Pierre. He rode through on the engine that came in for help. Pierre had told him I was to meet him, and so when M. de Brue saw me he stopped to say that the soldier was struck on the chest and killed instantly."

Dr. Lommel stood regarding his companion with terror and compassion in his look.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!*" he said; "poor Mère Marchette!"

"It will kill her," Victor responded.

"That is nothing," was the doctor's reply. "It is not death, but the agony she will suffer."

At that moment the nurse came out of the ward and hurried down the corridor to join them.

"M. le Docteur," she said, "I beg your pardon, but the excitement of Mére Marchette is so great that I venture to suggest that her grandson hurry."

She glanced round as she spoke, and saw that he was not there. An exclamation rose to her lips; the doctor checked her by a glance.

"Go back to Mère Marchette," said he, "and say that I am cautioning Pierre——stay, I will go myself. Wait here, Victor."

He went back into the ward, and passed down between the cots, from which eyes, that the indifference of illness scarcely left human, watched him with faint curiosity. Mère Marchette was sitting up in bed, trembling with eagerness and excitement. All the reserve which she had maintained for weeks had been swept aside. The moment for which she had kept herself alive had come at last, and there was no longer any need to save her energy. Her eyes shone, a feverish glow was on her cheek, even her withered lips had taken on for the moment a wan and ghostly red. It seemed to the doctor, as he looked at her, as if all the vitality which remained in her feeble frame was being expended in a last quick fire.

"Ah," he said, "I have been warning Pierre to be calm, when it is you to whom I should speak. Come, it will only take a moment, but I must give you treatment before I can let you see him."

As he spoke he put his forefinger up to her forehead with a gesture he always used in hypnotising her. Mère Marchette struggled a moment as if she would not yield to anything which delayed her reunion with Pierre; then she sank into a hypnotic sleep. The doctor leant forward, and spoke with an emphasis which he had never before used with his patient.

"When you awake," he said, "you will see Pierre; the person I shall bring to you is your grandson. Remember," he repeated, "it is Pierre who will come in with me."

He breathed on her eyelids in the usual method of awakening her.

"Now," he said, "I will bring him here, Mère Marchette."

He went back to where Victor and the nurse were awaiting him.

"Victor," he said quickly, "you know the experiment

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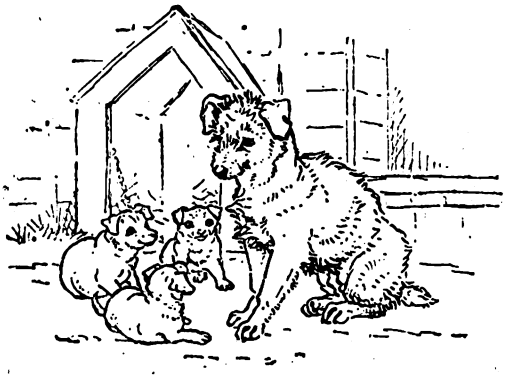

M. Charcot tried yesterday when he made a hypnotised patient believe one person was another: I have told Mère Marchette that you are Pierre. You must take his place; come quickly."

The young man drew back.

"I cannot," he protested.

"You must," Lommel returned, almost fiercely. "Come."

VI.

It was with terrible inward misgiving that Jean and Victor entered the ward; but as soon as the eyes of Mère Marchette fell upon the latter, they knew that the experiment was a success. Such a look of yearning love illumined the withered, old features, such an unspeakable joy shone in the sunken eyes, such quivering eagerness was expressed by the outstretched hands, that the young men found their way to the bedside blinded by tears.

An inarticulate cry, that was half moan and half sob, burst from the lips of Mère Marchette as Victor fell on his knees by the bedside. Carried out of himself by genuine feeling, the young man had no need to simulate the emotions necessary for the part he was playing. Seizing the wrinkled hand which lay before him on the bed, he covered it with tears and kisses; then with a cry of piercing sweetness, Mère Marchette flung herself forward into his arms.

"Oh, Pierre, Pierre!" she sobbed. "Oh, the good God, the good God!"

She clasped her arms about his neck, she strained him to her breast, the feebleness of her dying embrace transformed to strength by the divine fervour of maternal love. She mingled her kisses with a soft and hardly articulate babble of endearing words; the terms which she had used over his cradle she mingled with the pet names of his childhood, and the loving speech which belonged to maturer years. She held him away from her that she might look at him, and her eyes were holden so that she saw in his face the changes that her fancy had pictured in thinking of the real Pierre.

"Ah," she said, "how brown thou hast grown; and thou art such a man now! Ah, thou rogue," she went on, laughing softly, "I knew thou hadst grown a beard—and not a word of it in thy letters. But I knew."

She put her thin fingers under his chin, and with a sudden gravity lifted his face.

"Look in my eyes," she said; "why dost thou turn away? Hast thou not been a good boy? Hast thou not loved the good God?'

Poor Victor, overwhelmed with the dreadful consciousness of deceit, found it almost impossible, in face of this touching and pious affection, to meet the old woman's glance. He struggled to force himself to look into her eyes unwaveringly. Dr. Lommel laid his hand upon his companion's shoulder.

"Yes, Mère Marchette," said he, "Pierre is a good lad, that I will answer for."

The old woman raised her eyes towards Heaven, and her lips moved. She was evidently praying. She had received extreme unction just before noon, but this moment in which she commended her grandson to God was to her no less solemn than that of her own last communion. Then she put out her hand to Dr. Lommel with her smile of wonderful sweetness and an air of noble simplicity.

"You have been so kind to old Mère Marchette," were her words; "the good God will reward you."

He looked at the old dying peasant woman and tried to speak, but his sobs choked him. He bent and kissed her hand, and laid it gently in that of Victor. Her little strength was evidently failing fast. With a last effort she made a movement to drag herself nearer to Victor. He understood her wish and supported her in his arms.

"Promise me," she murmured, her voice wasted almost to a whisper, "that thou wilt be good."

"I promise," he answered.

And the words were no less sincere because she mistook the speaker. A smile of heavenly rapture came over her face; she tried to speak and failed. But Victor understood her wish and kissed her. As their lips parted she sighed quiveringly.

"She is dead," said Dr. Lommel.

VII.

Victor laid the body gently back upon the bed, and rose to his feet. He seized his friend by the shoulders; the tears were streaming down his cheeks.

"Oh, *mon Dieu*, Jean!" he cried. "To deceive such trust. I feel as if I have been violating a sacrament."

"I know," the other answered; "but ah, how happy she was!"

M. A. P.

OUGHT YOU TO HAVE HAD ONE OF THOSE FIVE POUNDS?

The result of the distribution in connection with the ten £5 notes offered every week in *P.W.* appears in the current issue of that paper. Two out of the ten people selected have been fortunate enough to secure £5 each by forwarding their names to this office. There are eight others, who, by failing to apply, either through indifference, or through their not being readers, did not secure their money. Their names and addresses are also given. Are you one of them?

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PYN-KA
THE WONDERFUL
METAL POLISHER
The Lustre Lasts!
Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!
Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.
Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

NOSE MACHINE.
This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps.
ALEX. ROSS,
62, Theobald's Road, London.
Opposite Bedford Row. (Est. 1850.)
Parcel free from observation

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."
BEECHAM'S PILLS
FOR ALL
BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
SUCH AS
Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.
SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.
In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.
Prepared only by the Proprietor,
THOMAS BEECHAM, St Helens, Lancashire.
Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

ZOX
CURES
NEURALGIA
Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.
PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.
Do not be persuaded to take a substitute, there is nothing as good as ZOX.
Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.
ZOX Co., 39 MINCING LANE, LONDON, E.C.

THE BEST HAIR DYE
in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

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WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD
When you can get a real safe remedy like KAPUTINE?
Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vesicle tissues generally."
NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.
All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.
After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.
The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."
After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.
DEER RECTORY, MINTLAW, ABERDEEN,
From Rev. J. H. BURN. NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.
"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.
Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.
Nothing Similar. Nothing as Good. KAPUTINE CURES HEADACHE IN 10 MINUTES.
If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.
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AIDS TO ACCURACY.

F. T.—Yes, it is a fact that the number of brewing licenses taken out has fallen off very much lately. During the last twelve years there has been a decrease of 10,568.

A. T. has a penny in his possession bearing on it the letter H. He wants to know the meaning thereof.———— No doubt it is one of those made by Messrs. Ralph Heaton and Sons, the proprietors of the Birmingham mint. This firm was founded by the man who invented the hot shot used at the siege of Gibraltar, and so saved the fortress.

G. H.—Every President of the United States has been either a lawyer or a soldier, or both.

Householder.—If a yard-dog is to be depended upon as a reliable protector of the house to which he is attached, it stands to reason that the better his state of health the more efficient he will be. A dog that is surfeited with indigestible and inappropriate food is no more to be expected to be alert by night and day than is one that is suffering from the pangs of rheumatism. On the other hand, a hungry dog is far more likely to accept without demur the poisonous bait offered to him by strangers who desire to silence his bark for felonious purposes of their own.

Scotty.—It takes fifty tons of paint to give the Forth Bridge one coat of paint, the area dealt with being something like 120 acres.

Waitress.—The waitresses on the terrace of the House of Commons are not engaged by session, or even by the week, but from day to day, and the number engaged depends upon the state of the weather.

B. B.—The great puff-ball increases its size more rapidly than any other form of vegetation. It frequently springs from a tiny bud to the size of a full-bodied pumpkin in the course of a night, and calculations have proved that it increases at the rate of sixty million cells a minute.

T. H.—The first printed books had their leaves printed on one side only, the blank sides being pasted together.

Economist.—One of the cheapest British towns to live in is Bristol; another Birmingham. The cheapest of all, however, is Liverpool. During the past few years rents have dropped 25 per cent. in some parts of the city, and, taken all round, meat and provisions are abnormally cheap.

D. B.—The reading of romances is forbidden by the Koran; that is the reason popular romances are never put in writing among the Mohammedans, but are passed from one story-teller to another.

Scanty Locks is anxious to know if continual cutting or trimming of the hair will make it more abundant ————Frequent cutting of the hairs cannot increase their number, although it will increase their thickness.

C. J. H.—The "Stayabed" Club, of Chicago, is not a club of lazy people, but an organisation composed of the bedridden. The qualifications for membership are confirmed invalidism, and the ability to communicate with the other members by letter. The idea of this pathetic organisation occurred to a lady who had been bedridden for fifteen years.

P. P.—You are probably thinking of the law which obtains in Italy, where, if a circus does not perform every act promised in the printed programme, or, if it misleads the public by means of pictures, it is liable to a fine of £100 for each offence.

Hair.—Wire hairpins were first made in England in 1545. Prior to that time, the ladies used fine wooden skewers to "keep their hair on."

R. G.—The case I heard of the other day seems to me to be a still harder one than that to which you refer. In China, recently, a man was executed for murdering his father, and along with him his schoolmaster for not having taught him better.

Modiste.—The idea is not new. One or two of the great fashion firms in Paris have had figures modelled in wax in order to show off their costumes to advantage. Madame Patti is one whose presentment in wax may be seen clad in the very robes which that illustrious lady has ordered, and will wear. Sarah Bernhardt is another.

I. S. wants to know how many separate railway companies there are in the United States.————There are no fewer than 1,785 such companies in that part of the world.

S. K.—According to a telephone authority, the easiest language for telephoning is Chinese. It is principally monosyllables, and is made up of simple rising and falling inflections. German, it seems, is a good language for telephoning; but French is bad, and English worse, being too sibilant.

L. O. H.—Take an apple and make a stitch in the side just under the skin, drawing the thread carefully through; then place the point of the needle into the hole from which it has just come and take another stitch, continuing this until the circle is completed, only make a point of bringing the thread in the last instance through the hole made by the first insertion of the needle. Cross the ends of the thread, and pull gently, and the apple will come in half, although the skin will be whole.

W. T. F.—About 137,000,000 blank cartridges are used every year in the German Army.

Ink Spot.—Yes; some ancient inkstands have been found in tombs at Thebes, in Upper Egypt. One, which resembles a wooden palette, and is said to date back to about 1500 B.C., has two compartments; the upper has two holes, for red and black ink respectively, and the lower contains three reed pens. Some of the dry ink remains in the holes after a lapse of 3,000 years.

E. O.—Runaway horses are unknown in Russia. No one drives there without having a thin cord with a running noose round the neck of the animal. When an animal bolts, the cord is pulled, and the horse stops as soon as it feels the pressure on the windpipe.

M. P.—In Germany, a merchant was recently fined heavily for using a quotation from the Bible at the head of an advertisement, and although such exceedingly bad taste might not meet with the same punishment in this country, it would displease the public so highly that the advertiser would do himself more harm than good. I shouldn't advise you to do it.

M. H.—Certainly it is better to keep books on low shelves rather than high ones—at any rate, those which you particularly value. The nearer one goes to the ceiling the greater the heat of the atmosphere, and heat is injurious to valuable bindings. It dries out the oil of the leather, and causes the covers to warp. Books require good air just as much as human beings.

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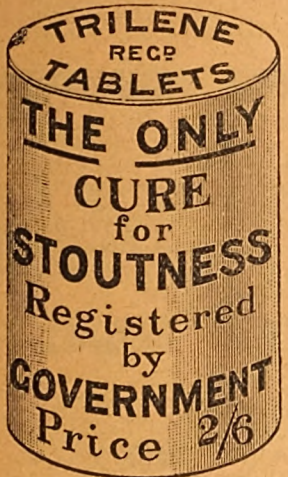
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

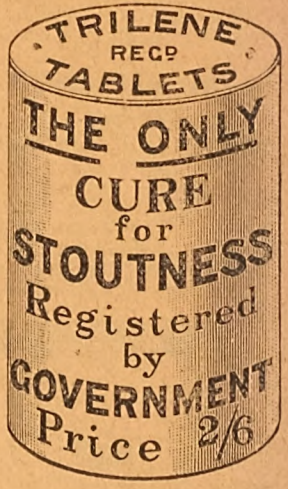
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

25 Windsor Terrace, Penarth, Cardiff.

Miss M FLAVELL says: "I have lost 2st., and am much better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

A. BROWN, of 25 Edwin Street, High Pallion, Sunderland, says: "You have no idea what a most wonderful effect the Tablets had. I am a great deal thinner, and better in health."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Windsor Hotel, Merthyr Vale, South Wales.

Mr. J. THOMAS writes: "When I started the Tablets I weighed 17st., and have got down to 14st. 9lb."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 13st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

L. LUDDRINGTON, "Sunnyside," Station Road, Sidcup, says: "I have benefited greatly, and have lost a stone."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PEART, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Miss A. ATKINS, 329 Southdown Road, Liverpool, writes: "I lost nearly a stone from taking one box."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

Mrs. WOODS, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets deserve every success."

Mrs. O'CONNOR, 2 Kensington Square Mansions, London, writes: "I am much less stout for taking them."

Surgeon Colonel E. S. BRANDER writes from Ihansi, India, in September, 1897: "Your Tablets in my own experience form an excellent remedy for reducing weight."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Miss J. GUISE, 3 North End, Croydon, says: "I cannot speak too highly of the Tablets; I was stout all my life until a few weeks ago, when I first began your treatment. I was surprised to find they acted so admirably. I am now getting quite a slender figure, besides being better in health."

Balgowan Lodge, Methven, N.B.

Miss MCPHERSON writes: "I have taken a box, and am reduced 1st. in weight."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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100

BICYCLE PRIZES.

Ladies' or Gent's £23 A.B. Cycles.

SEND ANSWERS EARLY.

WHAT TO DO.—Make up the best sentence you can of eleven words, the first letter of each word commencing with a letter of "COMPETITION" in proper order. Thus: "*C*yclists *O*ne *M*ay *P*ass *E*verywhere *T*hat *I*nvariably *T*rust *I*n *O*ur *N*ame." It will be seen that the initial letters of each word spell "COMPETITION." The foregoing sentence is only given as an example of what we mean, and should not be sent in.

AN ABSOLUTELY FREE COMPETITION.

We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. Neither after you have won a prize (if you are fortunate enough to do so) do we compel you to purchase any accessories. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office gets the benefit of. Thus we can truthfully assert of this thoroughly genuine Competition that it is

ABSOLUTELY FREE TO ALL.

ALL MACHINES GUARANTEED FOR TWELVE MONTHS.

LIST OF PRIZES.

First Prize, £23 A.B. Safety, fitted with A.B. tyres.

The following ladies and gentlemen are amongst the number of persons who have recently received free bicycles, each of whom have signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected either directly or indirectly with this firm. We will forfeit £1,000 if this statement is incorrect. A few Free Cycle Winners: Mr. Geo. A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. Arthur J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. Maria Fraser, Haglefort, Shinrone, Ireland; Mr. Robert Hughes, Llanidan, Anglesey, North Wales; Mr. L. Horne, 101 London Road, Oldham; Mrs. Flora H. Bungay, 170 Railton Road, Herne Hill, S.E.; etc., etc., etc.

Second Class (9 prizes) £23 Cycle for £9
Third Class (12 prizes) £23 Cycle for £10
Fourth Class (15 prizes) £23 Cycle for £11
Fifth Class (18 prizes) £23 Cycle for £12
Sixth Class (20 prizes) £23 Cycle for £13
Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN and **closes September 19th, 1898,** but do not delay sending in at once. Results will be declared as soon as possible, although it may be a fortnight afterwards before all replies are posted.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 506. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 10TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 506. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending September 10th, 1898.

A RIVAL'S TRIBUTE.

SEVEN or eight men, mostly members of the Venetian aristocracy, were smoking their scented cigarettes round the beautifully appointed supper table of Signorina Marina, the celebrated *prima donna*, who, both by her talents and beauty, had for some time reigned supreme over the susceptible hearts of her countrymen.

In the centre of the table was a magnificent wreath of the costliest flowers, which were just beginning to droop in the heated atmosphere, while countless other similar offerings, more or less withered, lay about the room.

"That has kept well," said Marina, as she removed the cigarette from her red lips and pointed with her jewelled fingers to the fragrant circle which lay beneath the rose-coloured shades of the antique silver candelabra.

"Affection's offering, I suppose?" answered the Count de Rossi, who was sitting beside her, "the humble tribute of homage from some adorer, chained by the spell of your beauty."

"It came from the Duke, after *Otello* last night," she replied, looking mischievously at him.

"And the others?" asked the Count, whose brows had contracted at the mention of the Duke's name.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

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"Oh, some of them are weeks old, those hanging over my writing-table I had three days ago, after *Il Trovatore*. They were lovely."

"But they are faded already. True emblems of the evanescent enthusiasm which offered them," said a langu id poet, whose pessimism was his pride, and who was writing an epic round Marina.

"The enthusiasm of Venice for her Marina will never fade," said the Count warmly, turning an adoring gaze on the dazzling figure beside him.

Marina was a creature of ever changing moods, and the poet's words came with a sense of evil foreboding. They gave expression to a terrible thought that had already risen in her mind, and in the midst of the applause which greeted her admirer's speech her face remained sad, and there was a mournful cadence in her voice as she answered:

"The poet is right. Human favour is but as a bubble and vanishes in the moment of its pride. In every outburst of applause which rejoices the artiste's heart, there lies an undertone of fear lest it should be the last. A month ago I reigned supreme; I was the idol of Venice. Now another star has appeared above the horizon, and the fickle hearts of my countrymen are beginning to worship at the shrine of my rival."

"Marina can have *no* rival!" exclaimed two or three at once.

"You cannot deceive me, my friends. A woman knows intuitively when the hearts of her lovers grow cold, and since Carlotta has been singing there has not been that fierce pulse of enthusiasm beating in the applause they have offered to me. They do it as a matter of course; it is cold; their hearts are not in it. I see it, I feel it; but *I* shall not suffer defeat. Venice will be the loser," she concluded with a proud smile.

"Carlotta was splendidly received last night," said Count Sposi, who owed Marina a grudge for having refused to share his coronet and impoverished fortunes. "She certainly sings divinely, and as to her youth and beauty there cannot be two opinions."

"I wonder you are not listening to her now!" said his hostess sharply. "Marina is not yet so destitute of friends but that she could well spare the Count Sposi. You may think, perhaps, to humiliate *me*, the deposed queen of song, by the praises of my successor! But, beware!" she added, and her face assumed an expression worthy of Lucrezia Borgia, "Marina is not easily slighted! At seventeen my dagger pierced the heart of my rival in love. To-day I am twenty-four, and my hand shall not spare my rival in fame."

"But why speak of yourself by so absurd a title as 'a deposed queen'?" asked de Rossi lightly. "The most Carlotta can ever hope to do is to *share* your throne, if you permit it."

"A throne, like a heart, can never be shared, my dear Count."

"You are cruel to talk like this to your faithful friends who are gathered round you, oblivious of the fact that Carlotta is undergoing the test which will make or mar her career."

"I am not ungrateful to you my friends," she said with one of her sunny smiles, "but something tells me that you will all go to the rising star, your voices will swell the chorus of adulation before many days have passed."

They protested with renewed ardour that none could ever take her place, they lavished eulogies and compliments upon her with unsparing hand, till, by degrees, the spoilt child of fortune was lured back to her most vivacious mood.

"There is one at least you may ever rely upon, one who will never forsake you, one who will be your slave till death," murmured de Rossi.

"You mean the Duke? He would have been here to-night only a matter of state importance kept him."

"No, I mean myself," said the other reproachfully, with a jealous pain gnawing at his heart.

She laughed merrily, and plucking a flower from the Duke's wreath pressed her lips to it and gave it to him as a peace offering.

For the next half-hour Marina excelled herself in the radiance of her smiles, the brilliance of her wit, and the witchery of her voice, till the possibility of her ever being dethroned seemed driven from all minds.

Towards midnight the door opened to admit an Austrian Count, who was generally admitted to be the best news agent in society.

"You are late, Herr Graf. You must do penance for your non-appearance, and confess what has kept you. Kneel down there, and make atonement!" said Marina with pretty imperiousness, pointing to a stool at her feet.

The Austrian let his ponderous form down with well-feigned contrition, and proceeded to relate all sorts of adventures:

"At last I turned in to hear Carlotta in the great scene of *La Nozze di Figaro*. I found the people going wild over her. They were behaving like lunatics, and some young fools near me were raving about her beauty, her angelic voice, and all that sort of thing. At the end of the act they called her seven times before the curtain! I can't see what they admire in her."

"They never did as much for me," thought Marina bitterly.

"I got so tired of the noise," went on the Austrian, "that I went behind, thinking to get a closer view of the syren; but her room was besieged, and after waiting about half-an-hour I saw the Duke of Acquavita escorting her and her mother to his own carriage. They say he is very much struck——"

"Ah! *Diavolo!*" hissed Marina through her teeth, and fell back in a deadly swoon on her silken cushions.

* * * * *

Venice was divided into two factions, and public feeling ran high between the two rivals in the city. Count Sposi had made it his business to warn Carlotta's friends that her life was in danger from the malice of her sister-singer, and the partizans of the former unwisely boasted of their favourite's conquest of the Duke of Acquavita, a man of ancient name and princely fortune, both of which, it was said, he had already laid at the feet of the young artiste.

Marina behaved with dignified reserve, and at last surprised both her friends and her enemies by requesting that a meeting should be arranged between herself and Carlotta.

There was a great contrast between the two. Marina was a woman in the full flush of her matured charms, conscious of her power, with an indomitable will, and the experience of a stormy youth behind her. Carlotta was young, fresh, gentle of heart though ardent in temperament, as yet unsullied by the garish life on the other side of the footlights.

Her sweetness and purity seemed to disarm her rival, and Marina went towards her with outstretched hands, saying:

"Forgive me, and those of my foolish friends who have tried to pain you! We must be friends, sisters in our beloved art, sharing its pleasures and cares. The

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world of song is wide, and holds fields of triumph for both of us. Let no petty jealousy mar the glory of our career!"

Carlotta's heart went out warmly to this generous overture, and welcomed her new friend with all the spontaneity of her nature.

"She is charming. I must be at her benefit next week," said Marina, as she drove home with the Count de Rossi. "I must add my tribute to those of her admirers, and it shall not be one of mere fading leaves."

The night of Carlotta's benefit arrived, and amid all the brilliant, enraptured audience, none seemed more carried away by the enthralling charm of the young artiste than Marina.

At the close of the opera, the fair young girl, in the white robes of the penitent Marguerite, came forward again and again to receive the storm of acclamation that greeted her. As the curtain rose for the fifth time Marina rose in her box and hurled her "unfading tribute" with unerring aim.

It was a bronze wreath picked out with gold, and it fell, not at the feet, but on the temples of the smiling Marguerite, who sank lifeless on the boards where she had scored her triumphs, felled by the hand of her treacherous rival, cut off in the zenith of her fame by the imperishable gift of an implacable foe.

MARY FERMOR.

The Temptation of Gold.

TOM JENKINS ran his hand through the gold that lay heaped on the floor of the hut.

"It seems to me, Billy," he said slowly, "that hopin' to find it is better than findin' it."

Dull gleams of light from a smoky lantern fell athwart the face of the old miner, rugged, homely, deeply furrowed by time and hardships, and offering a marked contrast indeed to the handsome, patrician features of Billy Bailey, his junior partner.

"Findin', Billy, means leavin' here. It's an end to the wants and privations I've known for nigh on twenty years. But, somehow, I've come to like these still old mountains, and the singing of the pines, and the river. They've growed like friends, and I'm never lonely among 'em. Listen! you can hear 'em now. Perhaps it's the last time they'll ever sing for me."

"We're going back to civ'lisation," continued Tom, not heeding the other's lack of sympathy with his reminiscent mood, "and that means separation. I know you like me, Billy. A feller couldn't want a better partner than you've been fer the two years I've knowed you. But with your eddication, and yer young blood, and yer ambitions, you ain't my sort in civ'lisation. We can't be the same there. I couldn't expect it. But I think a lot of you, Billy. I——"

"Oh, come, Tom," broke in his companion impatiently, "you're in the dumps to-night. Take a drink and brace up. Should think you'd look on the bright side of things now. We've worked and starved in these wilds for gold, until at last we've got it. Think of the ten thousand pleasures that this gold can buy for us. There's no life in these solitudes. It's there in the crowded streets, and it can all be ours when we've got the god of gold on our side."

Billy laughed gloatingly in anticipation. Thence once more he fixed his eyes with a glittering intensity on the yellow heap which meant for him all that life can mean to a selfish, loveless nature.

"But it ain't for me," persisted Tom. "I'm past them things. If it wasn't for the hope of finding my old mother in England and makin' her comfortable, I'd stay. I don't care for the gold after all. I've found it, and my hungerin' for it's satisfied."

Billy made no answer. He had long since become resigned to the diversity of their tastes, and to-night he was in no mood for argument. He got out some materials, and began to repair a rent in his coat. Tom rose presently, and dropped the nuggets into a sack. Then he arranged his blankets for the night.

"Put it away safely, Billy," he said jocularly; "we're already on the edge of civilisation, and must learn to be pertickler."

"I'll look after it, never fear," said the other shortly; "good night."

Billy finished his task, but his mind was still busy with the thoughts of the future. He rose and stepped out into the night. At his feet the turbulent river rushed blackly along, its foam crests gleaming like dull silver in the clear starlight. Behind him towered in silent mystery the rugged, wooded mountains. The air was heavy with the scent of the pines.

But Billy saw none of the beauty of the night. The mountains awakened memories of hardships and hopelessness; the river was only a highway to civilisation.

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He lit his pipe, and began to pace up and down the shelving shore.

There was none of the stuff of which heroes are made in Billy Bailey's composition. Had the fates seen fit to continue their kindly beginning, he would probably have developed into one of the horde of whited sepulchres—those who observe the conventions to the letter, indulge every desire with a studied care that wins the approval of men, and, when dead, are respectfully buried and speedily forgotten. On the contrary, fate had preferred giving Billy a chance to prove his mettle. His college career cut short by the melting away of his father's fortune, he awoke one morning to find himself face to face with the world, his wits his only capital.

He remembered to-night his struggle to maintain his social position; the slights heaped upon him by erstwhile boon companions; the gradual sinking away of hope, until, with starvation staring him in the face, he had shipped in a vessel bound for distant lands.

But now! Yet there was not so much, after all. Would it give him all the pleasures he hoped for?

If he only had Tom's share, too! The thought startled him, and he looked furtively about, as though already under surveillance.

Well, why not? What was Tom to him now? The old man cared nothing for gold—he had said as much. Why not double his fortune by a single *coup*? The skiff was already for the morrow's journey down the river. By daylight he could put many miles between himself and Tom before the latter could make the trip across the almost impassable mountain trail.

He weakened for a moment as he thought of Tom's almost motherly solicitude—of how throughout their wanderings the big-hearted miner had borne the brunt of the struggle. Even when the treasure was discovered, the old man's first words were: "I'm glad for your sake, Billy."

Then he asked himself if he, too, was growing sentimental, and to-night, of all nights, on the very eve of battle.

He walked back to the hut. Tom was fast asleep. The flickering light of the lantern fell on the corner where he lay, his powerful form half swathed in the tattered blankets, his brawny arms thrown above his head. The face, from which sleep seemed to have smoothed away the deep furrows, reflected the rugged honesty of his heart. But the touching picture meant nothing to Billy, who watched the sleeper for an instant and then proceeded to put his cowardly scheme into execution.

It was but the work of a few minutes to gather together the things necessary for the short journey down the river and to secure the treasure for safe transportation. There was a look of cunning triumph on his face as he completed his preparations. He was thinking of the surprise awaiting Tom, who had been "fool enough to believe in human friendship."

He made a cautious step toward the door of the hut, when a slight noise caused him to glance back over his shoulder. The next instant the bag of gold crashed to the floor, while Billy sank on his knees, as though felled by a blow. Tom was sitting bolt upright in bed, his revolver levelled at Billy's heart.

The two gazed at each other a moment in utter silence. Billy's eyes scanned the old man's face and read there reproach and pity, rather than a thirst for swift revenge. This somewhat re-assured him, and he rose to his feet.

"Well," he said bluntly, "what do you intend to do?"

"So," said Tom, with a long breath, "I was mistook in you, after all. To think that I give you my friendship and you wa'n't worth it! What am I going to do? What do men usu'lly do when a partner turns thief?"

"You wouldn't shoot me, Tom?"

"Why not? Men's been killed for less than that, and the world was well red of 'em."

Then it did mean death.

As Billy realised this, his face turned ashen pale, while a palsying terror struck through him, rending his mask of bravado and revealing him as the pitiable dastard he was. He cowered before the old man, pleading hysterically.

"Oh, spare me, spare me, Tom. You said you cared nothing for gold, while I—I was mad with love of it! It is my idol—my everything. But take it, take it all—only give me my life—Tom—I—I—can't—die!"

"Get up,' commanded the other coldly; "don't make me despise you worse than I do. What would you do if you was in my place? Shoot, wouldn't you? You'd kill me now, if you had the chance."

"But think, Tom, what life means to me; I'm young and——"

"Think what friendship meant to me, Billy. I'm old."

In the momentary silence that followed, the pines and the river could be heard singing their old, old song, heedless of the strife of mortals for a scrap of the treasure they guarded. Tom heard the song, and his bitterness seemed to go out with the weird melody. The hand that held the weapon dropped listlessly to his side.

"I'll spare yer life," he said hoarsely; "you can go."

Billy stood a moment as though he had not heard.

"You're free. Go!" said Tom.

The boy glanced from the old man to the bag of gold, and then turned slowly towards the doorway.

"You better take yer gold now," said Tom quietly, "as I s'pose you won't be coming back."

"Do you mean it?" gasped Billy.

"Certainly; half's yourn, ain't it? There's only one thief in this camp, and it ain't me."

Tom proceeded to open the bag, and roughly divided the contents.

"You can take the boat; that goes with your half. As for me," he added, in a voice that wavered in spite of himself, "I'll do what I'd 'a' done if you'd 'a' robbed me. I'll stay a little longer with the mountains an' the river. They're uncertain sometimes, and sometimes they're dangerous, but on the whole they're better than men."

Billy vaguely appreciated the nature of the man with whom he was dealing, yet he felt that such nobleness required some acknowledgment. He sprang forward and tried to grasp the old man's hand.

"No, no—not that!" cried Tom fiercely. "Don't touch me. That gold is yourn. Take it and go. But go quickly, Billy — for Heaven knows — I'm only human."

A. G. GALE.

Untold Tales of the Indian Mutiny.

By H. HUNTER.

VI.—NÁNÁ SAHIB'S RUBY.

He was undoubtedly a grand old man, Ahmad Dutt, ex-trooper in the 2nd Native Cavalry. Fierce-eyed, clean-limbed, and with a length of arm which in his fighting days had often carried death to the heart of his enemy, he was now peacefully smoking his huka as a "pension-wallah" under the shade of his own fig-tree, waiting patiently till Allah should summon him to join the ranks of the Faithful in the Paradise of the Prophet.

On his chin he wore a flowing beard of snowy whiteness, on his head an enormous turban of orange silk.

Yes, I could well believe that Ahmad Dutt, once a trumpeter in the famous 2nd Cavalry, which had mutinied at Cawnpore, and offered their services to Dundue Pant, the Nána Sahib, who had many a story of the "terrible year" locked away in the secret chambers of his retentive brain. For the old *sowar* had a wonderful memory, and a marvellous skill in draping his figures and arranging his scenes.

He seemed to have the faculty of seizing by natural intuition upon the true dramatic moment for the presentation of his pictures and the exhibition of his portraits.

Ahmad was one of the few men of the cavalry corps who had remained faithful to the Company's salt. But it was now only at rare intervals that the ex-trooper could be induced to talk.

"Can I tell the *Huzoor* the story of the Flaming Eye, of the Burning Heart, of the Great Ruby of Sulieman, which Bajee Rao had from the Nabob of Oudh and bestowed upon Dúndu Pant, when he made him his son, and gave him Bithoor for his portion and inheritance? Can I tell his honour the story of the Nána's *Sirpésh*, the amulet which he wore in his turban to protect him from the evil eye, and the pestilence, and the power of his enemies? Yea, truly I can," said the ancient warrior with a low salaam, "if the *Huzoor* will condescend to listen.

"But the tale is long, O master. It hath as many chapters and divisions as the book of the Prophet—the blessed Koran itself. It belongeth to the past as well as to the present, and the end thereof knoweth no man; for the Ruby, which of a truth possesses mystic and talismanic virtues, hath not been seen by mortal eye, save once, since the night when the signal light of the Nána was extinguished in the waters of the Ganges at Fathgarh.

"But sure, *Huzoor*, I am telling the tale as one of the foolish might tell it, and not like Ahmad Dutt, the son of Hassan Ali, in whose family it hath been told from generation to generation, even from the days of the Great Mogul, Shah Jehan, before ever the Peacock Throne, of which Sulieman's Ruby was the most precious ornament, had been carried from Agra to Delhi, before the Persian had crossed the Great River, or the Sahibs come over the Black Water.

"From his father Hassan Ali it was that thy servant heard the tale of the famous Ruby which Sulieman wore on his finger and the Nána wore in his turban.

"Hassan was Duffadar in a Mahratti troop in the time of Bajee Rao, and would tell the tale round the camp fire on the plains or in the courtyard of the *serai*, while the horses were resting and the food was being cooked. And when the dawn began to glimmer in the east, lo! the story would be still unfinished, for there was much to tell.

"I know not," muttered the old man solemnly, after a pause during which he puffed the smoke from the huka slowly through his nostrils, "whether tis fitting to speak of the old ways in the new days. But the *Huzoor* wants to hear what perhaps the old *Sowar* alone can tell him? Be it so, my son. I, Ahmad, will tell of my father's story so much as concerns the *Huzoor* to know, and no more. For the sahibs are not as we, who will listen to a story for the sake of the story till the stars begin to fade and the light of the coming day is seen in the sky.

"The white faces from the west are ever thinking how it will end, no sooner than the tale is begun. They would have us tell our stories as they ride their races; and are less anxious about how a story runs than how it finishes.

"Well, Allah's above all; and for the rest, it will be my own mouth that speaketh, *Huzoor*. And by the beard of the Prophet, the son of Hassan Duffadar will tell his honour nothing but truth—plain truth, which is what the fewest in this world can recognise when they see it; for, in sooth, 'tis much of a stranger amongst the children of men.

"Know, then, that in the days when Agra was still the capital of Shah Jehan, there came to that city a certain blind *fakir*, who had travelled to India with a caravan from Bagdad. His long wrap was of green, which showed that he had made the Holy Pilgrimage and was a worthy man.

"He asked to see the King's Chamberlain, and on being led into the presence of that officer requested to be taken before the Emperor. To him he made known that his youth and strength had been spent in searching for the Great Ruby which the Queen of the East had given to King Sulieman, and the King had caused to be engraved with certain secret talismanic characters which gave the possessor of the stone power over the servants of Eblis, over the messengers of evil, over the malignant spirits who are the enemies of man, and over the lower angels who minister to his comfort.

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"He re-counted all the perils and privations he had passed through, the ordeals he had undergone, the vows he had taken, the oaths he had sworn.

"'True, O King!' said he. 'I am now old and blind. But the morning of my days, the flower of my years, was surely well given to obtain that, the like of which for beauty and power, for value and excellence is not to be found elsewhere on this earth, save in one small corner of my poor girdle.

"'Surely there is none that can say that thy servant hath wrought unwisely or spent his strength for naught; for, though his days be consumed and his flesh faileth, yet hath he obtained the desire of his heart.

"'One generation followeth another, but the King liveth for ever; and in him shall the people put their trust.

"'The Ruby, O Father of the Faithful! is a King's amulet.

"'Allah never made but one such.

"'Sulieman never put the master-word of the wisdom which he had from Heaven upon any other.

"'There is none, O King! that is like unto it. Though ye search the uttermost parts of the earth, ye shall not find it.

"'The light of ten thousand years is flashed forth from every line. The fire which from the beginning of Time has burnt at the heart of all things is reflected from every face. Was it not through gazing too long and ardently at the splendour of its glory, which, like another sun, illuminated the darkness of the dread chamber, where, at last, I uncovered it that the light of my own eyes was put out. But the brightness of its beams remains to console me, for I was blinded by excess of light.

"'Now, of a truth, O King! many and marvellous are the prophecies which have been written; and amongst them, is that which a holy man out of the north west, yea, from the land of the Five Rivers, declared no less than five hundred years ago.

"'"The Nazarene"' said he, '"will come to this land of Hind; by force and fraud they will possess themselves of principalities and powers. And they will seek to drive out the old faith and establish a new. But they shall not succeed; nay, though they hold the land in irons and occupy it for one hundred years, they shall be driven out in the end, even by the edge of the sword. And ye shall smite them, O men of Hind, they and their little ones, with a great slaughter. Nevertheless, for one hundred years the shall rule in the land."'

"That, *Huzoor*, was the old prophecy," said Ahmad, probably thinking some explanation necessary, "which the Panjabee fakir delivered, seven hundred years before the lotus was seen in the cantonments, or the chupatties appeared in the villages; and it was often repeated by our Moulvies amongst the people.

"'Behold now,' said the finder of the Ruby; 'my time draweth nigh, and there is but one thing left for me to do before Al Sijil closes my account and rolls up the scroll.

"'There is no God but God, who hath brought me from a far country, even from El Kuds which is beyond Baghdad; and into thy hands, O King! I deliver the Great Ruby of Sulieman—thy wise men will tell thee the meaning of the inscription thereon—enjoining on thee to cherish and preserve it against the time when the Nazarene shall be lord in the land.

"It will not be in thy day, or in the day of the Prince, thy son; but it will surely come to pass, for it is written. Then shall they that follow the Ruby talisman have no fear, for their enemy, though he spend blood and treasure, shall not be able to overthrow them.

"But thou must swear, O King, to build in thy chief city a mosque to the praise and glory of Allah, and the everlasting honour of his prophet. So much thy servant asks of thee in return for the Ruby, which has cost a lifetime to win, but will be a priceless possession to him who is faithful in the days which are to come.'

"So the Ruby passed to Shah Jehan, and the famous mosque at Delhi rose to witness to the King's faith in the fakir's story.

"The stone—these eyes have seen it, *Huzoor*—was the largest and chief jewel in the Peacock Throne, which Abdool the Persian, of accursed memory, carried off with him into Iran. But it would weary thy ears to listen were I to tell the tales concerning the wonderful red crystal which Hassan, my father, had upon his tongue.

"Well, by the will of Allah, without whom nothing can happen that does happen, the Great Ruby of Sulieman had got into the hands of Bajee Roa, the last of the old Mahratti chiefs, about the time that Wajid Ali, who was the last of the Kings of Oudh, got into trouble with the *sahibs* at Lucknow.

"Bajee had done Ali Shah a service, that some day I will tell the *Huzoor* if he pleases, for 'tis a good story though not for all ears to hear; and for payment the Mahratti demanded the Ruby, which was now looked upon with jealousy by every ruler, and whose virtues were known in every bazaar.

"The Rajah on whose person glittered the Talisman of Sulieman, when the hour of the fakir should arrive, was certain to end Emperor of India. That was the belief of the bazaar.

"Bajee did not get the Ruby out of Wajid without—but that also must stay for another telling. If once we get amongst the Begums, the Queen and Princesses, we shall never reach the Náná, on whom Bajee Rao bestowed the Ruby when he adopted Dúndú Pant as his son.

"Said I not the tale was long? So, it took the Mahratti three years to obtain the jewel from the King. And was there no plotting in the women's quarters? Yea, there was more than plotting," and Ahmad made a very significant gesture which left no doubt that there was murder.

"Well, at last the Náná was the owner of the Ruby, and a mighty fine fellow he thought himself. True, it made a magnificent *sir-pésh* for his turban, in which it blazed like a flaming eye, flashing its burning rays on all it touched. It shone with a brilliancy that dazzled and a potency that confused; while the Náná smiled to see men blinking and winking under its glitter and glare. It made him vain and puffed up his heart with pride—and, of a truth, it was a very king of gems, that Ruby.

"There was a fire in it that was in no other stone that had ever been seen in Hind. There was a power in it that no other ruby had ever been found to possess. I can believe the old fakir who said that the brightness of its beauty had deprived him of his sight.

"The Náná wore the stone upon all great occasions. He was fond of trying its effect upon the *sahibs*. They would praise its purity, its size, its colour, and most of all the living fire at its heart which the longer one looked the fiercer it blazed, till one could have sworn it was burning into one's vitals. Oh! it was no common ruby.

"When the 'great agony' began, you may be sure that the Ruby was not forgotten, either by us behind the intrenchments on the Allahabad Road, or by that

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crafty son of perdition, Tantia Topi, the Náná's butcher. Dundu Pant saw his father's son already sitting as Great Mogul in the Palace at Delhi, when, pointing to the flaming jewel in his turban, he swore by his head to the men who had marched to Kulianpore that victory would ever follow where the Ruby shone, and persuaded the *sowars* to return to Cawnpore instead of rushing on to Delhi as they were minded to.

"But when the *sahibs* saw the Ruby gleaming in the front they gave praise to Allah for sending them an easy prey, and the Náná soon had a score of shots whistling about his ears. They didn't harm him, however and the men cried: '*Ajaib!*' a miracle! But that was the first and last time the Rajah of Bithoor exposed himself in the field.

"The Ruby might have all the virtues which the old fakir claimed for it, but, I suppose the Náná thought it was hardly playing fair to invite attention that was not convenient.

"When we had a dozen men die from sunstroke, it was the Náná's Ruby which got the credit of it.

"It was all over the place, that the Ruby was killing off the Feringhees like sheep, by burning them up in its fiery rays.

"Well you may laugh, *Huzoor*, but I, Ahmad Dutt, believe the Ruby was a true wonder stone; but the Náná was no better to begin with than a *budmash* and didn't understand how to work the charm or it wouldn't have fared so ill with him. And then even the *sahibs* must allow that 'twas the Ruby which saved Dúndú Pant from the fate of the Moulvie of Fizabad.

"The *Huzoor* does not think so? Well, that is because he is not of the race.

"No, the Ruby did not bring the Náná the luck he expected; but the fault, *Huzoor*, was in the man and not in the stone. There were no wise men at Bithoor to interpret the writing—the dark saying of Sulieman.

"Azimullah was a cunning plotter, who made love to the *mem-sahibs* that he might the more easily draw them into his net; but wisdom was a stranger to his lips.

"Bábá Bhat and Tantia Topi were men of blood, who hated every white face and urged the Náná forward whenever his courage cooled.

"'Tread them down, tread them down!' they cried continually in his ears

"'A people terrible from the beginning. Let them not take root in the land. As with the husband so with the wife, as with the mother so with the child. Dost thou wear the Ruby for naught, O Dúndú, son of Baee? Surely thou puttest thy father to shame before these white scum.'

"But though the Ruby kept away the Evil Eye and was a charm against Black Magic, yet did fortune forsake the arms of the Náná.

"Then they who had followed him believing in the Ruby of Sulieman, began to reproach and revile him, and clamour for their pay.

"'By the soul of my father,' said one, 'I am a fool to follow a man whom Allah despiseth—a man too mean for Allah to notice, a man left to his own devices and whose expectation hath perished.

"'Full surely this Rajah of Bithoor is not he whom Heaven intended should wear the Ruby; and of a truth 'tis little we see of him or of it now,' and they began to desert him, for the *sahibs* were only a day's march from Cawnpore, and the Náná had fled to his palace at Bithoor after giving orders for the killing of the English ladies who were shut up in the city. But the Sepahis, *Huzoor*, said they were soldiers and not slaughtermen, and refused the work; so Tantia sent for butchers from the bazaar, and there came three black-browed sons of Eblis. . . . .

"Yea, truly, as thou sayest, it was a devil's deed, and of a surety the Devil hath taken all concerned in it—though I speak not for the Náná, since he had the Ruby. . . . .

"Everywhere, up and down through every chamber, in and out the corridors, along the terraces and below the verandahs of the Zenana at Bithoor, the *sahibs* searched for the Rajah. Many things they found in the Palace, things brought from over the Black Water, for the Náná had been in the country of the *sahibs*. Race-horses and dancing girls were on the walls, and English furniture in many of the rooms. But the man himself they found not, neither him nor his wives, nor the famous Ruby, of which even the *sahibs* had heard tell.

"He had gone up the Ganges to Futtehgarh; and because of the Ruby which he wore no man laid hands on him, though the *sahibs* offered a big price for his head.

"His people said afterwards that he had committed his body to the holy River; and, when the signal light was extinguished in the middle of the stream, they all lifted up their voices and wept. But the *sahibs* who searched long for him, and raised his price to a lakh of rupees, (£10,000) say, that he only crossed the river, coming out again on the Oudh side.

"Yet was he never seen more by the Englishmen, though they sought for him diligently; since they knew he was alive and had the Ruby with him.

"It was the Ruby, *Huzoor*, to which he owed his life. The Moulvie was an honest soldier who fought fairly and did no murder; and, for him the *sahibs* offered only half a lakh, yet it was enough. But even a lakh failed to bring in the Náná, because of the Ruby of King Sulieman which he wore. The stone protected the bearer though he was without the wisdom to work the charm."

* * * * *

Only once, it seems, has the Ruby been seen again; since, as the Náná's *sirpesh*, it blazed in his turban on the banks of the Ganges at Futhgurh.

One evening in January, 1870, a stranger muffled in a Cachmeri veil entered the shop of Mohamed Ali, jeweller in the Thumbi Bazaar at Delhi. He asked him to look at a very fine ruby which had formerly belonged to the Shah of Persia and had been purchased by the stranger at Shiraz as an investment.

Mohamed opened the paper containing the jewel, and instantly recognised the famous Ruby of Sulieman.

The stranger, possibly reading something in the other's eye which determined him, tore the veil from his face and disclosed the features of Náná Sahib, but with an expression of such malignant hate that the jeweller, paralysed with terror, was unable to move a finger.

When he recovered his faculties, the Náná and the Ruby had both disappeared; and Mohamed, frightened out of his five wits by the adventure, never spoke of it till months afterwards.

The end of the Náná is wrapped in mystery; and that of the story of the Náná's Ruby, as my friend Ahmad Dutt put it, "knoweth no man," for the Great Ruby of Sulieman, better known to us as Náná Sahib's Ruby, hath not been seen by mortal eye since Dundú Pant was recognised in the Delhi Bazaar.

Next Week we shall begin a series of Stories by LEVIN CARACAC, *under the general heading,* "*Homespun Yarns.*"

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A BACHELOR'S MISTAKE.

MR. JOHN CLARK, the hero of this sketch, had lived fifty years alone, when he might have been blessed with "God's best gift to man—woman."

Still, as Clark was decidedly a wealthy man, his friend, Arthur Gould, thought he would make an excellent husband for his sister, who was slightly on the shady side of thirty. So one evening, finding Clark in his solitary apartments, looking downcast and miserable, Gould said:

"Clark, I know what ails you."

"What makes you think anything ails me?" gruffly inquired Clark.

"Because you are not lively and happy. You are lonely and want society. No one can enjoy life without companionship. In short, you want a wife."

"I've got along all these years without one, and I can finish the same way."

"Because you have been a fool all these years is no reason why you should continue one."

"True!" said Clark. "Had I taken a wife twenty years ago I should have been happier to-day. But who would marry an old fellow like me now?"

"Many a nice girl would jump at the chance."

"I don't want an old maid," said this particular old bachelor. "Some pretty, bright girl might tempt me. But, then, this courting business I know nothing about, you see, and taking it on the whole I might pay too dearly in advance."

"Well," said Gould impatiently, "on the whole, if the truth was known, I think you are a trifle too lazy to live."

"Why, I'm quite ready for a bargain. Show me some of these nice girls you seem to think are so plentiful."

"If you please to visit my family you will have an opportunity of meeting many ladies. I will introduce you to my sister, for one; she will introduce you to others, and——"

"Good! I'll spend to-morrow evening with you."

"We shall be glad to see you."

They parted, and Clark's thick head was full of new ideas. At six o'clock next night he stood before his looking-glass trying necktie after necktie, and carefully parting what remained of his hair. At last he was fully equipped and started.

On his arrival he found none but the family present, and being introduced to the ladies, passed a pleasant evening.

He watched every movement of the younger lady, and before leaving had concluded to seek no further for a wife, providing the charming Miss Gould could be persuaded to become Mrs. Clark. She was attractive, pleasing in conversation, and graceful in manner.

"She is the woman for me," thought the bachelor, as he said "Good night," promising to call again soon.

He went home from his second visit happier than from the first, for, in addition to his increasing admiration for the lady, he felt assured, by her evident exertions to entertain him, that his feelings were reciprocated.

One unfortunate circumstance must be explained before proceeding. Owing partly to Mr. Gould's carelessness in presenting the ladies as his wife and sister merely, and partly Clark's confusion in confronting two women at once, he had mistaken one for the other, and fallen in love with Mrs. Gould (decidedly the prettier of the two), and who, perfectly innocent of his error, strove to make matters pleasant on behalf of her sister-in-law. She noticed once or twice that he addressed her as Miss Gould, but let it pass for a slip of the tongue consequent upon Clark's confusion and bashfulness.

Time passed, and the bachelor determined to speak. One evening he found Mrs. Gould alone, and was informed that "Arthur and sister" had gone to make a call, but would soon return. Clark expressed a little sorrow at their absence; now was his time, he thought; so summoning all his courage, he commenced:

"My dear lady, forgive me for speaking my mind frankly when I assure you that the happiest hours of my life have been passed in your society."

"Why, thank you for the compliment," said Mrs. Gould. "It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here, and you will enjoy life better than in the solitary existence you have hitherto led. Arthur has a deep interest in you, and I shall always be pleased to entertain you to the best of my ability."

"Thank you," said Clark. "I feel that a single life is an unhappy one, and if not too late I propose to amend."

"Indeed! Then you think of marrying?" said Mrs. Gould, glad for the sake of her sister-in-law. "I congratulate you. May I ask who is to be the honoured lady?"

"That depends upon you. I have never met with one who inspired me with such esteem, such love, as yourself. All I have I lay at your feet. Will you be my wife?"

He paused and wiped the perspiration from his forehead. Mrs. Gould, utterly confounded, sprang to her feet, exclaiming:

"Me your wife! Why, Mr. Clark, explain yourself!"

Her husband, just entering, caught the last words.

"What is the matter?" asked he, gazing alternately from his wife to Clark.

"That matter!" replied the astonished suitor. "You know as well as I do. Your sister appears to have taken fright at something—I don't understand what."

"My sister! Why, that is my wife!"

"Your wife!" screamed Clark. "Why have you deceived me in this way?"

"No one has deceived you, my dear fellow. You must have deceived yourself. That is my wife. This is my sister," pointing to the other lady now entering the room.

Poor Clark was struck dumb. He rose, seized his hat, made a low bow, and annihilated space between the Goulds and his own "bachelor's hall," where, in a short time, he was seated before a fire made of fancy neckties, sachet bags, light gloves and other superfluous articles of an old bachelor's toilet.

As to what he thought, said, or did after that time there is no account, but Mrs. Gould was his first love, and without doubt she was his last.

EMILY VICARY.

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Football Players Competition!

OPEN TO EVERYBODY. £10 IN PRIZES. OPEN TO EVERYBODY.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each of which indicates the name of some well-known football player.

The first, for example, is "A young goose." This signifies, of course, Gosling.

Ten names will appear each week for five weeks, making fifty names in all.

Keep all your lists by you until you are told to send them in.

To the person who succeeds in solving the greatest number we will give

A CRISP £5 NOTE.

TO THE NEXT, £2; TO THE NEXT, £2; AND TO THE NEXT, £1;

while consolation prizes will be awarded to the extent of twenty handsome volumes which competitors may select for themselves from the catalogue of books issued by this firm.

If you are weak in the names of football players, your brother, or cousin, or male friend will give you a helping hand.

SHORT STORIES "FOOTBALL PLAYERS" COUPON No. 1.

1. A young goose.	1. Gosling.
2. An instructor.	2. .....
3. People.	3. .....
4. A weapon.	4. .....
5. A satellite.	5. .....
6. One who saves up.	6. .....
7. A show place.	7. .....
8. A Scotch county.	8. .....
9. D. V.	9. .....
10. Properly executed.	10. .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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The Summary will Enable You to Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney of H.M.S. *Magnificent* to Harington's sister, Ethel.

France and Germany declare war against Great Britain.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpedo boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of excitement owing to the repulse of the Allied fleet.

Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour's fleet gains a decisive victory over the Allies off the Rock of Gibraltar.

A representative of the *New York World* interviews Lord Salisbury on a matter that is not yet made public.

CHAPTER XI.

A Proclamation.

The gallant deeds of the Mediterranean Fleet found fitting counterpart in the national enthusiasm which prompted England to cheerfully embark upon an enterprise chiefly remarkable for its spirit of heroic self-sacrifice.

None knew so well as the leaders of the people the desperate nature of the struggle to which they were committed. Men and money must be lavished in the attempt to crush, once and for ever, the gigantic confederacy which had so suddenly sprung into existence.

The Council of National Safety early decided that the public must be made to realise fully the tremendous odds against which they fought, believing that this step would render clear the necessity there was for the drastic and far-reaching methods of organisation which alone might serve to assure the ultimate victory of the United Kingdom.

At a meeting, therefore, over which Lord Salisbury presided, the Prince of Wales being present as an ordinary member, the following proclamation was drawn up.

"To the People of Great Britain and Ireland.

"The declaration of war by France and Germany is an open avowal of the determination of these two countries to destroy the Empire of Britain. This wholly unjust and iniquitous conflict has been forced upon us in a manner which has already called down the vengeance of the God of Battles.

"On land and sea we have, by the mercy of Providence, been able to defeat our foes and to save our beloved country from the horrors of invasion.

"England is still as she has been for many centuries, Mistress of the Seas, and, in any ordinary European complications it would have been her duty and her solemn interest to preserve that predominance for the benefit of mankind, whilst not otherwise interfering in the strife.

"But, unfortunately, it is impossible to pursue such a peaceful and beneficent course.

"The chief statesmen and the principal newspapers of the Allied Powers have candidly declared their action to be the prelude to a war of extermination! Great Britain, they say, must be reduced to the level of Iceland, stripped of her dignity and vast possessions, and her people ruined and disintegrated. These are no idle boasts. They are

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backed up, as we have seen, by a terrible purpose and concentration of aim which have been stayed alone by the invincible courage of our gallant soldiers and sailors.

Lord Salisbury presided.

"In plain and sober earnest we are fighting for our lives, our liberties, our homes, for all that we hold dear on earth, for all that has raised Britain to the proud position she occupies among the nations.

"Under such conditions our duty as citizens of the British Empire is unmistakable. We must resolve to crush those who would crush us, and not desist from our task until we have effectually secured the peace of Europe upon a permanent and proper basis.

"The Council of National Safety believe that the most effective method of illustrating the magnitude of the task imposed upon England is to set forth in simple figures the war strength of the Allied Powers so far as their land forces are concerned. At sea, England has shown that she can deal with them, but the necessity for invading both France and Germany make it imperative that there should be no under-estimation of their fighting establishment.

"France, then, has an army of two millions of men, with nearly 150,000 horses, and 3,000 guns. Half a million of her troops are actually under arms; the balance will probably be called upon the moment we assume the aggressive, and by summoning her territorial reserves she can place 3,000,000 of men in the field.

"The army of Germany in the field consists of over half a million of men, which can at once be increased to 1,500,000, with 312,000 horses and 2,800 guns. The mobilisation of the reserves more than double her fighting force.

"We are therefore called upon to face *six millions* of trained soldiers, with 462,000 horses and 5,800 guns.

"At this moment there are under arms in Great Britain and Ireland some 500,000 men, including regular troops, volunteers, militia and army reserves, with 1,000 guns and 15,000 horses.

"It is proposed to forthwith double the number of men, guns, and horses. The guns are in store, the horses are being purchased, and we call for 500,000 young men, between the ages of eighteen and thirty, to volunteer for war service immediately.

"The Commander-in-Chief estimates that he will thus be enabled to land expeditionary forces of sufficient strength for the first advance on the shores of France and Germany within a few days.

"We also call upon the nation to enroll three millions of men in addition to the expeditionary forces already detailed, in order to reinforce the armies abroad to such an extent as may be deemed necessary, and to provide for the defence of the United Kingdom in case of further attack.

"It will be the duty of lord lieutenants of counties to act with local authorities in selecting from registers of all men capable of bearing arms, first, the local levies for the immediate strengthening of troops under orders, and, in the second place, the further mobilisation of the Auxiliary Army of three millions.

"Sir Redvers Buller is charged with the conduct of this further mobilisation, and each line regiment in the service will provide a complete company of selected non-commissioned officers and men who will supply the nucleus for the officers and non-commissioned officers of the Auxiliary Army.

"All local authorities should be guided by the following supreme considerations in discharging the onerous task imposed upon them:

"1st. The able-bodied unemployed should be drafted into the ranks of the army forthwith.

"2nd. Single men should next be selected in preference to married men.

"3rd. Care should be taken to interfere as little as possible with manufactures which by their nature contribute to the food supply and clothing of the nation.

4th. Selected officers and men of the police force should be utilised to extend the supply of regular troops drafted for drill purposes into the Auxiliary Army.

"5th. Special local measures must be taken for the adequate preservation of law and order.

"Inland Revenue and Customs officers will abandon their ordinary duties and devote themselves wholly to the commissariat and transport requirements of the troops, and for this purpose will act with Post Office officials, three-fourths of whom will at once be nominated for this work by the Postmaster-General.

"We cannot too strongly emphasise the fact that Great Britain is now fighting for her life, and that it is the duty of all her sons, without distinction of class or position, to devote every energy towards bringing the war to an early and successful termination.

"It should be added that it is the intention of her Majesty's Government, at the conclusion of hostilities, to recommend that the pay of all ranks of mobilised troops shall be continued for three months, to enable the officers and men to resume their positions in civil life with the least possible disruption or personal loss.

Signed { Salisbury. / Albert Edward. / Wolseley."

"There," said the Commander-in-Chief, as he laid down the pen, "that proclamation means conscription."

"No," exclaimed Lord Salisbury. "Conscription is compulsion. This is the call to arms of a free people. It is another prayer to the Almighty to set back the sun until we have conquered the enemies of human progress."

"Whatever it may be termed, I get the men," replied Lord Wolseley, "and I feel certain that we can beat the allies on their own ground."

"Who leads the expeditions?" inquired Lord Salisbury.

"Lord Roberts commands the attack on France, and Sir Charles Dilke has asked to be appointed on the staff. His aid will be extremely valuable, as no other Englishman knows more about French affairs or is so well versed in the composition of the French army. Sir Evelyn Wood is intrusted with the control of operations against Germany."

"Have you formed any definite plan?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, sir, I am acting largely upon the lines laid down by the small committee which sat during the winter after we had received the news of a threatened hostile combination last November. We then thoroughly overhauled the schemes prepared by the Intelligence Department and the chief modification in the method of pending operations has reference to Germany. We abandoned the project of an attack by way of Belgium."

"Why?" inquired Sir William Harcourt. "It has always seemed to me that Belgium would be an excellent base for an advance against either country."

"True, but in such a gigantic business as this we must look somewhat to moral effect, and I believe it is possible for our troops to be simultaneously at the gates of Paris and Berlin."

"When do we move?" said the Premier.

"I hope to receive intelligence of the occupation of Havre on Saturday morning," was the quietly confident reply of the Commander-in-Chief.

"Havre!" cried several voices together, whilst the members of the Council exchanged looks of astonishment.

"Yes, Havre," exclaimed Lord Wolseley, speaking with

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"Give me a cup of tea, girls."

unwonted energy. "The Seine is our road to Paris, and Havre is the first fortification in the way. I regard this as our least difficult task," he added, "and I am glad to be able to say that Lord Roberts fully concurs with me."

"Are you satisfied with the Admiralty arrangements for transport?" inquired Mr. Goschen.

"Perfectly. I wish I had the men to fill the ships your department has placed at my disposal. By the way," continued the Commander-in-Chief, who appeared to be anxious to escape further questioning, "what progress does your Royal Highness's inventor make?"

"Excellent," said the Prince of Wales. "He is a wonderful fellow. His men turn out 2,000 articles each day; I have actually made three myself, and am becoming quite an electrical expert. I am thinking of preparing a paper for the United Service Institution on the true inwardness of an ohm."

The Prince's eagerness roused the curiosity of the other members of the committee. They asked him to describe the invention, concerning which very contradictory rumours were afloat, and their request was acceded to. Very clearly did his Royal Highness set forth the principle of the electrical apparatus in which he was so interested.

* * *

In the drawing-room of a house in Mayfair two girls were smiling through their tears whilst reading for the fiftieth time a pencilled note which had just reached them from Plymouth by the kindness of the captain of the *Peninsular*.

"I am quite sure that Frank is safe, dear," said Irene Vyne as she sank on her knees by the side of Ethel Harington. They were laughing and crying together over Rodney's letter from Malta.

"I am hopeful myself," replied her companion, "but I don't see how we can do more than hope. It was such a terribly dangerous undertaking."

"Oh, of course. I know that. But naval officers are accustomed to explosions. Boilers and guns and things are always bursting. Besides, he is so full of resource. You remember how rapidly he disposed of that Frenchman who was in our service at the Embassy. Father afterwards discovered that he was a most skilful spy in the employ of the French Police, and that he had found out the secret of the Foreign Office cypher. Only yesterday I ascertained how it was I had such a curious notion of having seen him before."

"How was that?"

"Lady Grasmere called, and then I remembered where I had met him. It was at a *musicale* she gave last November in town, and the wretched creature was masquerading as a Russian tenor. He sang divinely, too. What a pity he should be only a *mouchard*."

Lady Irene Vyne would have been even more surprised and disgusted had she seen M. Pochowski, ex-singer, ex-valet, at that moment, sitting on a magnificent horse at the head of a squadron of the Imperial Guard, drawn up for inspection by the Tsar of all the Russias.

Captain Harington entered the room, hot, excited, and too full of his news to properly hook up his sword, which slipped and clanked against his spurs as he strode towards them.

"Give me a cup of tea, girls," he cried. "I'm choked with dust and news. Rodney has blown up the Suez Canal and I have been appointed to Roberts's staff. We'll be in France before the week is out."

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Ethel looked at Irene to see how she would receive this momentous intelligence, but the girl's face only flushed a little, and her hand did not tremble as she brought the tea to her lover.

"I wish I were a man that I might also go," she said, "Anyhow, I will never forgive you if you don't send more lucid epistles than Frank has favoured your sister with." And she showed him the now almost illegible letter.

"Hello!" he said. "Poor old chap! He wept so copiously over the note that his tears haven't dried yet."

Ethel snatched the paper from him, and Irene coolly ignored his remark.

"How many men go with you?" she inquired.

"We start with 150,000. Once a landing is effected, 200,000 more follow. Then we make a forward movement. The advance will be along the line of the Seine. How jolly glad I am that I did the trip from Paris to Havre last summer in a canoe."

"Will such an army be strong enough to act effectively?" said Irene, who, it must be remembered, was an ambassador's daughter, and knew exactly the numbers and efficiency of the French forces.

"To conquer France we will need ten times as many," replied Harington, rising to depart. "But Lord Roberts thinks that the allies are hardly prepared for such a bold counter-move on our part. You must not forget that they lost the pick of the army of the north in the fight off Worthing, and our expedition, once it gains a footing, will be quite able to deal with the remainder of that Corps d'Armée at the outset. Of course, they will try to smother us afterwards, but they may not succeed. Pobs will work off a few tricks on them that he learnt in Afghanistan."

"This will be a war of men, not of tactics," exclaimed Irene.

"Perhaps both," cried Ethel Harington. "Frank, I am sure, will fight well, but it was by cleverness that he was able to destroy the Canal." She was so desperately in earnest that the others laughed.

"Teddy Harington," said Irene, amusement struggling with emotion in her tremulous tones, "your sister will blow up that wretched streak of water ten times every day for the next month. If you don't go and do something big I will jilt you and marry Mr. Briggs, who actually left cards on us the day after we all came back from Paris."

* * * * *

And Briggs. William Briggs, of Catford—where was that cycling expert during these troublous times?

He was the hero of the Cat and Anchor, the lion of the cycling club, the darling of every new woman in that town on wheels.

But his soul had been fired by the events of that memorable night in the Gare du Nord and the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré. The placid joys of puncture-proof tyres and lever chains fascinated him no longer. Lord Eskdale's words rang in his ears. "You have indeed done your country a good turn," said the ambassador, and the phrase haunted him. Could he not do England another—a million—billions of good turns—thought Mr. Briggs, by organising a corps of Catford cyclists, and offering their services to the expedition?

A list opened in the Cat and Anchor soon had fifty names. In the club it was quadrupled. Armed with this document he sought out Lord Eskdale, who brought this offer to the notice of Sir Redvers Buller, and ere many days were past his eyes danced in his head as they read the following extract from the Gazette: "To be Captain in the Auxiliary Army, William Briggs, cycle manufacturer, Catford, commanding the Catford Cycle Corps."

CHAPTER XII.

The Capture of Havre.

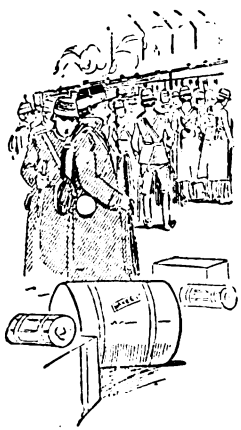
"Combien?"

"Il y a onze cuirassés, cinq croiseurs, vingt-trois canonnières et—tonnerre de Dieu—plus de cent bâtiments de transport——"

"Yes, yes," interrupted General de Rosny impatiently, turning to the naval officer who was supplying him with this information. "How many men? They cannot land their ships."

Lieutenant Lelièvre shut his glass with a snap, and an angry light came into his eyes as he fiercely inquired if Monsieur le Général intended to convey any slight to the French navy by his remark.

For a moment the soldier felt inclined to strike to the ground the irritable fool who chose such a moment for the nice consideration of phrases, but he mastered the impulse and explained that nothing was further from his thoughts.



Train after train started for Havre.

Whereupon the mollified lieutenant informed him that by packing men on board ship to the utmost capacity, the English pigs could not stow away more than 150,000 troops on the armament, then some eight miles out at sea off the Cap de la Hève, and de Rosny forthwith rode off to the Fort de Frileuse where his staff were assembled.

Telegrams were promptly dispatched to the Second and Third Corps d'Armée at Amiens and Rouen. In both towns everything was in readiness, and train after train started for Havre conveying some 200,000 troops to the locality. Some 50,000 men were quartered in the barracks and fortifications of the town itself, whilst the others were split up into two army corps, the first resting on Montivilliers and the second on Harfleur, both towns being within an hour's march from the outskirts of Havre, and connected therewith by two lines of rails.

Havre stands on the north side of the estuary of the Seine and is very strongly fortified. The western, or sea face of the town, is protected by the powerful fort of Ste. Adresse and a redoubt near the Jetée du Nord. The harbour and docks are guarded by the Citadel, Bastion de la Floride, and Fort de l'Heure, whilst the Fort de Tourneville and Fort de Frileuse, not to mention swarms of small redoubts and earthworks, provide serious obstacles in the way of a land attack.

But Lord Roberts, who was standing on the quarter-deck of the *Majestic*, to which fine vessel the Admiral of the Fleet, Lord Charles Beresford, had transferred his flag since the disablement of the *Magnificent*, had discussed every item of his programme in the office of the Commander-in-Chief before his departure, and was now engaged in giving his final instructions to generals of divisions and brigadiers. For the present the information was not to be imparted to any other members of the expedition, but prior to actual operations every officer and private were to be made clearly cognisant of their individual posts in the collective programme.

It was Thursday afternoon, the day following the fight at Gibraltar, of which no tidings had yet been received by either party.

In his latest general order to the troops, Lord Roberts, whose official title was "Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief of the French Expedition," exhorted all ranks to remember that the safety of England lay in their hands.

"I ask you," he said, "to combine rigid obedience with unalterable resolution. To you is intrusted the honourable duty of taking the first forward step on behalf of your country, and I would remind you that this will not be the first time British soldiers have occupied Havre. Your forefathers stormed the town nearly three hundred and fifty years ago, and I am firm in the belief that the flag

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unfurled by those glorious progenitors will again be seen dominating the heights which command the entrance to the Seine—the road to Paris."

Six of the eleven ironclads, the *Majestic* leading, entered the ten-metre channel and steamed slowly onwards until within two miles' distance from the Fort de l'Heure. The other warships at considerable intervals formed a cordon round the flotilla of transports and Cunard and White Star liners which had conveyed the troops from Southampton, and were now anchored in the roads out of range of practical gun fire.

A wild yell of delight.

The three French coast defence vessels, and a number of torpedo boats, were seemingly under orders to remain for the present behind the guns which protected the Avant Port, and in the Bassin de l'Eure and Bassin Bellot could be seen the masts of a great company of cargo steamers, evidently freighted with war material for the subsidiary move on England if the first attack had succeeded.

A tricolour floated proudly over the Bastion de la Floride, and the gunnery lieutenant of the *Majestic* asked permission to direct the first shot fired in the engagement—a shell from a twelve inch gun—towards that locality.

Never was gun laid more carefully. The excellent chart of the harbour in the officer's possession enabled him to accurately verify the distance calculation, three gunners declared the training perfect, and with a thunderous roar the first avenging missile sped over the waters and hurled a cloud of dust and masses of masonry over the railway line that runs along the rear of the fortifications.

But it did more. It demolished the flagstaff and its supports, and a wild yell of delight rose from the British fleet as officers and men noted the fall of the French flag at the very outset of the engagement.

A stiff artillery duel now broke out between forts and ships, and the latter, by constantly changing their positions, were able to disconcert the aim of the gunners on land. Consequently they suffered little harm, whilst they were able to do considerable damage to the battery near the jetty and the Fort de l'Heure.

The *Salamander*, torpedo gunboat, early distinguished herself. Commander Eagles was ordered to make a reconnaissance up the estuary, and he actually steamed to within firing distance of Tancarville, nearly ten miles up the Channel. The *Eclair* and *Vite* se darted out of the Avant Port to cut her off, but were promptly sunk by the quick-firing guns of the *Majestic*, which had drawn closer in shore in anticipation of some such move, and this experience by the enemy made easy the progress of the audacious *Salamander*.

Lieutenant Eagles, on his return, reported the massing of French troops at Harfleur, Confreville, and Videmare, information which precisely bore out the views held by Lord Roberts.

The night was clear and starlit. The moon, in her first quarter, struggled to aid the brightness that rendered objects discernible at a considerable distance, and even through the smoke and confusion of the bombardment it could easily be seen that the enemy expected an immediate attack.

But the men on board the transports were ordered to sleep, and, after much wonderment and growling at the unexpected inactivity forced upon them, tired nature soon rendered them oblivious of the thunderous cannonade which continued throughout the night.

As day broke over the coast line several of the remaining ironclads and cruisers, together with a dozen gunboats, joined the fighting line, and vigorously shelled the immense bodies of troops which had been drawn up during the night to repel the threatened invasion. Such whole sale carnage resulted that the French commander speedily withdrew his men behind the shelter of the forts, and the latter, disregarding the heavy fire of the ironclads, did such destruction among the smaller vessels—one British cruiser and two gunboats being sent to the bottom—that the game might so far have been considered drawn.

But the forts themselves were in a sorry plight, and Lord Roberts' face wore a much more pleased expression than was warranted by the situation in the opinion of his men, stewed up as they were in the most uncomfortable fashion.

The day wore away without the slightest sign of definite movement, and beyond the knot of divisional and brigade commanders who knew the Commander-in-Chief's intentions, hardly an officer or private in the army but considered that a golden opportunity had been lost on the previous night, whilst every lapsing hour gave the enemy more time to consolidate his position.

This view prevailed amongst the Frenchmen also, and perhaps the only man on shore who mistrusted the seeming hesitancy of the British was General de Rosny.

Delay in itself was irksome. It was now fraught with foreboding.

The physical and nervous strain upon his troops was not wholly to his taste, but good and careful soldier as he was he spent the time in supervising every detail of the defence from any possible point of attack, which, he was sure, would take place that night.

About seven o'clock in the evening, signals from the flagship to the troopships caused a flutter of expectation on all hands, to be followed by a feeling of profound astonishment as the flotilla, accompanied by a strong guard of ironclads and cruisers, bore off in stately procession towards the north-west, as though bound for Cherbourg.

"It is an infamous ruse—this bombardment—to draw our troops here and lay open some other locality," cried a French major of dragoons, as the strange manœuvre became known on shore.

"Where are we a-goin', Jack?" said a Tommy in the Grenadiers to a sailor who passed him on the lower deck of the *Teutonic*.

"We're a-headin' for Newfoundland, just now, an' it's five days of the best," was the answer.

"Of all the bloomin' chucks I've ever seen, this is the wust," roared Tommy, and the Grenadier Guards have never been nearer mutiny than they were when the rumour went round that the expected landing was not to be made.

"Where are we a-going, Jack?"

So serious was the growl that it reached the ears of the commanding officer. He sent for the sergeant-major.

"Tell them," he said, "to eat a solid supper and smoke till they're black in the face, as they will have as good a fight before morning as the regiment has ever seen."

Then joy prevailed, and the fumes of nail-rod mingled in the breeze with the strains of "Annie Laurie."

General de Rosny was absolutely puzzled. He telegraphed

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Plan of the Environs of HAVRE.

to Paris, Cherbourg, Brest, and Le Mans, the headquarters of the fourth Army Corps, whilst General Mercier, at the last named place, spoilt the dinner of the officers of the 104th Infantry by an imperative message to entrain forthwith. General Saussier, the governor of Paris, did not please de Rosny by ordering an immediate preparation for assistance to be given in the West. Altogether, Havre had more than the usual *mauvais quart d'heure* that evening.

But the bombardment proceeded as furiously as ever.

Lord Charles Beresford and Lord Roberts, with their respective staffs, were on the *Rattlesnake* gun-boat, with the flotilla.

As darkness came on, the fleet now being well out at sea, a wheel to the right was ordered by a single rocket. The fresh course lay due east, and after an hour's steady steaming several rockets were sent flying into the sky.

At last, far ahead, came an answering signal, and the *Rattlesnake* darted to the front to slow down presently by the side of another huge flotilla of tugs, towing an immense number of flat-bottomed boats, whilst six of the tugs had in charge an immense object which looked like a gigantic pile of logs.

It was a floating pier, of which the sections had been joined together in Portsmouth Dockyard, and so fashioned at one end as to be capable of being driven a long way on to a sloping beach before it came to a standstill against the shore. Adorned with a great array of steam cranes, two lines of rails, a couple of small steam-engines and other equipments, it looked a quaint monster floating quietly on the waves.

An altered disposition having been made in the order of the fleet, the course lay S.E. by S., and by ten o'clock the light on the Cap de la Hève was seen on the starboard bow.

Lord Roberts was evidently about to land his forces on the coast at a point opposite the small village of Blèville, and attack Havre from the land.

At midnight precisely the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Grenadier Guards, commanded by Lieutenant-General Massy, Captain Harington being his Brigade-Major, pushed off from the side of the *Teutonic*, not a light being visible in the entire fleet, and pulled silently towards the beach.

The noise of the guns at Havre rose high above the placid beat of the surf on the shingle, as the General sprang ashore, followed by Harington.

Without command or confusion the men at once spread themselves out over the lonely expanse of sand and pebbles, behind which rose the gloomy outlines of the neighbouring cliffs, and in a marvellously short space of time the whole of the 1,800 troops were lost to sight and sound, leaving the General and his youthful companion standing near the empty boats to await the arrival of the next contingent.

This was made up of the 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch; the 1st Brigade of the Oxfordshire Light Infantry, the 2nd East Lancashire, and the Aldershot Company of the Royal Engineers.

The three regiments, guided by Harington, and without the slightest attempt at formation, crossed the belt of shingle as quickly as possible, and soon struck a tolerably good road leading through a narrow valley to the table-land behind the cliffs.

On the way, a corporal's guard in charge of a gendarme showed clearly enough what the duty of the Grenadiers was, to which they had set themselves so quickly. They had spread like a fan over a very considerable range of country, had cut the telegraph wires along the cliffs, and had captured several coastguards and other persons who might have taken prompt steps to give an alarm to the expectant French troops five miles away.

It should here be mentioned also that telegraphic communication all over the district was greatly impeded by the fact that late on the previous evening a couple of gunboats gave special attention to the roof of the Bourse at Havre, on which hundreds of wires centred, and speedily demolished the top of that handsome edifice, although during the whole of the preceding bombardment scrupulous care was taken to fire only at forts, barracks, or troops.

It was a cheering sight to see the manner in which the sappers tackled the work of fixing the floating pier when this lumbering monster slowly bulged through the darkness and grounded one end upon the shingle, the tide being then on the ebb about two hours.

General de Rosny galloped off.

The shoreward section was hauled up by hundreds of willing arms until it was humanly impossible to bring it further; the next section was dragged up to join it, and both were then firmly stayed to prevent slipping. Smaller and more manageable pieces were drawn on shore from special lighters, and placed in position in front, and by this means a firm track was laid right up to the spot where the road led from the cliffs.

All this was accomplished in less than an hour, and meanwhile a very large number of men and horses had been

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landed, some 3,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry being drawn up on the plateau a mile inland.

Attempts at concealment were now abandoned, and the electric search lights from the fleet showed every inch of the pier, the gradient of which was not so extreme as might be expected, as every artifice in construction had been used to counteract the rapid shelving of the beach.

The motive was soon apparent.

Two heavily-laden vessels came alongside, and gun after gun was hoisted from their holds, swung on to low trucks on the pier, and then hauled by the engines along the double lines of rails until the shoreward end of the pier had been reached. Here the artillery horses and gunners were waiting for them to limber up and trot off rapidly to their allotted station with the main body.

The wheels of both engines and trucks were provided with specially deep flanges, and as the gauge was a broad one, it was almost impossible for any derailment to take place.

The work went on uninterruptedly and without hitch. It was a triumph of organisation and forethought. Nothing had been forgotten, nothing miscalculated, and the senior officers in charge of the embarkation were familiar with every inch of the ground, as they had all visited the place during the winter and early spring.

By four o'clock some terrified peasants had reached the Fort de Tourneville and announced the landing of the British troops.

A telephonic message was sent to Fort de Frileuse, and General de Rosny galloped off at the head of his wearied staff to personally investigate the cause of the rumour.

He narrowly escaped falling into the hands of a scouting detachment of the 17th Lancers, and three of his *aides* lost their lives in stemming the rush made by the Death or Glory boys when they caught sight of the French officers.

De Rosny's frame of mind was not of an enviable cast as he raced back to Havre. He cursed himself and General Saussier and General Mercier and his cavalry vedettes with impartiality.

By the time he reached his outposts he had regained his normal senses, and promptly set about the necessary dispositions to meet the new order of things.

His men were weary after thirty-six hours of sleepless watchfulness, but the splendid spirit of the French soldier returned at the thought that at last there was something to do beyond waiting idly under an incessant artillery fire.

Marching by parallel roads to Blèville and Sanvic Graville, over 100,000 troops were soon in motion, and as the first flush of early dawn suffused the horizon with pink and gold, the British cavalry outposts retired to acquaint Lord Roberts with the tidings of the advance.

The Commander-in-Chief had now 80,000 men massed on the undulating downs at the back of the cliffs, and nearly 200 guns, supported by 7,000 cavalry, were in position.

The left wing of the British Army was the first to move. A deep ravine ran far into the land between the British position and Ste. Adresse, and it was Lord Roberts' intention to force the enemy into this difficult ground, which could be swept by the guns for a distance of nearly three miles.

The rapidity and dash of the French advance rather favoured this project. As the growing light spread over the landscape, and the masses of troops became more distinctly visible, shrapnel began to whistle through the air, whilst the ping of the tiny bullets from the Lee-Metfords, and the Lebel rifle sent a wild rush of tumultuous emotion through the hearts of those who heard the sound for the first time in actual warfare.

So far as could be subsequently ascertained, a private of the East Lancashire Regiment was the first man to give his life for his country. Ere long the casualities became more frequent, and soon a line of ambulance waggons were hastily carrying wounded to the shore, whence they were ferried to the ships.

Britain was beginning to suffer.

(To be continued.)

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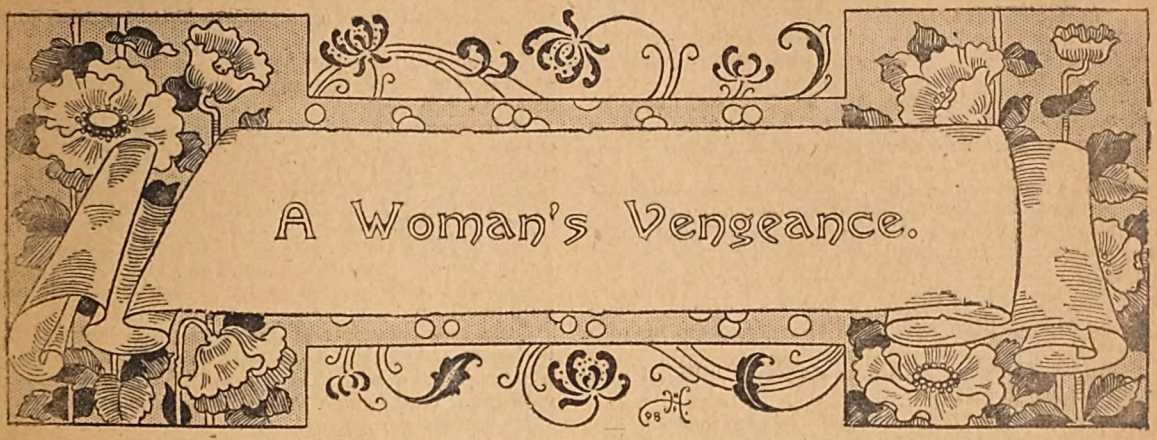

A Woman's Vengeance.

Ti-Rhada was only a little Nepaulese tea-gatherer. small and strong and brown, with two great braids of jet black hair coiled about her head.

Despite her dark skin she was very pretty, as Nepaulese girls go, not the least of her marks of beauty being her large brilliant eyes. But she did not know that she possessed charms uncommon to her race, for her mother and sisters were always too weary of tea-gathering to think of beauty, and Nepaulese men are not given to complimenting women.

In the tea-fields of Darjeeling, in the very heart of the Himalayas, she was toiling among the fragrant plants where for centuries her ancestors had toiled before her.

She has been there throughout every day of the tea season every one of the fifteen years of her eventless life, and the thought had never entered her head that she would ever be anywhere else, nor that there was "anywhere else," for that matter.

But this day in particular a party of tourists were wandering about Darjeeling, and they at length came into the plantation, where one of them, a young Englishman named Mainwaring, spied her out.

"Good-looking young nigger, that." he said, jerking his thumb in the direction of Ti-Rhada.

"Perhaps," remarked his companion; "but beauty in women is always a relative quality. They are or are not good-looking, according to your taste and condition of susceptibility. The divine Blanche, now, might not agree with you."

"The divine Blanche, fortunately, is three thousand miles away, so I don't see what she has to do with it."

"Try not to be impatient, Mainwaring, but the eyes of five and-forty do not see all things as do the orbs of five-and-twenty, and——"

"And what?"

"Nothing, perhaps, and perhaps a great deal. But the others are hurrying on towards supper, and we must not detain them. Come on."

The sightseers passed out of the plantation without being seen by Ti-Rhada.

Mainwaring came back to the tea-fields for another look at the "young nigger," the following morning; and he came alone. Ti-Rhada was a bit startled at finding him suddenly close beside her, with that in his gaze which she had never seen in man's eyes before.

Not wishing to alarm her Mainwaring turned away.

His friend, Colonel Fritch, was on the hotel portico when he came in.

"Been hunting up more niggers?" he inquired.

Mainwaring bowed stiffly, and entered the hotel without answering. He was not only annoyed, but indignant. Fritch was an ass. He was dignifying the the merest nothing in the world. Whom could it harm if he had gone back for a second glance at the little Nepaulese? What was she or any other Hindoo woman to him? They were interesting to look at, and he should continue looking at them all he pleased, and if Fritch had anything more to say about it, he would cut the Fritch party, stay at Darjeeling as long as he pleased, and go away when he got ready.

The next morning he made a third trip to the fields. This time, after persistent exertions, he managed to engage Ti-Rhada in conversation. That is, he prevailed upon her to listen to his questions and remarks, and to make little monosyllabic answers. This was not very edifying, and had the girl been less pretty, Mainwaring would have voted it all a bore; but it was very pleasant to see her red lips shape themselves into varying word frames, and there was a suggestion of music about the words themselves.

Mainwaring's pilgrimages to the plantation were numerous, but not another word did Fritch say about Ti-Rhada.

"I thought you people were only going to stay here a week," said Mainwaring to Fritch one afternoon, when Ti-Rhada had been particularly interesting, and her white admirer in consequence was particularly amiable.

"We find Darjeeling very pleasant and refreshing," was Fritch's reply, "and so none of us are in a hurry to get away; but if your young blood is gathering impatience for an immediate hegira, I'll call the clan together, and we will hie us hence."

"Oh, I'm in no hurry about going—or, that is, it doesn't concern me in the least whether we go or stay. But it occurred to me that your original plan was being varied."

The next day Mainwaring suspected that Ti-Rhada was glad to see him, and by the third day hereafter he was sure of it. He was pleased mightily. Surely he must have some strength of character when both heathen and civilised women were attracted by him!

In a little time a change came over Ti-Rhada. She not only listened and assented when Mainwaring talked, but talked herself, and for an uneducated little heathen she talked well.

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Mainwaring was more than ever fascinated, but somehow he felt constrained to delay demonstrances of affection. Down in the dark depths of Ti-Rhada's eyes there was that which showed that love, to her, would be no light thing.

Three weeks from the day he first saw her, by which time it was her wont to greet him with a beaming smile, she met him almost sullenly one morning.

After a dint of much coaxing he wormed out of her that her dearest friend, a girl of about her own age, had lost her lover. Still worse, in absconding he had taken her future with him, for she was now an object of contempt and derision to her entire tribe.

"What will she do now?" asked Mainwaring, endeavouring to muffle the stab the disclosure was of his own purposes.

"Kill herself," said Ti-Rhada stolidly. "What else is left for her to do?"

"Why, in my country she would kill her lover."

"Yes? It is unlike India, then. I should like to live in your country."

"I'm glad you don't live there," responded Mainwaring quickly. "I—I should be afraid of you."

Silence seemed a morsel so much sweeter than speech to the girl's palate that morning, that Mainwaring soon became uncomfortable, and went away. After much ruminating, he decided to leave the hotel the next day, return to Calcutta, and thence home to England. But the following morning, when he went for a farewell glimpse of her, Ti-Rhada smiled her sweetest, and was so much more gracious than ever, that he lost his head entirely.

The weeks that followed were full of blind unreasoning joy. Not a thought did they give either to the past or to the future. The present was all sufficient.

When the autumn came, and the tea fields were no longer filled with brown-skinned folk, and there was a sharp chill in the hill air, Mainwaring got a letter from his parents. The intelligence which it conveyed filled him with dismay.

He was commanded to start for home at once, so he would be there by Christmas-time, and he was notified that he would be expected to marry his *fiancée* immediately upon his arrival. He was threatened with disinheritance if he ventured to deviate from this course in the slightest degree.

No mention was made in the letter of either Ti-Rhada or Fritch, but that the latter had told the Mainwarings everything in his ken about the little Nepaulese it was plainly to be seen.

Mainwaring was furious. The washed-out blonde splendours of Blanche no longer attracted him. Ti-Rhada was the only woman in the world for whom he cared. But—he must have money. Ti-Rhada and poverty was a combination which failed to conjure him with lasting spells. If he could have money in the degree of abundance essential to his tastes only by leading Blanche to the altar, why, to the altar Blanche should be led.

But he would not give up Ti-Rhada!

As tactfully as he could he told the girl his position, dilating emphatically upon the hopeless helplessness poverty would plunge them both into. There was but one thing to do, he assured her, he must go home, marry Blanch, tolerate her for a a few weeks till he could get his money affairs in good condition, then fly back to Darjeeling and his heart's darling once more.

Would Ti-Rhada trust him so much?

Long and steadily she looked into his eyes, till she seemed to have searched out his every secret hope and fear.

"Yes, I will trust you," she finally said. "You may go and—and do as you say. You love me. You will come back to me."

With every oath of constancy a frenzied lover can think of, he swore to keep faith with her. Cold and passionless with the pain of it all as the bronze she looked like, was Ti-Rhada the day after he left her; and when the train had borne him away she sank into a little pulseless heap, and neither moved nor spoke for hours. March was to have found him back in the Himalayas again, but he did not come. Nor did April bring him, nor May.

Once among people of his own kind, little by little he began wondering if he had not made a mistake in falling in love with the coarse little Nepaulese tea gatherer. At the end of two months he was certain of it.

He had been a fool.

Of course he would not go back. The girl would soon forget him for some more conveniently adjacent lover. It was the fashion of her race. Perhaps she had forgotten him already. It was silly of him to have felt conscience-stricken after all.

"Do you know, dear, that I am really beginning to doubt the justice of my first impressions, and believe that you truly do love me?" said his wife, several weeks after their marriage. "I should be the happiest of women, for I have married the rarest of treasures, a modest man—almost a shy man."

In June they went over on the Continent to a little fishing village on the coast of Normandy. This spot was now very dear to them, for it was the scene of their first meeting.

One afternoon, when the sun made the air almost sultry, Blanche drowsed off and fell asleep in her hammock, her husband sitting beside her.

He soon wearied of smoking, found reading a bore, and settled himself back in his chair for a nap.

When he was nearly asleep there came a pressure of a cold hand upon his brow. Awakening with a start, he found himself face to face with Ti-Rhada. She moved silently down the lawn, beckoning him to follow.

Terrified beyond power of resistance, he obeyed.

In the middle of a little clump of trees she stopped and faced him, fixing her great dark eyes upon his with long and searching scrutiny, the same as she had done the day he left her.

After a time a shaking sob, like a mortal convulsion was wrenched from her bosom, and the rich bronze darkness forsook her skin, and left it grey and ashen.

"I see—I understand," she said quietly. "You are all hers. Nothing within you is any more mine, nor his neither."

"His?"

"I speak of the little dead babe, lying alone under the tea-plants in the Darjeeling fields."

Mainwaring groaned, but could not move. Nor could he even raise a defensive arm, though he saw what her clenched hand held when it flashed upwards into the air before it fell with smiting force upon his bosom.

He felt the sudden sharp pain, saw the crimson answer his life-blood made to her knife, lurched, caught himself and fell backward upon the turf; but not an articulate sound did he utter, not even when he watched her turn from him and glide swiftly, noiselessly towards the sleeping Blanche.

G. D. M.

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THE CHOICE OF A LOVER.

"Two offers of marriage in one day! Well, which suitor is to receive the happy affirmative, Meta?"

The speaker, a middle-aged woman, regarded the girl before her with evident admiration and affection.

Meta Randall's fair face wore a perplexed expression, and her sweet voice trembled as she replied:

"If I only knew, auntie!"

To one even less versed in the character of the girl than Mrs. Preston, the sincere regret in her tone would have been ample assurance that neither coquetry nor vanity had induced such a reply.

The elder lady observed her curiously for a moment, and then said:

"Since both men are handsome and equally eligible, you should trust entirely to your heart to decide."

"But, auntie dear, my heart speaks as favourably for one as the other. Harry and Phil have been my friends, my cavaliers, from childhood. It would seem unnatural not to love them both. I feel that I could marry either to-morrow and never regret my choice. I am sure I love them equally.

"Was ever a poor girl in such a pitiable condition of uncertainty? Do choose my husband for me!" she entreated, as she dropped upon a cushion at Mrs. Preston's feet.

The aunt gently patted the head upon her lap.

"It's a great responsibility, Meta, to place upon my shoulders. What if, after all, I should choose the wrong one? But I have a plan, at least. How feasible it may prove, you are the one to determine."

As Mrs. Preston unfolded her scheme Meta's drooping head was lifted; then smiles of delight chased each other over her features; and finally, as the elder woman finished speaking, she sprang to her feet, exclaiming joyously:

"Just the thing, you dear, original auntie! Now take this, and this, and this!" And laughing merrily, she kissed her again and again.

"There, my dear, there! Better wait and learn the success of the plan," exclaimed Mrs. Preston. "Those letters must be answered immediately," she added, pointing to the crumpled missives on the floor.

"Certainly," the girl replied, as she picked up the letters. "Oh, it's too funny!" she added, as she ran gaily from the room.

That evening, in response to the invitations she had sent them, Henry Davis and Philip Stanton called upon her. Mr. Davis arrived a few minutes later than Mr. Stanton, and a look of disappointment was plainly apparent upon the face of each at the unexpected presence of the other.

Miss Randall, however, was in the best of spirits, and she talked brightly upon minor topics until a feeling of mutual fellowship was apparently established between the men. Then, with womanly tact, she gravely introduced the subject which concerned them all.

"Harry—Phil," she began, "I have invited you here, not, indeed, to answer the question which both of you honoured me by asking, but to make a proposition to you. You will think me an odd girl, perhaps, but at least you cannot reproach me for either coquetry or dishonesty when I tell you that my answer holds a condition. First I want to ask you one question: Have I ever, by word, or look, or action, signified to either that he was a favourite in my regard? In all the years of our friendship, have I ever manifested any affection for one that I have not as freely accorded to the other?"

The flush which gradually suffused her face displayed the excitement her candour had provoked, and she drew a deep breath of relief as both men simultaneously answered:

"Never!"

"Thanks. Now listen to my frank admission. As far as I have been able to analyse my feelings I am sure I love you both equally. As I can accept but one, the question must be decided for me—hence the condition. If either or both refuse to accept it I must stipulate that our past harmonious relations be sustained without any future reference to the possibility of marriage with either. And now the condition!"

"The condition!" both men quickly repeated.

"I propose a bicycle race between us three. I am to have the precedence of two minutes in starting. It is to be a three mile race upon the road between this house and old 'Bell Inn,' you know the road. The one who overtakes me before or as we reach the inn, will not only be the winner of he race, but also of a wife. If you overtake me at the same time or I reach the goal first, you will draw lots to see who is the victor."

The faces of the men wore an odd expression, but they promptly exclaimed:

"We agree."

It was a beautiful May morning, and the picturesque road leading to the Bell Inn was an appropriate one for a race which must in any case afford a romantic ending.

It was just ten o'clock when Meta Randall, neatly attired in a cycling suit of light grey, passed out of the house, with a merry laugh and a graceful toss of the head towards Davis and Stanton, at the quick ring of a bell, the signal for starting. Declining the proffered assistance of the competitors she mounted her bicycle and sped quickly down the road.

"What a glorious spin!" thought Meta, as the swift motion sent the exultant blood leaping through every artery, and every fibre of her body thrilled with the exuberant joy of living.

Faster and faster she flew along, until her efforts seemed involuntary. To herself she seemed impalpable and endowed with a freedom as perfect as the breeze which fanned her crimson cheek and tenderly lifted the curls about her face.

So completely did Nature's influence enthrall her that no thought of the ride, its purpose, or the two men who were speeding behind her, entered her mind until a shout informed her of the fact that Davis was rapidly gaining on her.

Then, quicker than a flash of light, came that for which she had previously so longed—the knowledge that one of these men was dearer to her than the other. Pure, tender and sweet, yet full of fear it came, causing a quick gasping for breath and a deepening flush upon the cheeks as she realised that perhaps the knowledge came too late, and that if Harry Davis won the race the happiness of two lives must certainly be wrecked.

With a voiceless prayer more fervent than any she had ever breathed before, she redoubled her own efforts

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to reach the inn as she heard the gentle whizzing of a wheel behind her.

"Philip, Philip, Philip!" appealingly resounded through her brain like a human voice. In agony she clutched the handle-bars more firmly, bent her body forward as she exerted every muscle to the uttermost and pedaled with the greatest rapidity in her determination to win the goal ahead of Davis. If she succeeded there was one more chance for Stanton to win by drawing lots.

The inn was just in sight. If Davis should win!

"Oh, no! Not that!" she whispered.

She was trembling with excitement; a sudden mist clouded her sight—a rumbling in her ears partially deafened her. A few more yards! Then there was a far off shout, a gentle touch upon her arm, and next——

A sense of dizziness and the recollection of falling from her bicycle came to her as she opened her eyes and saw—not Davis, but Philip Stanton, bending over her with tender solicitude and uttering loving exclamations.

J. G. SHORE.

SAVING A HUSBAND.

"MARION, you must do it!"

"Ernest! How can I?"

"Come, be seated. Let me finish. It is for the happiness of both of you that I come to you with a word of warning."

Her face assumed a look of alarm as her husband's cousin uttered the last words in a grave tone.

"Why, what do you mean? What has happened?"

"Nothing yet, but something may, unless you take my advice."

"Oh, Ernest, tell me what it is. Is it about Dick?"

"Yes, and you. Your baby has been dead a whole year, and still you wear these mourning gowns, and spend a great deal of time in weeping. The dear child is in Heaven; you know he is better off, and you cannot bring him back. You have been so absorbed in your grief that poor Dick has been neglected. A fellow can't stand that sort of thing for long: he must have a bright and cheery place to come to when business is over."

"Dick loves you truly, I have no doubt," he continued. "But you will go nowhere with him, and he needs amusement and companionship, and is seeking it elsewhere. Where is he to-night?"

"At the club. Oh, Ernest, you strike terror to my heart!"

"That's just what I want to—no, hardly that, but I want to arouse you from your grief for the dead, to look to the living. This great danger that threatens may be averted, but you must be brave and sensible, and I will help you."

Marion clasped her hands and waited for the rest.

"You know that Dick has spent much of his time in my office lately, far more than he used to. Can you guess why?"

"There is a lady typewriter—her name is Kate Armstrong, who works for me and the man who shares the suite of rooms with me. I have heard Dick call her 'Birdie.' My dear girl, be calm, don't start so! You need all your——"

"And you allow such things in your office!"

"How can I help it? She does not belong exclusively to me, and the other fellow is out most of the day. And if I say anything to Dick I shall offend him."

"You could get her discharged if you liked."

"What would be gained by that? It would only make matters worse, for he would sympathise with the girl and seek her elsewhere."

"Oh, that I should live to hear such things of Dick!"

She was walking the floor excitedly now, wringing her hands and sobbing.

"Marion, it seems cruel to tell you this, but you must save him."

"What can I do?" she wailed.

"In the first place stop crying, pull yourself together and face the situation. Here is my plan:

"The Arion Society will give a masked fancy dress ball at the Botanic Gardens on Thursday night, and I overheard him trying to persuade her to go with him. She has a little place part of the door, you know."

"What! And this creature that he calls 'Birdie,' is she—pretty?"

"Oh, yes, she is quite pretty. She wasn't sure of going, but told him she would call him up at his office on the telephone to morrow. Now I have learnt that she cannot go, but you must call him up, personate 'Birdie,' and make arrangements to take her place. Then you can find out the whole situation."

"Oh, Ernest, I cannot go to a masked ball! It seems too hear less after baby's death!"

"Marion, you can, and you must. Bury your grief show him that you can be as charming as you were three years ago, when you were married, and make him feel ashamed of having thought of 'Birdie' for a moment. Think how much is at stake, and that it is for the happiness of you both."

She thought of how she loved Dick, and what agony it would be to lose him, and resolutely dried her tears.

"I'll do it, Ernest!"

"Now, that's the right spirit to have! To-morrow at five minutes past one be at my office. I will send her out promptly at one o'clock for her lunch, then you can be free to talk to Dick."

"Yes, send her out, for I should annihilate her by a look!"

Marion Graham, after a night spent in devising ways and means to win Dick back, and keep him when won, followed the advice of her cousin, and was at his office at the appointed time.

As she entered the front door a very pretty girl came out, who she felt sure was Birdie. Instinctively she drew back her skirts, lest their garments should touch.

"Ernest, she's gone, is she?"

"Yes; left a few minutes ago."

"I am sure I saw her as I came in."

"Yes, probably."

Then he called up Dick, and told her what to say.

"Mr. Graham, someone at the instrument for you," said the office boy.

"Botherat on!" exclaimed Dick. "I want to finish this report without interruption. Ask who it is and what he wants."

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"It's a lady, sir."

"Oh, all right! Will be there at once."

"Are you there?"

"Hallo, Dick!" came from the other end of the wire.

"Oh, is that you, Birdie?"

"Yes, how are you to-day?"

"First-rate. Can you go to-morrow night?"

"Yes, that's what I want to talk about."

"Well, I say, wait a few minutes, and I'll come round and take you out to lunch, and we'll arrange it all."

"Oh, no, thank you, Dick, I couldn't possibly go to-day, I have to hurry out, just get a little something, and come back and work all the afternoon on an important piece of business."

"Too bad; but you are going to the ball, are you not?"

"Oh, yes! And, I say, Dick, I'll look up a costume, and then write you all particulars, where to meet me, etc. But don't come to the office to-morrow. I shall be very busy in the morning for I want to get off in the afternoon Don't dare to write, either. Good-bye, you'll get my letter in the morning."

"All right—good-bye, dear."

Next morning Dick received a letter at his office—typewritten—explaining all that was necessary for their arrangements. The signature "Birdie," was typewritten.

In the evening he told his wife he was going to the club.

"Don't sit up, Marion, I may be late—going to meet some fellows there, got a big thing on hand. Good-night. Go to bed early, and don't fret."

He kissed her, and as the door closed behind him, she said:

"No, I won't fret, Dick Graham, but if I don't make you ashamed of this night's work, I'm much mistaken."

An hour later a cab stood at the corner of the street, and a woman, cloaked and veiled, entered it. The coachman drove to a fashionable club, and as it stopped, a man ran lightly down the steps and joined the other occupant. Then they drove to the Gardens.

The ball was in full swing, and Marion Graham feasted her eyes upon the brilliant scene, while various emotions filled her soul.

Ah, Marion, you forget you have been out of the field for some time! Domestic duties, ties of motherhood, and the loss of a treasure have all saddened and subdued your spirits. The atmosphere of the home has been dull and heavy with grief. But Ernest was right, she must make an effort to throw it off, and live for the living. Poor Dick, what a hard time he had of it! How different she would be in the future! She would show him that she was more companionable than any Birdie that ever lived!

The music was exhilarating, the costumes gorgeous, and new life thrilled her as she looked at the ever-changing kaleidoscope.

"You are looking simply splendid! That costume is a beauty!" said Dick.

They joined in the whirl of dancers, and her feet responded to the music with much of her former delight.

She threw herself into the spirit of the occasion, and blessed Ernest Taylor for making it possible that it was her waist Dick's arm encircled instead of Birdie's.

He praised her dancing, her figure, her costume, and showed her every attention possible.

She was careful not to talk except during the music, which effectually drowned the tones of her voice, so that he should not discover the deception being practised upon him. During the lulls she allowed him to monopolise the conversation.

At last it was over, and they entered a cab to go home. Here was to be her grand dramatic climax; the unmasking, his surprise, her accusation, his confession, her forgiveness; the exchange of promises to do better in future, and the fall of the curtain on their complete reconciliation.

She began to get nervous, and hardly knew how to begin. The excitement of the ball was over, and fear seized her.

"And has my Birdie had a good time?" he asked tenderly, putting his arm round her.

"Very," came in muffled tones from under the mask.

"I've enjoyed it immensely, and I am so glad you were with me! Let me take off that mask, I haven't seen your face to-night!"

She allowed him to raise it just a little, then leant her head upon his shoulder. He stooped and pressed his lips to hers in one long, lingering kiss.

Oh, if that kiss had been for her instead of Birdie! How well she remembered his fond caresses, and now they were intended for another. How could he so soon forget the old days!

These thoughts filled her as he held her close in a silent embrace.

"Why, what's the matter, Birdie? You are crying!"

Where was the dramatic climax she had planned? She buried her face on his breast, and sobbed like a child.

"Well, dearie, there, there, don't cry any more! It has been hard for you, I know. Is the play over?"

"Dick—I am—Mar—i—on. Don't—you know—me?"

"Why, certainly, dear, I've known you all the time. Now stop crying and I'll make my little confession."

"Why, Dick—what—do you—mean?"

"Just this, darling. I saw that you were killing yourself with grief, and I knew that something must be done. In my dilemma I went to Ernest and explained the situation, and we arranged this little plot. We decided that the best way to rouse you was to create an alarm for my moral safety, and between us we succeeded. Clever trick, eh?"

"But—Birdie?"

"Ha! ha! ha! Why, my dear, she's a myth—a pure creation of our fertile brains. The typist is a man. The girl you saw go out was Ernest's sweetheart. You are the only Birdie I've got."

The last picture in the drama was the only one true to her original plan. She threw her arms about his neck and sobbed for joy. The lost was found!

'Now, dearest, there is one thing more that I must say about our little play, which I think you will always remember: 'It might have been!'"

J. SCUDAMORE.

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HIS PRINCESS.

"AND so, dear, you have decided to name the baby Ned! Was Fred quite willing?"

"It was his own suggestion. Please like it, Elizabeth."

"I do like it, little one; I love it; and I love Fred for suggesting it."

As I stood looking at the pretty maternal picture of my sister Barbara adoring her first-born, my heart was full of thankfulness and my eyes wet with tears. "Ah, my little man," I said stooping to kiss the tiny scrap of humanity, "if you are brought up as I think you will be, you will be more proud of your first name than of your last. How you came by it is almost like a story. story."

And then I suddenly thought that perhaps it was a story, so here it is.

"Blessed is the man that hath his quiver full of them," saith the Psalmist, and I think that even had my father been less happy in his family relations, he would have striven to feel "blessed," in order to fulfil the Scriptures. For there were twelve of us, all high-spirited and running over with mischief. I, Elizabeth, was the eldest daughter, and Barbara, who was ten years younger, the most beautiful and the favourite.

Why none of us were jealous of Barbara, I am sure I do not know. Perhaps it was because we all united in spoiling her. She was the only delicate baby my mother ever had, and this naturally caused a difference in the beginning. But had it not been this, some other reason would have presented itself. That old woman was a deep philosopher who said of her unmarried sisters:

"It ain't never that there be no men about—it's the winnin' ways as is wantin' in the gals."

Winning ways were not lacking in Barbara's case, and as child and woman she was most perfectly beautiful in face and form. Some few, who had not fallen under the witchery of her personality, maintained that she was too small, too fairy-like—that the soft golden hair was too fluffy and luxuriant.

Small Barbara might be, but the erect little body was a storage-house for spirit and fire sufficient for a dozen ordinary mortals. Her pretty, imperious ways gained for her the title of "Princess" with father and the boys. My mother disliked the name, thinking it not good for Barbara, and we girls never used it for quite another reason. It was our small and only stand against the absolute monarchy.

But when she was about four years old another subject was added to Barbara's list—one who was to outstrip all others in loyal devotion, and this was Ned—black, savage, untameable Ned.

His mother was a full-blooded African who had been purchased by our uncle, the owner of a sugar plantation in America. He bought her with her baby in her arms, out of pure compassion, he said; for she was as untamed as a savage and evidently untameable—utterly useless to her late master, who was trying to subdue her by methods of which we were spared the recital. But the change of masters came to her too late. Though her spirit was unbroken, it was so bruised and festering as to render her death no surprise when it occurred some months later.

The child, whose name was Ned, was brought up in the quarters with the other negro children. He developed early a wild and lawless spirit, and when he was put into the field to work the overseer complained constantly that he was a leader among the slaves and thoroughly insubordinate. My uncle's attention thus called in his direction, he found Ned a man of twenty-two years, superbly built, and apparently as much of a savage as his mother.

Remembering her history, my uncle determined to make no attempt to break the lad's spirit. He wrote at once to my mother, in England, telling her the story and saying that as he found Ned responded to kindness, he felt sure there was the making of a magnificent servant in him. He ended by begging my mother to accept him and give him the individual attention that his bachelor home could not afford, adding that if the boy proved too much for her he could be returned.

Mother and father talked the matter over, and the end of it was Ned came to our farm in Norfolk. He was almost a giant—quite six feet four, but too perfectly proportioned to show his full height, and lithe and active as a panther.

Mother decided to train him as a butler. He learnt rapidly, and though at first he lifted barrels of flour with ease and trembled under a glass of water, he soon waited with a really stately elegance. The strangeness of the new home and surroundings kept the old lawless spirit in check; but familiarity bred the usual contempt, and in a few weeks Ned was king of the kitchen as absolutely as he had been king of the Virginian plantation.

Possibly this spirit was an inheritance; undoubtedly his appearance bore out the supposition, and perhaps from the same source sprang the wild gusts of rage

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which seemed to possess him and sweep him along resistlessly. Mother remonstrated gently, then sternly and repeatedly—all in vain.

Pandemonium seemed to have broken loose in the regions below stairs. Early one morning the climax came. An uproar such as never was heard before rose from the kitchen, causing my father's hasty appearance there for the first time in many years. Huddled in one corner were the frightened servants, and in the centre of the room towered Ned, holding the group in subjection. Some trifle had irritated him, and this was the consequence.

Father was beyond measure angry—so angry that Ned's rage paled before his. He told the rather sobered negro that he would stand it no more. Kindness had failed with him, and he should now have the whipping he richly deserved.

"Not to be given by me, however," he added. "The constable shall do it, and I mean to send for him to take you away at once."

So saying, my father left the house in a white heat. But he was unused to interfering in what he considered his wife's department, and was also a man of quick wrath and quicker forgetfulness; so, becoming absorbed in important matters of business, he spent no further thought on Ned or his misconduct.

It was not thus at home. So severe a measure had never before been resorted to, and we were all unhappy. Mother alone, and probably because she knew what manner of man our father was, remained as placid as ever as she sat in the nursery sewing.

But her placidity was to be rudely interrupted. There was a sudden patter of feet in the hall, a scrambling up the stairway, and Susan, the old cook and whilom ruler of the kitchen, rushed into the room.

"Oh, mum, that nigger has gone up into the garret with the meat chopper and master's razor. He's going to kill someone, I'm sure.

Two bright, hard spots of colour rose in my mother's cheeks as she listened, but her manner was unhurried as she quilted her needle into her work and shook off the threads from her dress into the open fire-place. With her usual even pace she walked out of the room and up the stairway, we children with the servants who had gathered in the hall, stringing after her. On she went to the partially-closed garret door. There she paused.

"Ned!"

There was no answer.

Raising her hand, my mother struck the door lightly with her palm, throwing it wide open and disclosing Ned who stood before it. All the savage was up and looking out of the dark, scowling face, the bloodshot eyes, the drawn lips. His body was thrown back, and in one hand, raised above his head, he held the axe. In the other flashed the razor.

The servants crowded behind each other with smothered cries, but mother, with her beautiful, proud head thrown back, stepped over the threshold. She was slightly and delicately made, yet as she stood opposite the huge negro, her figure drawn up to its full height, her cheeks brilliant, her eyes flashing defiance into his, she rose above the question of brawn and muscle, to become his full equal in power, but no more.

The inflexible blue eyes and the passionate black ones looked unflinchingly into each other for what seemed to me an age. And then suddenly my mother's whole figure seemed to relax. The scornful, curling lips half smiled. The blue eyes looked infinitely soft and pitying. She stepped swiftly to Ned's side and laid her gentle hand on his shoulder. "You poor boy," she said softly, "why will you do so?"

Wonder drove possession from the dark face—wonder held Ned spell-bound as my mother took the weapons from his unresisting hands. But when she bade him return to his work he seemed to awake, and darting a furious glance round, he rushed headlong from the room and down the stairs. But then something happened which I cannot think of even now without a darting sense of horror. Half way up the stairs stood little Barbara. Her nurse had deserted her and she was following after.

Spreading out her tiny arms she blocked Ned's way.

"You is got to tarry me down 'tairs," she cried in her sweet treble. "I hurted my foot and I aren't a-doin' to walk."

Ned stopped and hesitated. I sprang forward, but mother, her face as pale as her handkerchief, held my arm in an iron grasp. I turned sick and faint; everything swam before my eyes, and when I could see again it was a strange sight that awaited me. Barbara was sitting high in Ned's arms, singing a little tune to herself and beating time on his woolly head.

He carried her down the stairs, straight to the wood-room, where they spent the rest of the morning. One minute Ned was chopping wood furiously, and the next he was sitting with Barbara on his knee, delighting her heart by strange stories and games. Mother made me peep in occasionally, but would not allow them to be disturbed.

"The child is doing him good," she said.

At last the nursery door opened softly, and Ned entered with Barbara cradled in his arm, sound asleep.

He laid her in the crib, covering her carefully, tenderly, soothing her when she half woke, and then left the room with noiseless step.

The battle was over. Ned had found his master, and that master was a baby.

There was never any real trouble with Ned after this. He now had a motive for good behaviour, and lived in deadly fear of being sent back to America, away from "de fiddle-string of his heart, Miss Princess."

When he felt his old rages coming on, he used simply to depart—where, we never knew. Sometimes he was gone for one day, sometimes for two. My mother wisely forebore asking questions, and when we children did so he would invariably reply gravely: "I was sent for suddint to go to the Islant of Dardanelles fer to wait on my Lord Concarson."

Barbara never had one atom of curiosity, so she never inquired unless we put her up to it, but even then we got no satisfaction. Ned would pick her up and carry her off, saying:

"Yes, honey, Ned's gwine to tell Miss Princess all 'bout it—jes' you come wid me."

But on her return we could never gather that she knew any more than we did. Barbara was so easily distracted and so lacking in any desire for knowledge.

In one respect Ned was very considerate. He never disappeared if guests were expected, and on one occasion he even returned hastily on remembering a dinner party! "Jes' s'pose I had a' gone on dis ememberin' dis here party," I heard him say to Susan "Dere ain't one o' you servants as knows even to set de table, an' when it comes to waitin'—Lord! I jes' run back like a har' soon as I come to think 'bout it. I ain't stop to take breff."

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But these departures became less and less frequent as his adoration of Barbara grew stronger.

It was a strange sight to see the two together. Barbara's manner was as if graciously permitting affection, while Ned's was that of actual worship. Her first remark on seeing him was always, "I wants to be tarried;" and Ned knew no higher happiness than holding her curled up in his great arms.

I think she enjoyed the sense of his powerful strength. A great deal of his work was done thus encumbered, but as Ned could set a table better with one hand than anyone else with two he was allowed to do as he chose.

He was Barbara's willing slave, a slave whom no Emancipation Act could liberate, though Ned himself was a great abolitionist and fond of making speeches upon the subject in the kitchen.

Some time after this my father was obliged to settle in America. We sold up our home, and went out to Virginia. We arrived there in the early part of 1865, just before the Civil War.

When the war broke out Barbara was eight years old and was going to school with me. I was to leave at the end of the year. Our city was on the border-line, and constantly full of soldiers; so my mother preferred to send Ned to and from school with us. But one day we were dismissed a few minutes earlier than usual, and I started home alone with my little sister.

When only a square from our door, we met a Union soldier walking towards us. He looked admiringly at Barbara, and then stopped.

"Will you give me a kiss, my pretty bird?" he said.

She shrank to my side, speechless with terror. I do not believe the man meant to frighten her. He was a mild-looking little fellow, and probably had children of his own at home, but he stooped and lifted Barbara high in the air to steal the wished-for kiss. But that kiss he never got; for she was suddenly seized and whisked out of his hands and over his head, to his infinite astonishment. Ned was on the way to meet us and had flown to the rescue.

It was well for the little soldier, and perhaps well for Ned also, that Barbara required all of her faithful servant's soothing and attention. But from that moment Ned's horror of "dem Yanks" knew no bounds, and hatred of them included a hatred of their principals. His speeches in the kitchen veered in doctrine with an alarming suddenness.

He had things his own way, as usual, for the men were afraid of him and the maids admired him. Aunt Tilly, our new negro cook, alone spoke her mind, and I heard her do it from my upstairs window.

"You was a-talkin' de oder side of yer mouf," she said, as she hopped up and down in her vain endeavour to throw a dripping sheet over the high clothes-line in the yard. "You was a-sayin' dere warn't no right in a-holding de slaves."

Ned took the sheet from her with a contemptuous kindness and slung it over the line.

"Dat was before I knowed," he answered coolly, and then, emphasizing his remark by driving down the clothes-pins, he added impressively, "Dat's what niggers was made fer."

The year 1865 was soon to prove that Ned and many others were mistaken. But we children cared little for this or anything else that did not directly concern us, and so the years of childhood slipped away with only enough shadow about them to throw out the sunlight more strongly; and when Barbara's seventeenth birthday came, it was to find us children yet in many ways. Barbara was still the "Princess," but Ned was, if possible, more than ever her captive. The great change was that Barbara was engaged to be married—and engaged to an Englishman who had lately settled among us—a Mr. Fred Damer, who openly favoured the cause of the Northerners; for formality was not possible with one of his sunny nature and kind heart.

Except for her extreme youth, I think we all were satisfied with Barbara's engagement, Ned alone excepted. That Barbara should marry anybody was bad enough, but that she should marry one of "dem Yanks" was intolerable.

He waited on Fred at table with undisguised disgust, muttering and shaking his head behind his back at every opportunity; invariably beginning to wait on him from the right side, and just as Fred adjusted himself to the awkwardness, rushing round to the left. It really amounted to a petty persecution, which kept the children in delighted spasms of laughter and me in misery. My mother could not see from behind her tea-urn what was going on, and father never saw or heard anything. But at last Ned undertook to slap down as a gauntlet each plate and dish before his foe, and his mutterings began to grow audible. One day, on seeing Fred pay some little attention to mother, he spoke too loud for further ignoring.

"I sees yer, I sees yer, 'deed I does. Throwin' cobs at de cow, is yer? Yes, to make de ca'f take notice. Yer don't git dis yer ca'f, ef Ned kin help it—naw, sir."

This was too much. My patience was exhausted and I complained to father.

At the next meal my remonstrance took effect. Just as Ned was indulging in an unusually horrible contortion of his visage, and as my delighted brother John was stuffing all of his handkerchief into his mouth, my father looked up suddenly and bent his white brows on Ned until they met in a straight line over his blue eyes. Thus he continued to gaze at him until the embarrassed negro managed to get himself out of the room. Then, turning to the now sober John, father significantly motioned to the door, through which the scared boy escaped, glad to get off so easily.

My father never used unnecessary words, and as he knew none were needed to meet this occasion, none were said, and at least outward peace reigned until the inevitable first lovers quarrel arose. Then Ned was one broad grin; he seemed to scent danger for the hated intruder, and he hung about Barbara, perfectly happy in the fact that she, as in her childish troubles, seemed to prefer his constant attendance to anything else.

I was never quite able to make out what this quarrel was about, though it lasted several days, but it was not difficult to see that Barbara was behaving like the spoilt baby she was, and that Fred was very patient, more patient than I for him, for at last, finding Barbara alone in the library, I administered the good round scolding that I thought she needed. Unused as she was to any harshness, it did not take long to reduce her to floods of tears, and she was sobbing her heart out apparently, when Fred entered the room.

As I closed the library door behind me two minutes after his entrance, it was with the fixed opinion, which I have seen no reason to alter since, that the male or female who attempts to interfere with even the potentially married is a fool. What conclusion the lovers came to in their prolonged reconciliation, I do not know. When we all met in the drawing-room in the evening Barbara appeared her old bewitching self, supremely

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happy and contented. What arguments had been used to work the change I never asked, and Barbara never told me. However it may have been, the result was satisfactory.

Fred was a trifle more communicative, but indirectly. Taking me into a corner later in the evening, he gravely inquired if I thought my father would object to his taking Ned out into the yard and wringing his neck.

"If he did not, Barbara would," I replied. "What has poor Ned been doing now?"

"Poor Ned, indeed! He has been abusing me as usual. I was at my innocent devotions this afternoon, worshipping at my shrine in the attitude common to worshippers of every faith and clime, when he attacked me. Elizabeth, being behind the scenes, why did you not intercept the afternoon tea-try brought in by Ned with cat-like steps and handed to Barbara over my devoted head and prostrate form? I had two horrible alternatives: to rise suddenly to my feet, thereby upsetting the tray and all its contents, or to crab out sidewise. I chose the latter, and even as I emerged was offered tea by my tormentor with respectful gravity."

"What did Barbara do?" I asked, laughing heartily.

"Why, Barbara came to my rescue nobly. She reproved Ned scathingly, and with the air of an insulted princess, for putting only one lump of sugar in her tea—I think that was it."

"Reproved Ned! and before you!" I cried. "Then, indeed, she punished him. The jealous hatred he bears you is beyond words. My impression is that he is not going to put up with your presence much longer. I have been for some time expecting a messenger for Ned from Lord Concarson necessitating a voyage to the Island of the 'Dardanelles.'"

"Not he!" cried Fred. "No such luck for poor me!"

I was nearer right than I thought. The next morning brought with it the news that Ned was off again, and with no farewell message except a box of dainty sweets tied to Barbara's door-knob.

We thought a couple of days at most would see Ned in his place again. But no—Barbara had gone over to the enemy; his own eyes had seen incontestable proof of a complete reconciliation. It was not to be borne, and shaking the dust from his feet, Ned departed in earnest.

Perhaps it was for the best. Barbara missed him sadly, and grieved long over his absence, repenting often her hasty words. But as the days went by she grew more and more absorbed in her lover, and I do not think Ned's jealous heart could have borne the sight. And when Barbara's wedding-day came, and our clinging little Princess was taken from us, I thought of Ned and rejoiced in his absence, believing that his undisciplined nature would have suffered a pang ten times sharper than mine.

But Barbara had not seen her faithful servant for the last time. She was soon to meet him again. And of this meeting I have heard the story so often that it has grown impossible for me to feel that I was not there in person, so I shall tell it as if such were the fact.

Fred and Barbara seemed inclined to spend the rest of their lives in one prolonged wedding journey. They visited our old home in England, stayed several months in Paris, and then made a tour of the States for a year. Drifting about in this way, they strolled one noon into the dining-room of a New York hotel and sat awaiting their luncheon. The waiters were all negroes, and as Barbara idly looked at them, wondering

at the similarity of their appearance, her attention was caught by something familiar in the figure of the head waiter, whose back was towards her. Suddenly he turned, and Ned and his "Miss Princess" were face to face.

In the joy of that meeting, even the man who had stolen his treasure was forgiven. He had no words too eloquent to express his passionate delight, no entreaties too urgent to implore their stay. The best that the hotel could offer was theirs, and no hands but Ned's were allowed to proffer the dishes. Barbara's happiness was but little less than his, and when they left the dining-room after the prolonged meal, it was with the promise to make their stay an extended one. With this understanding, Ned bade them a reluctant farewell for the afternoon.

But in an hour or so a message was brought to him that Mrs. Damer wished to see him in her sitting-room. He found her alone, lying in a corner of the low divan, looking pale and suffering.

"Ah, Ned," she cried as he entered, "my head does ache so! I have been to see Aunt Mary, and she keeps her house as hot here as she did when she lived at home. It made me so ill—just as it used to!"

Ned was all tender sympathy. She was his little mistress once more, and he was her great gentle nurse. He brought her a cup of strong tea made by his own hands. Had she asked for nightingales' tongues he would have produced them somehow. Barbara sipped the fragrant tea and listened to the familiar voice contentedly.

"Ned," she said, looking up at him suddenly, "why did you run away?"

For a moment Ned's composure failed him and his eyes dropped. Then a smile crept over his face.

"Yer see, honey," he said, "I was just 'bleeged to go. My Lord Concarson, he don' sen' fer dis nigger deep in de night an' all de way from de Islant of Dardanelles, lessen he means business. I didn't even have de time fer to say good-bye to my pretty baby."

Barbara listened with soft laughter.

"Ned," she said, "tell me about the Island of Dardanelles."

Ned obediently began a long, fallacious tale of a lovely, lonely land, a land of tropic growth and splendour. The story was such as he had told Barbara over and over again in her baby days. Gradually her eyelids sleepily drooped and fell; opened, drooped again, and then, under the spell of the familiar phrases, she fell asleep.

* * * * *

"Fire! Fire!"

The dining-room of the hotel where Ned was in charge

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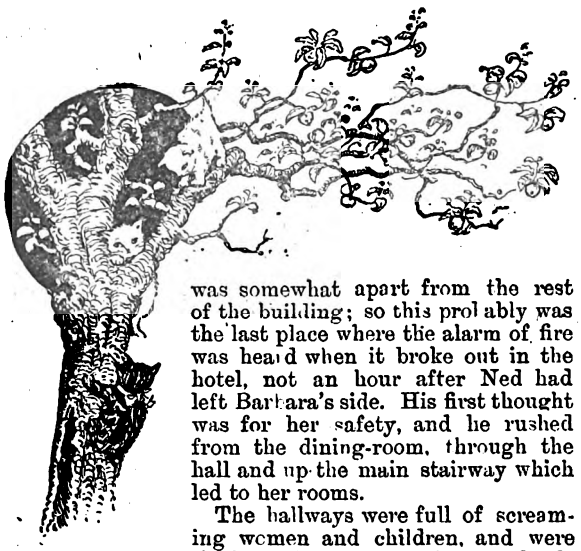

was somewhat apart from the rest of the building; so this probably was the last place where the alarm of fire was heard when it broke out in the hotel, not an hour after Ned had left Barbara's side. His first thought was for her safety, and he rushed from the dining-room, through the hall and up the main stairway which led to her rooms.

The hallways were full of screaming women and children, and were thick with smoke. Great clouds were rolling in from every side. On the first landing Ned met Barbara's husband, a baby in either arm, and a half-fainting woman clinging to his shoulder.

"Miss Barbara!" gasped Ned.

"Safe," was the laconic answer as Fred bundled the babies into Ned's arms and caught the tottering woman.

The fire had been smouldering too long before being discovered to think of saving much more than human life now that the flames had broken out, and it required brave and determined efforts to accomplish even this.

At last the order was issued by the captain of the fire brigade that no one should further risk life and limb by re-entering the doomed building. Ned had been foremost among the workers, and he now prepared to enjoy himself.

An African is always a voluptuary in his pleasures, and abandoning himself with true negro delight to the sway of excitement, Ned drifted about with the seething and twisting of the crowd, until he found himself standing close by Fred's side. He then resisted the pressure which was bearing him forward, and spoke reproachfully:

"I jes' hope you got Miss Princess a-lookin' at dis yer fire from somewhar. She allays did love a fire. Many's de one I done tuk her toe outen de back gate, when ole Miss think she war in de nussery an' I war in de woodhus. Thar warn't none on it she didn't see a-sittin' up on my shoulder an' crowin' like a little rooster. O'e Miss, she cot me takin' her out onct; and she did raise! I disremember jes what she tol' me, but I know I ain't tuk de chile no mo'. Ho! ho!"

Fred listened with much amusement.

"I am afraid your Miss Barbara cannot see this fire from where she is," he said. "I took her across the city early this afternoon to visit her aunt. It is not my fault that she is not with me. They didn't want me, and told me so."

"An' yer ain't seen Miss Barbara sence de fire broke out?"

"No—for Heaven's sake, man, what is the matter with you?"

The two faces looked into each other—a strange contrast. One with staring white eyeballs and eyes full of a horrible intelligence—the other white and ghastly with its dawning terror.

No further words were needed. Both men turned and sprang forward as moved by one muscle. But the action of the negro was with hand and foot. A well-directed blow from his ponderous fist made the husband of his young mistress stagger, and when he recovered his footing Ned had gained a moment's advantage and was cleaving his way through the crowd, which opened for him as did the Red Sea for Moses—"a wall on the right hand and on the left."

As he reached the door of the burning building his path was barred by a fireman in his full panoply and power of office.

"Git out, ye black fool!" he shouted in unmistakable Irish.

Out swept that powerful black arm, and with what seemed but a gesture, the burly Irishman was brushed aside. The next moment Ned was up the deserted stairway, and had gained the first landing. Here he paused. There was now no one to bar his progress but death, clad in his most fearful terrors.

The negro stooped and began to draw off his boots.

The stairway hung by a thread and his step must be cat-like. He cast one look back into the surging mass of life below, and saw there a man struggling vainly in the grasp of a dozen hands. He heard a hoarse voice crying:

"Let me go! My wife is in that place!"

Above the roar of the fire, above the shout of many voices, rose the stentorian tones of the captain of the brigade.

"Hold on to him, boys, hold on to him. There's one chance in a hundred, and that hangs on those steps. There shan't be a foot set on 'em."

Ned heard, saw, and was satisfied that the first part of his mission was accomplished. He set his bared foot on the charred steps and began the ascent, the first turn hiding him from the eyes of the crowd below.

A death-like silence fell on the multitude, a silence rendering more horribly audible the resistless, sullen roar of the fire, which licked and curled about the eaves of the house, and which the hissing water seemed but to feed. Great tongues of flame broke from one window and another. A woman's hysterical sobs alone broke the stillness, and she was sternly hushed.

Barbara's husband ceased to struggle in the fireman's grasp.

Have you ever known what waiting means—known more than its impatient restlessness? Have you ever felt that stopping of the heart's pulses for one moment of anxious listening, and then at some sound the wild rush and thunder of the blood in your veins, the agony of the clutch at your very life and being, your breath stopped in your throat? If you have never known all this, you have never known waiting, and you may pray Heaven to spare you that knowledge. This suffering and this knowledge are Frederick Damer's.

Crash!

A cry rose from the listening crowd in answer to the sound, and the woman who had sobbed before was carried away fainting.

"Thank goodness, it's only the lower stairway gone," said the captain. "The landing still holds. I can reach it with a ladder. Get me one."

"I'll go with you," said a quiet, determined voice beside him. It was Barbara's husband.

The captain turned and looked at him closely; apparently what he saw satisfied him.

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"Yes, sir," he answered calmly. "Give him your helmet, Jack. We must go now, sir. I hear them on the stair."

They entered the burning house together. At any moment the roof might fall. Four lives were now in jeopardy where two had stood before. The sound of a footfall slowly became an established fact.

"That ain't but one person walking, sir," said the captain gently, "and you'd best not hope, for that foot's bare."

"Then he is carrying her," said Fred, and again nothing but the dread fire sounds and that stealthy footfall broke the silence.

At last! at last! Out of the smoke, out of the flame, on to the frail platform, stepped the gigantic negro, his clothes literally torn and burnt from his body; the blood streaming from a ghastly wound in his head; his breath coming in sobs like those of a wounded stag; but in his arms, gathered close to his breast, her fair curls gleaming in its blackness, lay the unconscious form of his Miss Barbara.

Once more he was carrying her safely home from a fire, and now, indeed, for the last time. By the help of the two waiting men the descent of the ladder was made, and Barbara lay in her husband's arms. Even at this supreme moment, he observed with a rush of grateful emotion that the blanket in which she was swathed had been saturated in water.

As the rescuer and the rescued passed out from the blazing house, a wild shout burst from the excited crowd, which pressed forward beyond control. But even as his dimmed sense heard the cries as the blessed air of heaven smote upon him, Ned staggered and dropped to the ground. The blood gushed out from his ears and mouth. He was picked up by strong hands and carried into a neighbouring house, where at least there were quiet and care.

In another room in the same building Barbara lay, still unconscious; but the swoon caused by fright and shock soon yielded to treatment, and she awoke, crying hysterically for "Mother!" and clinging nervously to her husband.

But her first fully conscious thought was for Ned. Fred could not command his voice to answer her eager, persistent questions, and it was the physician in charge who gently broke to her the news of his danger, and who left her in order to seek the latest report of his condition.

In those few moments, alone with the wife, "brought to him like Alcestis from the grave," I think we may forgive a brief forgetfulness of the Hercules whose gift she was; but it was with a sense of remorseful awakening that Fred looked at the grave face of the physician as he entered, saying, "I can give you but little encouragement."

"Oh no! no!" cried Barbara. "You can, you must save him! Go to him, both of you. I promise to be perfectly quiet. I won't move—only go; oh, go!"

As the door closed behind the two men Fred turned to the physician with an inquiring look, and was answered by a shrug of the shoulders and an outward motion of the hands, more expressive than any words. Everything that skill could do had been done, but from the first it needed no medical verdict to tell that there was no hope.

Ned did not seem to suffer, but lay almost unconscious, breathing heavily. Fred, bending over him in an agony of grateful pity, saw his lips move, and, bending nearer thought he heard him whisper, "Miss Princess."

"Shall I bring her to you?" he asked, and, waiting for no answer, went hastily for his wife.

She started up with eager eyes as he entered. "Is there no hope?" she cried.

"There has been none from the first," he answered. "Dear, he is asking for you. Can you bear it? There is not a moment to lose."

"Oh! take me to him quickly, quickly!"

He lifted her tenderly, and half led, half carried her to the room of the dying man. But in his short absence there had been a change in the sufferer. Agony had partially restored consciousness, and each breath was a moan.

"Oh, Lord, come git me!" he was crying feebly as they entered the room.

"Love, it is too late. You must not stay now, nor would he wish it."

But Barbara broke from her husband's detaining arm, and threw herself on her knees by the bedside.

Her presence seemed to rouse him. He opened his eyes and looked at her tear-wet face.

"'Tain't so terrible bad, darlin'," he gasped brokenly. "I ain't a-cryin' none—jis' whisperin', jis' whisperin'——"

Barbara buried her face in the bedside and burst into a passion of tears. Her husband stepped forward to draw her away, fearing she might disturb the dying man; but Ned seemed to divine his intention, and, rallying his strength, laid a detaining hand on her sunny curls, raising her face to his sight.

"Don't take on so, darlin'," he whispered. "I's got to go, but I ain't goin' fur, honey, not to say fur." A gleam of the old humour shot across his face. "Ned only gwine to de 'slant of Dardanelles, honey, fer to wait on my Lord Con——"

A sudden shudder shook his whole frame; his face was contorted in agony. Barbara's husband laid his hand quickly across her eyes to shut out the sight.

And when he drew it away again all was over. Ned had at last made his voyage to the Blessed Isles.

ALEC ARTHUR ANSTEY.

"PEARSON'S MAGAZINE."

THE current issue of this magazine is an unusually brilliant production. It is crammed with interesting articles, stories to suit every taste, and illustrations and photographs such as can be found in no other magazine published. It is a tip-top issue. The following are some of the contents:—"Pictures and their Painters," "Snowed-Up in June," "From Reading to Paris in a Houseboat," "Liquid Air," "Ourselves *versus* the World," "The Vicomte's Double," "How Criminals are Identified," "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," "Wire Walking." Its cover is one of exquisite design, and is in itself a real work of art.

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in this week's number of *Pearson's Weekly* as the person to whom a £5 note was addressed, and who failed to apply.

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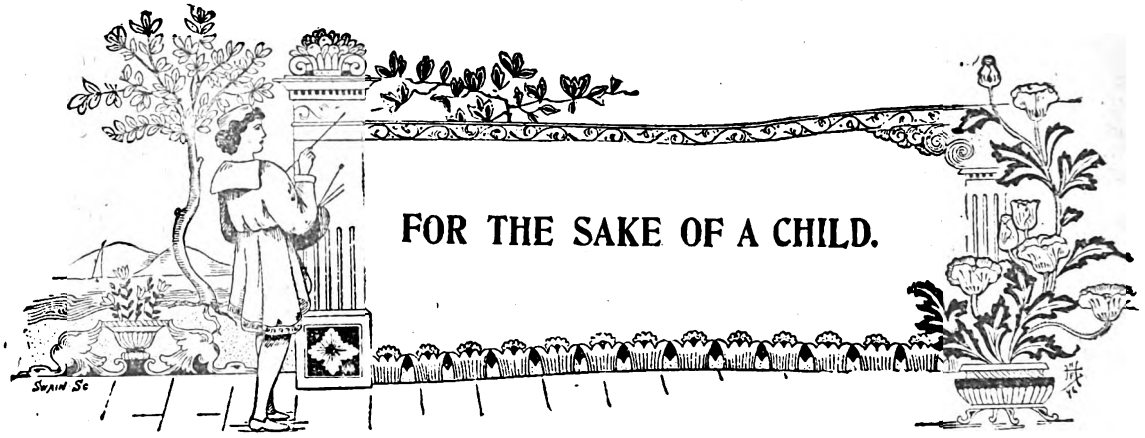

FOR THE SAKE OF A CHILD.

HE was only a little boy. Only a little boy with golden hair and great blue eyes and white transparent skin, and he looked as if he had walked straight out of one of the great east windows in the church and come down to sing with his beautiful voice, which would make the old peasants cry when they listened.

And if anyone had asked him why he was singing you should have seen the flush which would creep into his cheeks. You should have watched him raise himself on his elbow and point out of the open window to the bright sky and the sun which shone winter and summer down on to the seaward slope. He would have grown quite excited, his eyes would have sparkled, and he would have answered back:

"I am singing to mother in her home up there, because I am going to see her soon, the good priest tells me."

So Guy's little throat would swell, and the soft, sweet voice would ring out, while his thoughts were carried far away from the dingy little bedroom, with the cobwebs which swung drowsily in the corners, and the pale mauve dust which raced about under the bed.

* * * * *

Joseph was standing in the street below. It was not really a street, it was not exactly a flight of steps either, merely a steeply descending path with great bare boulders of rock and rank weeds growing in between. The houses themselves, on either side, with their little green shutters and rough mural decorations, were so close together that when Joseph came home in the evening with his donkey laden with faggots, the ends would sweep the walls on either side, as anyone could see who took the trouble to look.

He was at the door of his cottage now with his arms folded against the door-post, and his head buried in his sleeve, and if anyone had been there to notice they would have seen that his face was bleeding.

Half an hour later he was still standing there. The singing overhead had ceased, and a sad little voice was calling, "Father! Father!"

Still Joseph did not move, only he shifted once from one leg to the other, and his whole frame shook with a sob. A little girl came running down the path towards him, her hair streaming behind her, her little feet in their wooden shoes pattering louder and louder on the cobbles.

"Joseph!" she called; "Joseph!"

But the man took no notice until she stood, pulling his sleeve, and quite out of breath with her running

"Joseph, Francis is dead," she panted. "They found him up there in the olive grove behind the Villa Panama."

Joseph's arms fell to his side, and he staggered back against the other post. His face was grey and ashen, except for the grey smudge on his cheek and the jagged wound below the eye.

"Dead! Holy Virgin have mercy on me," he cried. His whole body vibrated; his head wandered. He bent down and seized the little girl by the shoulders, looking at her so fiercely that she was quite frightened, and struggled to get away.

"Who found him?"

"Marie. And Luc has gone for a gendarme, for they think he was murdered."

Joseph's grasp loosened on the little girl's dress. She wriggled out of his reach, and ran away crying.

Joseph's heart began to beat furiously. "What shall I do? Where shall I go?" he asked himself. His lips were agitated, his legs trembling.

A glass of wine would have given him courage, but the cask was empty. He felt distracted. A bitter taste filled his mouth, and he rolled his tongue round trying to moisten the dryness of his palate. In another moment he felt he would be sick. He was suffocated with fear, and that terrible sinking sensation made his whole body jerk with violent spasms.

There was no time to waste, however; the wound on his face would accuse him.

"I was a fool not to think of that before, dash it!" he said to himself. He might protest, but they would not believe he was innocent.

He crossed to the back of the house and threw open the little window. The fresh breeze blowing from the east cooled his burning forehead, and he drew a long breath gratefully and stood still to listen.

Was anyone coming?

He heard feet tramping on the stones outside; they came nearer and nearer, and then died away. If anyone had come in then he could not have moved.

"Father! father!"

The sweet voice seemed louder and more imperative. Joseph's eyes filled with tears, and he shook his head slowly from side to side.

"Ah! little one, what would your mother say?" he groaned.

He longed to go upstairs and say good-bye to his little boy, but a power which seemed irresistible held him back. He dare not trust himself by that bed of sickness.

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Hark! What was that? A hand on the door; someone was coming in.

He vaulted out through the open window, perspiring in every pore, his heart beating wildly. In another minute he was running with marvellous agility over the rough, broken ground behind the house, slipping from shrub to shrub, dodging from tree to tree, and not even daring to look back. Before the sun was set he would be far on his way to the frontier.

* * * * *

Three days had passed. Joseph stood alone on the top of a mountain, looking with eager, bloodshot eyes towards the west, where the sun was already disappearing. He stretched out his hands with a pathetic gesture.

"Heaven protect you, little one!" he stammered. "Heaven protect you!"

For three days he had suffered ceaselessly. He was still in France; still, if the gendarmes had only known it, within twenty miles of his home Here at least he was safe, on the top of this snow-clad mountain, among the ruins of an ancient fortressed city. If needs be, he could defend that narrow slippery path against an army. One rock would decimate a regiment.

The loaf he had taken with him, however, had disappeared. All day he had eaten nothing; tasted nothing but handfuls of frozen snow; and his mouth and throat were burning. As soon as it was dark he must make his way to the nearest village, and steal what he could not beg.

It was bitterly cold, although the sun was still shining brightly, and a warm haze seemed to be hanging over the country down below. Joseph shivered, and turned back to the dark underground cellar where he had taken refuge. He stumbled along, staggered now and then like a man that is drunk, and bruising himself over the broken masonry which lay scattered about between the crumbling walls and picturesquely shapeless towers which still stood, weatherbeaten monuments of Saracen's skill.

His boots were sopping with the snow, and the clothes, which had been warm enough down below, were pierced through and through by the wind which cut across the Alps.

It was warmer down in the cave where he had passed the night, and comparatively dry, and here he curled himself up and went to sleep, stupefied with suffering and anguish.

It was already night when he awoke. He sat up listening.

Surely he heard someone calling.

A soft child voice seemed echoing in his ears.

"Father! Father! I want you, father dear."

He rubbed his eyes and went outside.

A terrible stillness brooded over the world. Not a sound of any kind reached his ears. The hum of an insect, or the cry of some night bird would have brought him comfort.

Joseph was alone with Nature in one of her grandest aspects, and he shrank back into the darkness of his cellar, cowed and afraid.

The moon was shining down on the snow-clad mountain till it glistened like polished silver; countless myriads of stars shone in the black canopy above. For miles round he could see the jagged mountain peaks detaching themselves greyly from the sky, here plunged in blackest shadow, there flooded with the splendance of the moonlight, and Joseph turned his back upon it hastily and threw himself down in a corner of the cave with the shame and the misery that possessed him.

How long he crouched there he did not know. He tried to sleep, but hunger and thirst were tormenting him; his brain seemed on fire; remorse, keen, bitterest remorse, had taken the place of fear; he was at enmity with God and man, an outcast, a criminal, without home or shelter in the world, without a morsel of bread, without a drop of water.

His despair was dreadful.

And then all of a sudden the words of the kind old priest, who lived in the little village, passed through his mind.

"Three days more—four at the most—is the longest we can hope to keep little Guy with us."

Was his darling dying? Perhaps at that moment dead. In the great anger which had threatened his own life, he had forgotten how soon the spirit of that little boy would pass away.

He sprang to his feet suddenly, and straightened himself with a sort of fury.

Was he never to see his child again on earth? Perhaps he had already gone to meet his mother in the fulness of that love which death had been powerless to sever.

He raised his white face and looked about him wildly.

Whatever happened he must go home; whatever risk he ran he must see those blue eyes once more, and stroke the soft halo of golden curls. If the grave once parted them, who knew that they would ever meet again? It seemed to Joseph, standing there, that he had forfeited his right to see his little one in the great hereafter.

Fear laid a detaining hand upon him, but he shook it off with surprising resolution.

"No, no," he cried, half aloud; "I must go and see him. I must go whatever happens to me."

A great quietness stole over his soul as he crept out into the moonlight and began to climb down the slippery path as fast as the steep descent would allow. He was feeling a different man now that he had made up his mind to risk detection to have a last look at his little boy; perhaps to send a message to that other loved one whose mortal resting-place was marked by a little wooden cross in the great cemetery outside the town.

Joseph was so exhausted with hunger and cold that he could hardly drag himself along.

Nevertheless, he set out resolutely, his eyes set, his head thrown back, one hand tightly closed, the other grasping his stick.

For six hours he toiled along the mountain roads, up and down, up and down, without pausing to take breath. If he once stopped he felt that he never would go on again.

Presently there came the first grey gleam of coming dawn, and once he turned his head and saw a soft pink light creeping over the snow-capped mountains he had left behind.

He passed through the town, pressing close to the shadow of the houses, on and on, until at last he found himself following the winding dusty road which led up to the village where he had been born, and where his fathers had been born. Then he began to imagine there were steps pursuing him, and he broke into a run. It was not the thought of capture which frightened him; it was the dread of being taken away before he could see little Guy again

The morning light came on dimly at first, and then

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the sun came up over the mountains, with a sudden rush of gold and pink across the pale blue sky which made the motionless Mediterranean shine with the glory of a new-born day.

Joseph still ran on. When he perceived the grey roofs of the houses he quickened his steps. He was so eager that his foot hardly seemed to touch the ground.

No one passed him. The village was still asleep. A dog barked as his feet clattered on the cobbles, but no one looked out. He had reached the cottage door, his hand was on the handle when a tall figure loomed round the corner in a long blue overcoat and scarlet epaulettes.

Chiquet, the gendarme, had seen him.

Joseph stood stock-still for a moment, quite overwhelmed. Then he dashed in and bolted the door behind him. Three steps at a time he bounded up the stairs and threw open the door.

His sister, when she saw who it was, sprang forward with a little cry.

"So you have come back," she said slowly, "you brute."

He regarded her fixedly, trying to read his fate in her angry face. Had he come too late after all?

He tried to push by her, but she stood in the doorway, her arms akimbo, her massive frame immovable.

"So you have returned at last," she repeated.

"Yes, yes. And Guy?"

"You must not go in."

"Must not go in. Why?"

"The little boy is dying. He is already ——"

"Father, father, is that you? Oh, father ——"

Joseph sprang forward. He threw himself on his knees by the bedside, and covered the white upturned face with kisses.

A faint smile lit up the child's countenance for an instant, and he opened his eyes feebly.

Joseph seized the little outstretched hand.

"Poor little Guy," he murmured, tenderly stroking back the hair from the damp, feverish forehead. "Poor little Guy."

How thin, how pale, the boy had grown. His cheeks were hollow, his lips were white, his hands bloodless, and great black circles marked his eyes. Half-an-hour later, and Joseph's sacrifice would have been in vain.

His sister was weeping now. She had crept up behind him and stood looking down pitifully on the child's fading beauty. Instinctively they both felt the hour had come.

"Father."

"Yes, little one," so tenderly.

There was a long pause. The blue eyes were shut again. Presently they opened wildly.

"Father, I am so glad you have come."

The little fingers tightened their grasp; a spasm ran through the tiny body. Joseph rested his head on the edge of the bed sobbing.

He could hear Chiquet battering on the door below, and shouting to be let in. His sister bent down and touched him roughly.

"It's all over," she said. "Come, Joseph; you are making a fool of yourself."

Joseph looked up. If he was quick there was yet time to escape. In another moment the door would be broken down; the whole village would be aroused.

He rose to his feet, wiping his eyes with his sleeve. He kissed his sister on both cheeks, and crept towards the door.

There was a stir on the little bed; the blue eyes were opened again. Joseph turned at once, a terrible calmness in his face.

"Go," cried his sister, stamping her foot on the ground quite angrily; "you must not stop. Hark! They are breaking down the door. You can do no good by stopping."

Joseph stood irresolute.

"Father!"

The voice was so low this time that he could hardly hear it.

"Yes, darling."

"Are you going away?"

"Yes, for a little time."

The blue eyes fixed themselves on him wonderingly, and then two great tears crept through the long lashes and rolled down the wasted cheeks.

Joseph turned to his sister, his whole frame shaking with sobs.

"Go down, quick," he cried hoarsely. "Pile up the chairs and tables. Anything to gain a minute."

Then he went back once more to the death-bed of his little boy.

"Father, am I dying?"

Joseph nodded his head.

"I am going to mother. The good priest told me so."

"Yes."

Once more the blue eyes closed, and a rare smile lit up the little face.

Presently they opened again.

"I am happy—oh, I am so happy, father."

Joseph laid his hand soothingly on the burning forehead.

"Hush!" he said softly.

"You will come, too, soon, won't you?"

Joseph buried his face in the bed-clothes.

"No, little one," he sobbed. "I don't think so. Give my love to mother and say——"

He broke off suddenly. Guy's breathing had stopped. A beautiful smile was lighting up his face. Joseph stooped down and kissed the little forehead. It was quite cold now. Joseph thought he was dead.

He drew himself up miserably and listened. No one had come upstairs yet. His sister was shouting to Chiquet through the door. There was still time to escape. Gently he withdrew his hand from under the little boy's.

"Ah," he thought, "if I had not quarrelled with François I might have faced death. Now I am afraid."

Once more the little form on the bed moved. Guy opened his eyes appealingly. After that there was no more thought of going. Joseph knelt down beside the bed again.

Five minutes later Chiquet came up the stairs. He opened the door cautiously. He had prepared himself for a desperate struggle. His shoulders were thrown back, his legs planted firmly, his sword drawn.

"Joseph," he bellowed. "You ——"

He stopped suddenly.

His prisoner was still kneeling beside the little bed, his great frame quivering, his head between his hands.

For a long time he stood there irresolute. Joseph's sister crept in on tiptoe and laid her hand on her brother's arm. All the anger had gone out of her face.

"Chiquet is waiting for you," she faltered.

Joseph got up at once, turning his face away because his eyes were red and swollen.

"Come, good Chiquet," he said. "The little boy is dead."

A. D.

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ASTOUNDING SUCCESS
IN THE
TREATMENT OF OBESITY.

MARVELLOUS RESULTS.

EXTREME OBESITY
BECOMING A
THING OF THE PAST.

MANY persons are doubtless familiar with the nature of the extraordinary revolution in the cure of obesity which, within recent years, has been wrought by the original researches of the now eminent expert, Mr. F. Cecil Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It is evident that the certainty, the rapidity, and the agreeable surroundings of his curative process have been recognised, in a very large degree, among ladies and gentlemen belonging to the highest social circles. Keen observers who have an opportunity of judging assert, through the pages of Society papers and otherwise, that owing to the general employment of Mr. Russell's treatment, extreme obesity is becoming as much a thing of the past at fashionable gatherings as intoxication; and no doubt it will soon be regarded as nearly as disgraceful. The issue of an eighteenth edition of the author's singularly convincing little text-book, "Corpulency, and the Cure," however, serves to remind us that the popularity of the system has now reached spheres far remote from those of West-end fashion. The book of 256 pages may be had, post free, by sending three penny stamps to Mr. Russell's offices as above, and it is worth the careful attention of those who wish to free themselves of a burden of fat—not merely because it is unseemly and adds enormously to the apparent age of the sufferer—but because extreme obesity terribly interferes with the energy necessary in these days of competition to make one's way in the world, or even to earn a very modest competency. A large proportion of the letters of Mr. Russell's grateful correspondents refer to their delight at being enabled—within a very brief period, and without any irksome conditions implying semi-starvation—to attack their accustomed tasks with pleasure instead of wearied disgust, through being reduced to their normal weight. The popularity of the system is also largely due, doubtless, to the English hatred of mystery, which is utterly swept aside by Mr. Russell. He fully explains his *modus operandi*, and supplies the recipe for his preparation.

[*The following are extracts from other journals.*]

CORPULENCY AND THE CURE.

THE appearance of an eighteenth edition of Mr. F. Cecil Russell's now famous "Corpulency, and the Cure," constitutes an unusual phenomenon in the publishing world, such as suggests some curious considerations. What, it may be demanded, are the characteristics of the books whose popularity is so enormous as to enable them to run through eighteen editions within a comparatively few years? Some little time ago it became a favourite recreation—much to the advantage of certain publishers—to make out a list of "a hundred books" with which it was suggested all students ought to be familiar. How few of these, the results of the highest efforts of human thought, have reached an eighteenth edition before generations, sometimes centuries, after their original publication had passed away. It would seem, indeed, that immediate popularity can be gained—and, what is more to the purpose, steadily retained up to an eighteenth edition—only by ministering in a remarkable and exceptional degree to the requirements of stern utility. This, indeed, is what Mr. Russell has accomplished by the introduction of the novel method of curing obesity which is fully described in his book. This compendious little volume, of 256 pages, may be had (post free), we note, by sending three penny stamps to the author's offices, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. The enormous circulation represented by these eighteen editions is fully accounted for by a perusal of the book. It is quite evident that—as is proved by the evidence of thousands of cases successfully treated—Mr. Russell has completely revolutionised the treatment of corpulence. He has shown that any person may get rid of the superfluous fat carried on the body within, at the outside, a few weeks' time and at such a rapid rate that 7lb. or 8lb. are frequently disposed of within a week. This is done, too, without undue interference with the ordinary habits of life in respect to eating and drinking, and—paradoxical as it may appear—the amount of food consumed is generally increased during the process of weight-diminution. The weighing-machine is Mr. Russell's ally, constantly appealed to, in order to place the results beyond doubt. Such conditions are so obviously suitable to the requirements of fat persons that their generally growing desire to study the book is easily explained.—*Grantham Times.*

REDUCTION OF SUPERFLUOUS FAT.

WE have received a copy of "Corpulency, and the Cure," and a very useful and well-written little treatise it is, showing how from 3lb. to 14lb. of fat can be harmlessly removed in a week. We quote rather an amusing extract which was published on the subject by the *European Mail*. The editor says: "I noticed the other day that someone had contributed a paragraph containing instructions for persons who wished to reduce their weight. I don't doubt but what, if the advice given was followed, the desired effect would result; but to follow it out properly one would not have much time left during the day. Care was to be taken not to eat this and not to eat that, while to dream of certain drinks was sufficient to increase the weight by about a hundredweight. Now, Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., is my man. His treatment does not consist of any starvation business. Quite the contrary, for the mixture he prescribes is an invigorating tonic, and improves the appetite wonderfully. He treats corpulence as a disease, and so long as his instructions are followed no one need worry about dietary restrictions, but jog along in peace and continue the usual breakfast of half-a-dozen poached eggs, two or three gammon rashers, and a pound of steak. It is a good job for the success of the 'Pickwick Papers' that the book was written before Mr. Russell came upon the scene, otherwise it is doubtful whether we should have ever heard of those jovial characters, Mr. Pickwick, Mr. Weller, senior, or that truly wonderful being, the Fat Boy. The only case I can speak of personally in connection with this mixture is a friend of mine, who tried it with remarkably good effect. He was enormously fat, and, although he did not believe in Mr. Russell's treatment, when someone told him the mixture made a very pleasant drink in hot weather, he tried it for this purpose. This was in June a few years ago. In September he had to be measured for a new suit of clothes, as those he had were getting very loose, and didn't fit at all. He continued with the mixture, and the tailor had to take fresh measurements at Christmas. Well, he didn't quite have to put on a couple of overcoats so as to make a shadow, but the measurements round his waist were just half what they were twelve months before. Like a sensible man, he always recommends Mr. Russell now wherever he can. So do I." His book only costs three penny stamps, but is worth a guinea. Send to Woburn House for it.—*Boston Independent.*

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

ON page 329 will be found particulars of an entirely new form of football competition. If you propose to go in for it, get to work at once and solve as many of the names as you can. You might also mention the competition incidentally to your friends.

RECRUIT.—Here are a few of the rules of war as at present formulated by civilised nations. The use of poison against the enemy is forbidden, also murder by treachery, such as assuming the uniform or displaying the flag of a foe; the murder of those who have surrendered, whether upon conditions or at discretion is unlawful, and the use of such arms as will cause unnecessary pain or suffering to an enemy is also forbidden.

S. L.—It is said that there are more widows in France than in any other country.

M. S.—Forged bank notes may be detected from the genuine articles in that they are always a trifle smaller. The plates for counterfeit notes have to be modelled from a genuine note, and are, therefore, the exact size, and the bills from it, when damp, shrink. Government plates, which it is impossible to steal, are somewhat larger than the notes made therefrom, on account of allowing for this shrinkage of paper.

WILLIE.—Our word "negro" was taken directly from the Spanish "negro," meaning black, and would hardly be called a nickname. The common Ethiopian nickname "Sambo" is from the Castilian "Zambo," meaning "bow-legged."

W. K. would like to know which is the oldest prison now used as such in Great Britain.———Probably Newgate, which has been used as a prison for nearly seven hundred years. Its history as such can be traced back at least so far as the year 1218. As a matter of fact, it is now only used as a place of temporary detention for prisoners awaiting trial at the Old Bailey, and as the place of execution of criminals condemned to death in the county of Middlesex.

SACERDOTE.—The clergy of Russia are divided into two classes—the white or village clergy, who must all be married, and the black or monks, who must not marry. The higher dignitaries of the church are chosen from this latter class.

K. P.—Probably the employés of the Spanish railway companies have more consideration shown to them than those of any other country. One of their privileges is that of being entitled to the best seats, quite regardless of the tickets sold to passengers.

BATHER.—I have only heard of one case of the kind, which was reported on good authority about two years ago. Gezibar, a native of Silesia, was so buoyant that when he jumped into a river, he sank only half the length of his body. By attaching a weight of six pounds to his feet he went down as far as the shoulders, and it took twelve pounds to get his head under water.

G. W.—There are about fifty-five dogs to every thousand inhabitants of the United Kingdom.

F. H. H.—A shilling is intrinsically worth tenpence-halfpenny.

S. W.—The title "reverend" was until the sixteenth century addressed to many others besides clergymen, such as judges and eminent writers; but from that time its use has been strictly confined to the clergy.

A. P. would be glad if we could tell him what animal can live the longest without food.——— Disregarding the bat and the toad, about which naturalists cannot agree, the answer must be the serpent. One of these reptiles, when kept in confinement, has been known to refuse all food for the space of twenty-two months.

D. G.—Nearly every British battle-ship carries eight, and every cruiser four, fully qualified divers, whose duty it is to repair any damage sustained by the vessel below the water-line, clearing the propellers and recovering the anchors.

D. D. S.—The smallest independent state is Tavolara, a little island off the north-east coast of Sardinia, some three miles long, about two-thirds of a mile in breadth, and with a population of fifty-five. This tiny republic was recognised by Italy in 1887; before that time it was a monarchy.

"WHICH English railway passes through the greatest number of counties?" is the question put by SLATER.——— The endless complications of branch lines used by several different companies jointly make it necessary to restrict the application to main lines. The answer is the Great Western, whose main line passes through nineteen counties. The Midland comes next with sixteen, and the London and North Western third with ten.

C. B.—Probably the guinea pig is the most active of new born quadrupeds. It sees from its birth, eats strange food, and runs about with freedom during the first hour of its life.

MEX.—The post of President of Mexico does not seem to be conducive to longevity. Of the fifty-five rulers since 1821, four were executed, five were murdered, and seven killed in battle. Of the remainder, it is safe to say that the cares of office shortened rather than lengthened their lives.

SEVERAL correspondents believe that they have caught us out in a serious error in regard to the statement we made the other day to the effect that no man can join an American cavalry regiment if his weight be over 160 pounds. They point to the fact that General Shafter turns the scale at considerably more than this.——— I am quite aware of this fact, but General Shafter has only of recent years put on his enormous weight. When he joined the army he was quite an ordinary individual, so far as his physique is concerned.

A. E. K. comes along with this question: "Why is it that birds with long legs usually have short tails?"——— The only use of a bird's tail is to serve as a rudder during the act of flight. When a bird has long legs these are stretched directly behind it when flying, and answer as a sort of rudder, and a long tail is not required. We are adapted to our environment.

T. S.—Teak is the great source of wealth in Northern Siam. The best workers in the forest are Khamus, who live on herbs and roots, rats and snakes.

JACK.—You would not be permitted to enter a theatre in Heligoland by yourself, as you are under sixteen. You could no doubt gain admittance in company with an elder person. The natives have their own language or dialect. "Snake Jim Hollunder?" is what they say when they wish to know if you speak their tongue.

A. S. C.—The snail travels at the rate of one half inch per second, a man walking at an ordinary rate would cover a distance of four feet in the same time.

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IF "A YOUNG GOOSE" MEANS "GOSLING," WHAT DOES "TO CONSUME BY FIRE" MEAN? See page 360.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 507. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 17TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

DR TIBBLES' Vi-Cocoa

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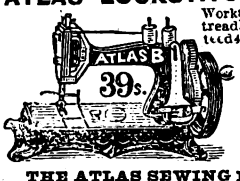

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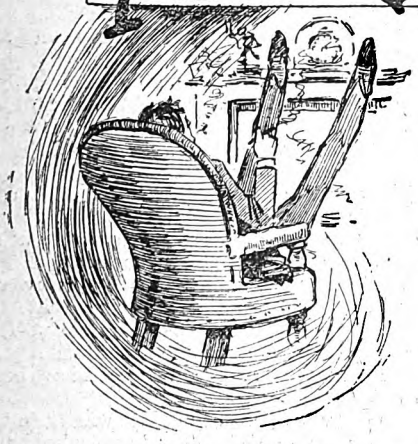
SHORT STORIES

No. 507.] For the Week ending September 17th, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

HOMESPUN YARNS



No. 1.

TRIED IN THE FIRE.

By Levin Carnac.

WHEN I was a lad, like a good many lads with a strong taste for the literature of adventure, I made up my mind to go to sea. I went—and liked my first taste of ship-life so little that I ran away at the first port we touched at.

This was Williamstown, one of the ports of Melbourne, on the opposite side of Hobson's Bay from Sandridge, and thence I made my way with all speed I might and the fear of the policeman behind me, up the Bush by way of Kilmore and the Pyalong ranges.

It was a good twelve months before I saw Melbourne again. During that year of rambling and wild living I picked up the materials of more than one striking story of real life, and that which follows here is reconstructed from the elements gathered from one of the companions of my wanderings with swag and billy over the bush-tracks in search of work and change of scene.

My friend was an educated man and an accomplished, if penitent, scoundrel by his own showing, and it is the story of his reformation that I am going to tell as nearly as I can put it into the form in which I had it from him one splendid moonlight night over the camp fire:

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"I call myself an honest man now, and I am as honest as a good many respectable sharps who wouldn't shake hands with me in public for £5 unless it was at a philanthropy show, but a few years ago—never mind how many—I was as tough-laid a scoundrel as a policeman could wish to catch between Bombay and Ballarat. I was a sort of gentleman thief and swell cracksman, with a turn for anything, from housebreaking to forgery.

"Tom Markham was a clerk and cashier in a shipping firm in Melbourne that owned a line of small vessels trading to the South Seas, and, not to make the most disagreeable part of my story too long for my taste or yours, I managed to steal and realise some securities belonging to these people in such a way that I got off scot clear, while poor Tom got seven years for not doing it?

"What complicated the matter a good deal was the

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We shot down all but two of the mutineers.

fact that Tom and I were both in love with the same girl, and it happened rather curiously that a year or so after Tom was sent up I was able to put her father under a very considerable obligation to me with part of the proceeds of the very robbery for which he was innocently suffering.

"I always thought that Lucy liked Tom a good deal more than suited my plans; but, of course, with the stain of felony on his name, marriage with him was not to be thought of, and so the field was left open to me.

"By this time I had got together quite a respectable pile by the exercise of talents on an extremely productive field, and was getting anxious to marry and settle down quietly and honestly for the rest of my natural days. Lucy's father was a civil engineer, and one day, by some stroke of good luck, he got a very fair appointment at the Cape that was advertised in the *Argus*.

"I had no particular wish to be in Australia when poor Tom came out, and I thought I might as well make a move then as later on; so when the old man found a little difficulty in getting together the passage-money for himself and daughter, I opened my heart to him and said that if his daughter would marry me I would go with them to the Cape and settle down there. Under these circumstances I could very well offer to advance him what he wanted to make up the passage-money.

"Lucy herself at last formally accepted me as her lover, but by some great good fortune for her, she refused to marry me until her father was settled at the Cape.

"We took passage in a crack three-masted schooner that had been in the tea trade and was then running with light cargo and passengers between Port Phillip and Cape Town.

"One lovely night after we had doubled Cape Leeuin I went down on to the main deck when the other passengers had turned in, and after taking a few turns up and down, I leant my arms on the bulwarks and stood looking out over the moonlit sea and back upon the life I hoped I had left for ever. I had done very well, on the whole. I felt no compunction for my thefts and swindles, for after all they were no worse in reality than the legal rogueries that are practised every day by the swindlers who are clever enough to keep on the right side of the line between sharp practice and crime; but there was just one that troubled what remained of conscience I possessed very sorely, and that was the way that I had blasted poor Tom Markham's life, and taken from him the sweetheart who was going to marry me when we reached Cape Town.

"So strongly had this regret got possession of me that for once I lost my almost perfect self-control, and said aloud:

"'Poor old Tom, I wish to Heaven it could have been done otherwise!'

"Hardly were the words out of my lips when I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard Tom's voice whisper in my ear:

"'Yes, Fitzgerald, you may well say that. You have stolen more than money or securities from me. No—you needn't start and turn white. I'm not going to expose you or make any fuss about what can't be mended now. If I wanted to I couldn't, for your word would be a good deal better than mine, seeing you are a cabin passenger and I am only a green hand hired for the trip, and a runaway convict into the bargain. I've watched you ever since we left the Heads to see if you'd recognise me, and as you haven't done so I think I must be fairly safe.'

"By the time he had done speaking I had recovered from the shock of the unexpected meeting, and, so, putting out my hand to him I said:

"'Tom! if you can forgive the dirty trick I played you, say so and shake hands, and when we get to the Cape I'll whack up everything I possess with you, equal shares, and you shall start fresh in life as well as me.'

"'That's a fair offer, Fitz,' said Tom taking my hand, 'it's as much as you could be expected to do, and on

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that basis we'll make it up. My notions of what they call honesty have changed a good bit since I graduated on to the Government works, and I see now that you must have either done what you did or gone to p.s. yourself—and for you it might have been a lifer if anything else had come out. It's rather rough, though, about Lucy. I love her just as much as ever I did, and I'd lay my life down willingly to please or serve her—and—and that's why I'm going to stand aside, Fitz, and let you walk over for her. I'm not fit for her now. My nature's poisoned and brutalised, and I'm—well, I'm just the outcast that you've made me, and that I'll have to remain, so you can have her and I'll stand aside.

"'But mind this, Fitz' (and here his voice grew hard and he gripped my arm like a vice), "if *you* don't prove worthy of her, as sure as there's a Heaven above us I'll find you out and revenge myself and her with——'

"The rest of the threat was never uttered, for, as he spoke, a whiff of blue smoke rose from the open forehatch, followed by a denser cloud, and the next instant the dreadful cry of 'Fire' was ringing from stem to stern of the ship.

"What followed I remember only as a wild dream of frantic, hopeless struggles to subdue the flames, of closing the hatches and pumping tons of water down into the hold, and hearing the fierce roar of the struggle between the flames and the water in the furnace that was raging just below the cracking, steaming deck on which we stood. At last the imprisoned steam burst up a portion of the deck, and then all was over except taking to the boats as fast as we could.

"Unhappily for us all we had no regular crew, for good sailors were very scarce in Melbourne in those days, and our forecastle was full of a lot of riff-raff from half the countries of Europe. Of course they broke loose as soon as they saw the game was up, and made a rush for the boats. As they did so I made for the poop on which Lucy and her father and the other passengers were standing waiting for the quarter-boat to be lowered. I dived down into my cabin, crammed a few things into my valise, stuck my revolvers into my coat pockets, and ran back on deck just in time to help to drive back half a dozen of the crew who were making for the davit-ropes.

"Close by Lucy, but standing with his back to her, I found Tom. He was only armed with a marline-spike, so I gave him one of my pistols, and we stood there side by side with the flames creeping nearer to us every moment, and the still moonlit water beneath us waiting to swallow up the doomed ship, fighting for the safety of the girl we both had wooed and I had so basely won.

"In the end we shot down all but two of the mutineers, and they made a run for the bulwarks, jumped over, and tried to swim to the long boat which the others had succeeded in launching. Their shipmates were in too much of a hurry to get away from the burning ship to stop for them, and they were pulled down by the sharks, as they deserved to be. Meanwhile, we had got the quarter-boat into the water and lowered the women and provisions and baggage into it.

"Before Tom or I had made a move to get into her she was overfull. One more might be squeezed into her, but it was perfectly plain that two would be fatal. Tom and I looked at each other for a moment and then at Lucy in the boat. In an instant all the good there was in both of us came out, and we each stepped back and said to the other: "Get in, old man, I'll stop."

"There was no time to argue, for the flames were upon us, so Tom, to settle the matter, took me by the shoulders and forced me over the side, saying, "You can make her happier than I can. Go and do so, and God be with you both."

"As he uttered the blessing he let go my shoulders, ran across the deck, pitched a hen-coop into the sea, and jumped overboard after it.

"Was he drowned? No; we kept him near the boat on his hen-coop all night, and the next day we had the good fortune to be picked up by a English clipper bound to Melbourne.

"I got back a changed man. That awful moment on the burning deck had scorched all the meanness right out of me. I saw what was the proper thing to do and I did it. I gave myself up to the police, cleared Tom completely, and went to do the remainder of his time instead of him. In consideration of my confession, and giving up a lot of the stolen property, I got off with five years. When I came out Tom and Lucy were married. They wanted me to go and stop with them for a bit, but I took to the bush instead, and I've been on the wander ever since, and shall be to the end of the chapter. Well, good-night, young fellow. I'm turning in now."

"Has Mantalius a very deep voice?"
"Very. When that man sings it hurts his corns."

Mistress: "Where have you been before?"
Servant: "Just give me a directory and I'll mark the places where I have not been."

Customer: "Is that the razor you shaved me with the last time?"
Knight of the Razor: "Yes, sir."
Customer: "Chloroform, please!"

"Man overboard!" cried the sailor, seeing a man fall into the sea.
"What do you mean with your 'Man overboard'?" gasped the unfortunate, bobbing up. "Baron Von Feiglestock is overboard!"

Jinks: "To-day I pleased a pretty woman by telling her that a certain red-faced, snub-nosed, bald-headed mortal looked like her."
Winks: "Get out!"
Jinks: "The red-faced, snub-nosed mortal was her first baby."

Magistrate: "For striking the plaintiff a punch on the nose I fine you forty shillings."
Culprit: "Forty shillings is a big thing with me, yer worship. Can't I pay it in instalments?"
Magistrate: "No; did you punch his nose in instalments?"

A: "Our postage system is, after all, shockingly unreliable. I intend to lodge a complaint with the authorities."
B: "Indeed! Do your letters often miscarry?"
A: "Yes; for instance, that five pound note you promised to send me a week ago hasn't yet arrived."

First Cyclist: "Do you see that gentleman yonder? He holds the greatest number of prizes and medals ever possessed by any one man."
Second Cyclist: "What! That fellow? He doesn't look a bit like a champion."
First Cyclist: "It's just as I tell you, though. He is a pawnbroker, you see."

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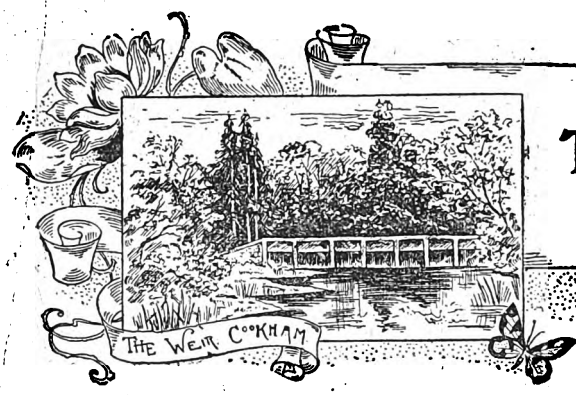

The Gambler's Ward.

SOME few years ago I went to stay with an eccentric French friend who lived in a quaint, old-fashioned house about ten miles from Paris.

He was a confirmed old bachelor, a student, an antiquarian, a collector of curios, and a deeply-read man, whose wealth had left him free to follow his natural bent, and who was dreaming away his life in the pursuit of various hobbies apart from his fellow-men, buried in the ashes of the past.

The day after my arrival we had just finished lunch, and he was explaining at great length the origin and use of a curious Etruscan vase, when my eyes, which, like my thoughts, were very disposed to wander, lighted upon an object that caused me to utter an exclamation of horror and amazement.

"What is the matter?" asked Julien de Noirville, coming back reluctantly to the present.

"Look!" I said quickly, pointing to a house that overlooked part of his garden.

At one of the upper French windows that opened on to a narrow stone ledge, not wide enough to be dignified by the name of a balcony, behind heavy iron bars, was the pale, agonised face of a girl, surrounded by long, fair hair, which fell in tangled masses on her emaciated shoulders. Her thin, claw-like hands were beating restlessly against the panes, and tears were rolling down her wasted cheeks. She was dressed in some kind of loose pink garment, that was both torn and dirty, and altogether she presented the most pitiable and dejected appearance.

"Oh, that's the lunatic!" said Julian indifferently.

"Who is she?" I asked.

"Ah, by-the-way, she is a countrywoman of yours!" he answered with more interest. "She's a Miss Grace Standish, and I have my doubts as to whether she is mad. Some weeks ago she jumped from that window into my garden and took refuge in the library. I found her there and she implored me not to send her back to prison, and told me a terrible story of the cruelty she was suffering from, that she was being done to death for the sake of her money, and all that sort of thing. Her friends traced her and insisted on her return to that house, telling me that she was a maniac, and of course, I had to let her go. Since then they have put those bars outside the window."

"But haven't you done anything to help her—to rescue her?" I asked impatiently.

"My dear Harry, you English are so fond of mixing yourselves up in other people's affairs! What could I do?

"Just imagine my plunging myself into the quicksands of litigation about an utter stranger, who may have been telling me some wild, hysterical delusions. Besides, I had just received a most valuable collection of Inca relics and had to tabulate them."

I turned away, disgusted at his selfish, inert conduct, and determined to find out more about the girl, who I felt sure was the victim of gross cruelty.

I prosecuted cautious inquiries and found that her story was only too true. Her father, Sir George Standish, had died when she was a baby, and her mother, a Frenchwoman, who survived her husband by a few years, left her own brother, Lucien de Longueville, as the child's sole guardian.

As Grace approached her majority his treatment of her became more and more unnatural, till, finding that his conduct towards his orphan niece was severely commented upon in England, he had removed her to France, shut her up in this gloomy house in the care of an old Frenchman and his wife, and had given out that her brain was hopelessly affected.

Starvation, solitude, and ill-treatment had already worked havoc upon both her mind and body, but the expression of her face was far from being that of an irresponsible maniac.

M. de Longueville had further strengthened his position by securing the assistance of an unscrupulous French doctor, who, in return for very handsome fees, gave certificates as to her mental condition which enabled her guardian to make free use of her money.

I determined to see her and hear something from her own lips, so I watched the house for days, and at last gathered that she was left alone for a short time in the middle of the day while the hard-featured old hag who was supposed to look after her, went down to have her own dinner.

I climbed up into a tree, whose friendly branches rendered me less conspicuous than if I had used a ladder, and, swinging myself on to a branch near the window, called gently:

"Miss Standish! Miss Grace! A friend wants you!"

She crept timidly to the window, only to start back again as soon as she caught sight of a strange face, but I beckoned kindly to her, and pointing to the window, said:

"Can you open it? I want to talk to you—to help you."

She managed to unfasten the hasp, but she was too weak to push the window open, so I placed my foot on the stone ledge and, while holding on with one hand, pulled at the barrier between us.

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"I am an Englishman, and I mean to get you out of this." I began.

"It's too late, too late," she moaned. "I heard them say this morning that I hadn't long to live, and I thank God for it. I can endure no more, I begged them to put me out of my misery months ago, and then they said I was dangerous and tied my hands and feet to a chair. See!" she said, holding out her wasted arms, upon which were thick red seams, "that's where the ropes cut me."

"The brutes," I muttered; "but you must be brave; it is not too late, only you must look out for me and try to tell me everything that will help me to save you. First of all who is the doctor that comes to see you?"

"Ah, how good you are!" she said, the tears filling her large, sorrowful eyes. "But I dare not hope, they will never let me out. They say I am mad, and I think they will soon make me so. Dr. Gabriel is the one who comes. A little dark man with cruel eyes and fat white hands."

Her voice had sunk into a low whisper, and I could see she was trembling violently from the excitement, so I judged it wiser to leave for that day before we should be surprised or she should be unable to conceal the fact of my visit. I shut the window after a few more encouraging words, and promised to come again soon.

She smiled sadly with infinite gratitude and pathos, and stood watching my descent with hungry eyes. Friends and kindness seemed unknown quantities in her young life.

I told Julien de Noirville what I had done, and he patted my shoulder kindly, saying in a tone of apology:

"My solitary life makes me selfish, I'm afraid, but I'm very glad you've taken the matter up, and if you want money, come to me."

I paid a visit to the British Ambassador and found he was away. I then wrote to him, but from his answer I could see that M. de Longueville had made his own cause good with the authorities, and in the face of serious international complications the fate of a poor mentally afflicted girl was but a mere trifle.

I gained the ear of the French magistrate who knew something of de Longueville's character, and engaged Maître André, a clever counsel to conduct the case.

After various consultations I took advantage of de Longueville's absence in Monte Carlo to call upon Doctor Gabriel, whom I found in his luxurious rooms on the first floor of a large house in one of the best parts of Paris.

He read my card, and looking up repeated the name, "Captain Lorrimer," thoughtfully, then, with a polite bow, he said:

"Pardon! Monsieur le Capitaine! but I do not remember the name. You have come to consult me; it is not my hour, but I will make an exception."

"Yes: I came to consult you on a matter of vital importance," I interrupted brusquely, for his oily manner irritated me. "I am here to ask you about Miss Standish."

He started slightly, then, assuming an air of deep sympathy:

"Ah, *la pauvre demoiselle*! It is a sad, sad, cruel case!"

"You use the right word—*cruel*. It is deliberate murder, and you know it as well as I do. You know she is perfectly sane, or you know nothing about your profession, but you sell your honour and her life for the filthy lucre that keeps you here in luxury while she is being slowly done to death!"

"Sir! You insult me! You shall give me satisfaction! No gentleman could hear such words—" he stammered, choking with rage and waving the fat white hands of which Grace had spoken.

"We will settle that afterwards," I said coolly. "You must first sign this little document, which lets you off a great deal too easily."

I laid before him a parchment which had been drawn up by Maître André, and which ran as follows:

"I, Hector Gabriel, do hereby certify that Miss Grace Standish has fully regained the use of her faculties, and is perfectly competent to manage her own affairs."

"Never!" he cried, pushing it from him and beginning to pace up and down in an excited fashion. "Never! I will never sign such a thing. She is mad, hopelessly mad."

"We have only your word for it, and as you refuse to save yourself by this means, I shall apply for an order to enable the two first mental specialists in London and Paris to examine her. Then the whole profession will know of your complicity in the crime and," I said, moving a step nearer to him, "if the law does not punish you as you deserve, I'll hunt you down and shoot you myself, for you're not fit to live!"

He tried a little more bluster, but his cunning told him that the game was in my hands, so after a few more muttered imprecations he signed the paper. As I prepared to leave the room with my trump card in my pocket, he suddenly changed his tune and almost grovelled at my feet, imploring me not to expose him. He had been poor, the money tempted him, he had not consented to any cruelty, and he had tried to prevent violent measures.

I flung him off and went away to watch my opportunity of telling Grace of my unlooked-for success.

When M. de Longueville returned and found that his niece had been removed from the house in which he had left her, he was inclined to treat the matter with a high hand, and talked of taking proceedings, but when he was compelled to face Miss Standish in a court of law, his valour oozed out at the tips of his fingers, and a more abject coward it has never been my lot to see.

Grace told her story with a simple pathos and intelligence that went straight to all hearts. The prospect of release had already begun to tell favourably on her, and it was easy to see that a few months of freedom and happiness would make her blossom out into a beautiful girl.

Her uncle was ordered to make full restitution of all that he appropriated since she came of age, and give an account of the way he had administered the estate during her minority. Through his dishonesty and extravagance her fortune was found to have been considerably diminished, but as he was a bankrupt and a gambler there was no redress.

Grace had the sublime generosity to offer him a sum of money on condition that he would go to America and stop there; but before the news reached him he had taken a longer passage into the unknown, and the world was better for his absence.

No, I did not marry Grace Standish.

After a time I went to India, and although we corresponded as friends we neither entertained for the other that feeling which would justify our union. Three years later she wrote to tell me of her engagement to a young London journalist, and when I returned to England a few months afterwards I was invited to dine at the house of the newly-married couple

MARY FERMOR.

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A JURYMAN'S STORY.

WE had been out twenty-four hours, and stood eleven to one. The case was a very plain one—at least, we eleven thought so.

A murder of peculiar atrocity had been committed, and, though no eye had witnessed the deed, circumstances pointed to the prisoner's guilt with unfailing certainty. The recusant juror had stood out from the first. He acknowledged the cogency of the proofs, confessed his inability to reconcile the facts with the defendant's innocence, and yet on every vote went steadily for acquittal. His conduct was inexplicable. It could not result from a lack of intelligence, for, while he spoke but little, his words were well chosen, and evinced a thorough understanding of the case.

Though still in the prime of manhood, his locks were prematurely white, and his face wore a singularly sad and thoughtful expression. He might be one of those who entertained scruples as to the right of society to inflict the death penalty. But no, it was not that, for, in reply to such a suggestion, he frankly admitted that brutal men, like the violent brutes they resemble, must be controlled through fear, and that dread of death, the supreme terror, is, in many cases, the only adequate restraint.

At the prospect of another night of fruitless imprisonment we began to grow impatient, and expostulated warmly against what seemed an unreasonable captiousness; and some not over-kind remarks were indulged in as to the impropriety of trifling with an oath like that under which we were acting.

"And yet," the man answered, as though communicating with himself rather than repelling the imputation, "it is conscience that hinders my concurrence in a verdict not approved by my judgment."

"How can that be?" queried several at once.

"Conscience may not always dare to follow judgment."

"But here she can know no other guide."

"I once would have said the same."

"And what has changed your opinion?"

"Experience."

The speaker's manner was visibly agitated, and we awaited in silence the explanation which he seemed ready to give.

Mastering his emotion, as if to answer our looks of inquiry, he continued:

"Twenty years ago I was a young man just beginning life. Few had brighter prospects, and none brighter hopes. An attachment dating from childhood had ripened with its object. There had been no verbal declaration and acceptance of love—no formal plighting of troth; but when I took my departure to seek a home in the Western States of America, it was a thing understood that when I had found it and put it in order she was to share it.

"Life in the backwoods, though solitary, is not necessarily lonely. The kind of society afforded by Nature depends much on one's self. As for me, I lived more in the future than in the present, and hope was an ever-cheerful companion.

"At length the time came for making the final payment on the home which I had bought. It would henceforth be my own; and in a few months my simple dwelling, which I had spared no pains to render inviting, would be graced by its mistress.

"At the land office, which was some sixty miles off, I met my old friend George Chambers. He, too, had come to seek his fortune in America; and we were both delighted at the meeting. He had brought with him, he said, a sum of money which he desired to invest in land on which it was his purpose to settle.

"I expressed a strong wish to have him for a neighbour, and gave him a cordial invitation to accompany me home, giving it as my belief that he could nowhere make a better selection than in that vicinity. He readily

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consented, and we set out together. We had not ridden many miles when George suddenly recollected a commission he had undertaken from a friend, which would require his attendance at a public land-sale on the following day.

"Exacting a promise that he would not delay his visit longer than necessary, and having given minute directions as to the route, I continued my way homeward, while he turned back.

"I was about retiring to bed on the night of my return, when a summons from without called me to the door. A stranger asked shelter for himself and his horse for the night. I invited him in. Though a stranger, his face seemed familiar. He was probably one of the men I had seen at the land office, a place, at that time, much frequented. Offering him a seat, I went to see his horse. The poor animal, as well as I could see by the dim starlight, seemed to have been hardly used. His panting sides bore witness of merciless riding, and a tremulous shrinking, at the slightest touch, betokened recent fright.

"On re-entering the house, I found the stranger was not there. His absence excited no surprise; he would doubtless soon return. It was a little singular, however, that he should have left his watch lying upon the table.

"At the end of half an hour, my guest not returning, I went out again to the stable, thinking he might have found his way thither to give personal attention to the wants of his horse.

"Before going out, from mere force of habit—for we were as yet uninfested by either thieves or policemen—I took the precaution of putting the stranger's watch in a drawer in which I kept my own valuables. I found the horse as I had left him, and gave him the food which he was now sufficiently cooled to be allowed to eat, but his master was nowhere to be seen. As I approached the house, a crowd of men on horseback dashed up, and I was commanded in no gentle tones to 'stand.' In another moment I was in the clutches of those who claimed me as their 'prisoner.'

"I was too much stupefied at first to ask what it all meant. I did so at last, and the explanation came; it was terrible! My friend with whom I had so lately set out in company had been found murdered and robbed near the spot at which I, but I alone, knew we had separated. I was the last person known to be with him, and I was now arrested on suspicion of his murder.

"A search of the premises was immediately instituted. The watch was found in the drawer in which I had placed it, and was identified as the property of the murdered man. His horse, too, was found in the stable, for the animal I had just put there was none other. I recognised him myself when I saw him in the light.

"What I said, I know not. My confusion was taken as additional evidence of guilt. And when, at length, I did command language to give an intelligible statement, it was received with sneers of incredulity. The mob spirit is inherent in man—at least, in crowds of men. It may not always manifest itself in physical violence. It sometimes contents itself with lynching. But whatever its form, it is always relentless, pitiless, cruel. As the proofs of my guilt, one after another, came to light, low muttering gradually grew into a clamour for vengeance; and but for the firmness of one man—the officer who had me in charge—I should doubtless have paid the penalty of my supposed offence on the spot.

"It was not sympathy for me that actuated my protector. His heart was as hard as his office; but he represented the majesty of the law, and took a sort of grim pride in the position. As much under the glance of his eyes as before the muzzle of his pistol, the cowardly clamourers drew back. Perhaps they were not sufficiently numerous to feel the full effect of that mysterious reflex influence which makes a crowd of men so much worse, and at times so much better, than any one of them—singly.

* * * * *

"At the end of some months my trial came. It could have but one result. Circumstances too plainly declared my guilt. I alone knew they lied. The absence of the jury was very brief. To their verdict I paid but little heed. It was a single hideous word; but I had long anticipated it, and it made no impression.

"It may be hard for the condemned criminal to meet death; it is still harder for him who is innocent. The one, when the first shock is over, acquiesces in his doom, and gives himself to repentance; the heart of the other, filled with rebellion against man's injustice, can scarce bring itself to ask pardon of Heaven. I had gradually overcome this feeling, in spite of the good clergyman's irritating efforts, which were mainly directed towards extracting a confession, without which, he assured me, he had no hope to offer.

"On the morning of the day fixed for my execution, I felt measurably resigned. I had so long stood face to face with death, had so accustomed myself to look upon it as a merely momentary pang, that I looked forward to death as a relief. She for whom I had gone to prepare a home had already found one in Heaven. The tidings of my calamity had broken her heart. She alone of all the world had believed me innocent; and she had died with a prayer on her lips that the truth might yet be brought to light.

"All this I had heard, and it had soothed as with a sweet incense my troubled spirit. Death, however unwelcome the shape, was now a portal beyond which I could see one angel waiting to receive me. I heard the sound of approaching footsteps, and nerved myself to meet the expected summons. The door of my cell opened, and the sheriff and his attendants entered. He held in his hands a paper. It was doubtless my death-warrant. He began to read it. The words 'full and free pardon' were the first to strike my preoccupied senses. They affected the bystanders more than myself. Yet so it was; I was pardoned for an offence I had never committed.

"The real culprit, none other, it is needless to say, than he who sought and abused my hospitality, had been mortally wounded in a recent affray in a distant city, but had lived long enough to make a disclosure, which had been laid before the governor barely in time to save me from a shameful death, and condemn me to a cheerless and burdensome life.

"That is my experience. My judgment, as yours, in the case before us leads to but one conclusion, that of the prisoner's guilt; but not less confident and apparently unerring was the judgment that falsely pronounced my own."

We no longer importuned our fellow-juror, but patiently awaited our discharge on the ground of inability to agree, which came at last. The prisoner was tried and convicted at a subsequent term, and at the last moment confessed his crime on the scaffold.

Wilson Jackson.

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Football Players Competition!

OPEN TO EVERYBODY. **£10 IN PRIZES.** OPEN TO EVERYBODY.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each of which indicates the name of some well-known football player.

For example, "A young goose" signifies, of course, Gosling.

Ten names will appear each week for five weeks, making fifty names in all.

Keep all your lists by you until you are told to send them in.

To the person who succeeds in solving the greatest number we will give

A CRISP £5 NOTE.

TO THE NEXT, £2; TO THE NEXT, £2; AND TO THE NEXT, £1;

while consolation prizes will be awarded to the extent of twenty handsome volumes which competitors may select for themselves from the catalogue of books issued by this firm.

If you are weak in the names of football players, your brother, or cousin, or male friend will give you a helping hand.

SHORT STORIES "FOOTBALL PLAYERS" COUPON No. 2.

11. A pretty girl.	11. .....
12. In want of a pig's thigh.	12. .....
13. To consume by fire.	13. .....
14. Jenny Wren's nephew.	14. .....
15. A tribesman of India.	15. .....
16. To ward off.	16. .....
17. A swarm of little fish.	17. .....
18. Named a spring.	18. .....
19. Gritty countries.	19. .....
20. A fish and part of a lamp.	20. .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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A LETTER'S EXPERIENCE.

I HAVE existed but a few hours. I was born this morning on the red velvet lid of an ebony writing-desk. A woman wrote me into existence, and as I grew under a fine gold pen, I first perceived the tips of slender white fingers whose regular sway back and forth gave me a delicious sensation. Then I distinguished the face bent above me, a pretty face, pale and sad, with great, grey eyes, under which were black circles, rosy, wet eyelids, but white lips. Her hair fell in disorder over her forehead, curling behind her ears down to her shoulders. My first lines, in a slanting English handwriting, were to this effect:

Had passed a miserable night; impossible to sleep; strange dream, and awoke trembling; pity and mercy asked in the same line. Then the ball of the night before was spoken of; she had been very unhappy and had left full of presentiment, although he was there. "Why was this?"

She leant on the desk, her head on her hand, and fell into a reverie. Her sleeve fell back and I felt the perfume of her warm, soft arm penetrate me. She remained thus for some time, her beautiful, large eyes full of sad thoughts. Suddenly two tears gathered, and I began to understand the sense of the words "Why was this?" The tears trembled on her eyelids, then ran down her cheek. The poor little woman sighed and returned to me.

He had been very neglectful at the ball, and she had caught his eye only once or twice. . . . The pen began to write rapidly, the words were scratched off, sentences followed each other without punctuation, a passionate love filled my pages in a retrospective glance. "The transport of the first days," doubts, timidity, the avowal, first kisses. Then the day when jealousy was awakened, so terrible, yet so charming, terror, agony, if ten minutes late, the promise of eternal fidelity, renewed vows—all this as the eyes rained tears and the pen went on impetuously, tightly held in the thin fingers.

My four pages were full, when someone entered the room. I fell among a pile of letters, faded flowers and debris of all sorts. In one corner lay a white cravat, twisted round a little dried-up bouquet. It was of corded muslin and made me suddenly think of a certain date, of which I speak later.

When I was taken out of hiding the young woman was dressed ready to go out, with a thick veil covering her red-lidded eyes. She added two words, "Come to-night," and I waited impatiently for a name that I expected to see, when I felt two fresh, warm lips pressed so passionately against me that the paper crackled.

Then a flower was slipped between my leaves, and I was shut up in an envelope and addressed, and the—ah, I cannot say for sure what happened. My impressions are vague. I was put in a pocket later, where I found a little handkerchief damp with the tears I had seen wiped away.

We were together until once more I was brought forth, but to fall into a vile box, where I remained all alone. It had an opening on top from which I could see people passing to and fro. I was kept here a long time, and thought I should never get out again, when thump, a heavy mass fell on me, then another, and still another. I was nearly stifled under the load. A hideous blue envelope fell on my side, as if to crush me out of existence. Perhaps it contained some villainous news, some hypocritical lie, some message of evil, and I, yet palpitating from the fine English handwriting on my pages, had to be mixed up with all this.

A key clicked in the lock, crick, crack, and an enormous red hand plunged into the box, and, taking the packet, disappeared and came again. Twice I slipped between his big fingers—I was too delicate for such handling—but I was seized at last and crumpled up in a bundle tied with string. Then I was carried along till we were surrounded by voices, scratching of pens, and I was seized anew by a hand that pressed something dreadful upon me. I received two dire strokes right over the poor little flower between my pages.

When I came to myself again I found myself on a chimney-piece, the room filled with shadows of the dying day. At length, after a long wait, my envelope was torn open and I was glanced over rapidly by two superb but icy-cold blue eyes, so dry and hard that they gave me a shock. Only my first lines were read—he seemed to divine the rest—and then he threw me roughly on the chimney-piece again; the flower fell unheeded to the floor—I saw it no more.

The one who rejected me so unkindly was a very handsome man, tall and well-made, with curly, blonde hair and long, carefully-trimmed moustache. He was elegantly dressed, and his hands were white and delicate.

As I lay in an uncomfortable position close to a chandelier, the man, evidently forgetful of my existence, devoted his attention to tying a white cravat (the mate of the one in the desk), and no doubt at this very moment my dear friend who sent me forth this morning was wondering how I was being received.

Oh, if I could only efface all that she had confided in me! He re-read me, however, after a time, and little by little memory awakened in turn over the history contained therein, but his expression remained hard and cold.

Reproaches, tears, heart-throbs, all were unavailing. I heard him murmur, as he paced up and down the room: "If I go there will be more tears, and what is to be done? It is not my fault that I do not love her any longer. I am decided. I cannot go to-night. I will write and tell her so. I will say—" and he wrote.

What a difference from this morning, when I saw a sweet woman's face bending over me, feverish with emotion caused by thoughts of him, and this man seated before a table searching his brain for phrases to fit, but the words would not come any more easily than the ideas. He tore up six pages before finishing three lines.

I tell you all this from the bottom of a drawer where I am lying. There are letters and faded flowers and ribbons all round me and I recognise the perfume of my tear-stained pages. Where shall I be to-morrow? What will become of me? This is my thought as I dream of the black eyes full of tears and the cold blue eyes that have ceased to respond.

L. M. N.

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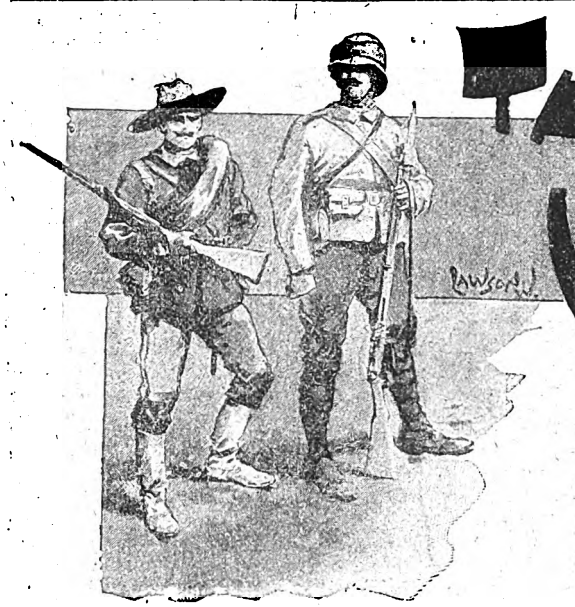
The Summary will Enable You to Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.



THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

France and Germany declare war against Great Britain.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpedo boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of fermentation owing to the repulse of the Allied fleet.

Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour's fleet gains a decisive victory over the Allies off the Rock of Gibraltar.

A representative of the *New York World* interviews Lord Salisbury on a matter that is not yet made public.

The British organise two expeditions, one to invade France, and one to invade Germany. The first army corps appears off Havre, and after a short bombardment which lasts till nightfall, the fleet withdraws, the troopships move northwards, and the soldiers are landed at a point opposite Blèville.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Capture of Havre.

To the 8th Chasseurs à Pied, led by General d'Aubigny in person, was given the honour of leading the attack on the British centre.

Their advance through Blèville had been skilfully covered by the 102nd and 72nd Infantry, who had thrown forward a thick cloud of skirmishers. These, however, hung back owing to the very warm reception they were receiving from a body of troops which lined a narrow belt of trees fringing some brushwood at the base of the rising ground capped by ten field batteries.

D'Aubigny saw his chance of not only discomfiting the occupants of this favourable cover but also rendering the position of the artillery untenable by reason of the excellent mark they would offer to his men, firing at ease and in comparative safety at a distance of about 1,000 yards.

Driving his feet home in the stirrups, dropping the reins on his horse's neck, with képi in his left hand and sword aloft, the handsome soldier turned round in the saddle and cheered his men on. The bugles and drums crashed in the *pas de charge*, the regiment gave a frantic shriek of exultation, and a wild dash was made over the intervening space of 200 yards.

An answering and deeper roar came from the trees, and the French rush had hardly commenced before the 42nd Highlanders sprang out to meet them.

Once before—long years ago at Corunna—had the Black Watch crossed bayonets with Frenchmen whilst both regiments were charging simultaneously. Not for one instant had the result of that fearful crash of arms been in doubt, and if the dim shades from the Peninsula had been able to witness the manner in which their successors hurled back the 8th Chasseurs à Pied they must have cried in ghostly glee: "Ah, the regiment never dies!"

It was hardly fair to the Frenchmen to ask them to meet that charge.

By sheer weight alone they were driven to the earth as a terrier might be repulsed by a mastiff. General d'Aubigny's horse reared and fell on top of him, and Colonel Wauchope jumped his charger over his prostrate foe as he galloped furiously to the front to prevent the pursuit from being pushed too far. It was no part of Lord Roberts' plan to occupy Blèville—yet.

"Hech, mon, but this is a braw day for Galashiels," said an elderly sergeant, as he followed his section back to the cover of the trees.

"They're the 8th Chasseurs" (he pronounced it Chassoors), said a private, turning over the body of a Frenchman with his foot. "D'ye ken the meanin' o't?"

General d'Aubigny's horse reared and fell on top of him.

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"It's an eediom," replied the sergeant, "but the Scoatch equeevalent is 'rinnin' awa'.'"

D'Aubigny, who was thought to be dead, was only stunned. When he regained his senses some hours later, the tide of battle had rolled over him, and he was able to escape northwards in the dusk.

Under the guidance of Brigadier-General McCalmont.

The action became general by 8.30 a.m., and by nine o'clock Bléville was very strongly held by the enemy. The French front was narrower than the British, owing to the mad haste with which troops had been hurried along the parallel roads coming up from the east of Havre.

General de Rosny, quickly perceiving that he was not getting the due advantage of his superior numbers, threw forward a strong force of cavalry and guns to turn the British left flank.

The guns, thirty-six of them, occupied a slight eminence on the extreme left front of the British line, and opened fire with shrapnel with such beautiful precision that half-an-hour of such work would practically destroy that wing.

Their cavalry at the same time delivered a front charge, which, under ordinary circumstances, would have proved sheer madness against British infantry in line of columns, but which was now a really brilliant piece of strategy, whilst the ranks were being thrown into confusion by the murderous hail of shrapnel.

But some such contingency had been foreseen, and a British cavalry division of 3,000 sabres, led by Sir Baker Russell, in the uniform of the 13th Hussars, rode sharply out at the trot from behind the squares, and went straight for the French horsemen. The 17th Lancers were in front, followed by the Blues, the King's Dragoon Guards, the Queen's Bays, and the 3rd and 4th Hussars, two squadrons of the latter being left with Brigadier-General Massy, to be used at his discretion, for the further protection of the left wing.

With an appalling crash the opposing masses of horsemen met in mad career. The gradient of the ground was slightly against the Englishmen, who, although they stopped and beat back the French, were compelled to fight every yard of the way, the outcome of this inequality in the manœuvring space being one of the most sanguinary cavalry fights on record.

At last the French were fairly compelled to turn tail and bolt, and the guns quickly limbered up, as they knew that the next move of the British mounted contingent would be directed against them.

It was absolutely imperative therefore that they should return, unimpeded, by the way they had come.

Massy knew what the cessation of fire meant. "For Heaven's sake, stop them!" he shouted to Major Ramsay, who commanded the squadrons of Hussars, and no further directions were heeded.

The 4th bounded forward with a yell of delight, and Harington, who was mounted on a magnificent hunter, asked and obtained permission to go with them.

The guns were half a mile away, and the only practicable line of advance for the Hussars was rigidly circumscribed by a deep brook and a seemingly impassable belt of thick bushes.

The road followed by the guns crossed the front at a point easily distinguishable, and Major Ramsay swore a mighty oath as he realised that the French gunners must be able to pass that point before the 4th could reach it, ride they ever so hard.

Harington also saw the difficulty, and in that moment Irene's words, her imperious look, her queen-like gesture, came to him as an inspiration.

All thought of the future left his mind. He was possessed of the one idea that those guns must be stopped, and he alone in that gallant company knew exactly how to do it. Nay, he alone could do it, for his horse would succeed where inferior animals must fail.

For the next five minutes, he said afterwards, he was mad.

Quitting the squadron, he took his horse a flying leap across the stream, landing on the opposite bank at a spot where the tall hedge offered a small opening.

The thorough-bred hunter scrambled up the bank, pushed through the fence, Harington's face and tunic being badly cut by the thorns, and in a second the pair were flying across country to diagonally intersect the French line of retreat.

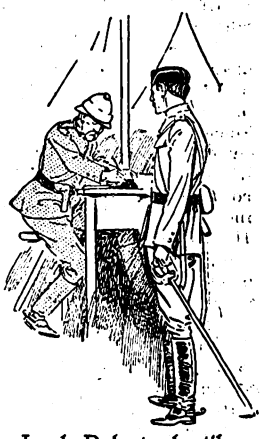
So busy were the gunners in plying whip and spur that they never noticed this solitary horseman, who was approaching the narrow, deeply-dyked lane along which they were thundering towards safety.

Leaping such obstacles as he encountered, Harington gained the roadway abreast of the leading gun. He charged the off-wheel horse with such an impact that the animal, with his fellow wheeler and driver, was driven sideways into the ditch on the far side of the road. The sudden check on the traces brought down the four leaders, the gun overturned, and the next gun smashed into it before the drivers could avert the disaster.

The road was hopelessly blocked, and two minutes later the Hussars were fiercely engaged in capturing thirty-six guns.

Teddy wheeled his horse after the shock of the encounter, leapt back across the dyke, and the terrified hunter forthwith bolted for the British lines at a pace he had never travelled behind a fox.

Lord Roberts had keenly watched the whole incident through his field-glasses. Whilst the Hussars and gunners were settling the question as to the possession of the field pieces he ordered the left wing to swing round and the centre to attack Bléville.



Lord Roberts hastily scribbled a despatch.

The time had come for the crucial movement of the day, and Sir Baker Russell's superb charge, followed by Harington's daring exploit, had opened the way for it.

General Massy was congratulating the Grenadier officer on his escape when a galloper arrived from the Commander-in-Chief, requesting his presence at the earliest opportunity, and Teddy hurried off, his hunter by this time having had some of the steam taken out of him.

When he saluted Lord Roberts, the latter looked keenly at him and said: "Major Harington, I desire to congratulate you. I shall have much pleasure in recommending her Majesty the Queen to decorate you with the Victoria Cross."

Promotion on the field is the rarest and perhaps dearest honour a soldier can receive, and Harington's emotion prevented him from uttering a word in reply.

The Duke of York, who was with the Commander-in-Chief, also spoke to him in terms of warm appreciation, and

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Teddy was quite grateful to a man who asked him how much he gave for the bay horse he was riding.

By eleven o'clock the position of the French Army was about as bad as that held by Napoleon's troops at Sedan.

Although not surrounded, they were terribly cramped for room. Before the pitiless fire of the Lee-Metfords they were fast losing men, and, what was worse, the *morale* of the troops was beginning to yield to circumstances.

Their superiority in field-guns was of no avail, as the roads were now hopelessly blocked, and more than half of their artillery was never in action. It could not get to the front.

A "Times" official met his lordship.

Excellent though the Lebel rifle was, it could not make such an impression upon the widely-spread British line as was produced by the continuous emptying of magazines by our troops into the dense masses of Frenchmen.

General de Rosny did not lose his head under these trying conditions.

He realised that he had been far too precipitate in the attack. Impetuosity and *élan* were of little avail against such a determined yet well-restrained foe, so he decided, too late, to fall back upon the line of forts, and give battle later in the day with fresh troops and with more skilful disposition of his forces.

He was a soldier of iron nerve and marvellous physique. Otherwise, he would never have succeeded in saving the lives of himself and several of his staff by pulling in a small boat over forty weary miles of the English Channel after the collapse of the attempted landing at Worthing.

But he miscalculated the most potent factor in warfare, whether ancient or modern, namely—human nature

His men were weary, hungry, and dispirited. Want of sleep, want of food, and above all, want of success, do not develop the best fighting qualities of the Frenchman. The order for retreat was a harbinger of disaster, and when the keen eye of Lord Roberts discerned the change—with the result that a series of desperate charges were pressed home by the British cavalry and infantry—the retreat became a rout, the French army lost all semblance of order, and the men plunged wildly into the one avenue of escape towards Havre, the ravine.

And during these desperate hours, where was the British artillery, whose motto is "Ubique," whose officers and men consider themselves the salt of the earth?

Only sixty of the two hundred guns available had come into action, and more than one experienced soldier had thought in the depths of his heart that Lord Roberts was not making sufficient use of the guns.

But when the French troops were streaming in tens of thousands into the broad and deep ravine, a hell fire of shrapnel and canister, at point blank range, was poured into them by 140 guns massed in a splendid position on the right flank, where they had up to that moment been comparatively useless.

The other guns limbered up and galloped furiously in the direction of Montivilliers, where, aided by the whole of the British cavalry, they were able to turn the flank of the second line of the retreat, and de Rosny, drawing rein on a hill near Sanvic, at last understood that a French army can advance, but it cannot retreat.

Haggard, gaunt, with exhaustion slowly conquering his physical force, and despair gnawing at his breast, the French Commander-in-Chief turned his bloodshot eyes upon an *aide-de-camp* who rode madly towards him from Havre.

It was yet little past noon. There was still hope! Reinforcements had arrived from Amiens or Rouen! Perchance an attack was about to be delivered on what was now the rear of the British line! The cruisers from the Mediterranean were about to engage the British fleet! Any of these things could retrieve the fortunes of the day.

"*Mon Général*," cried the messenger, "*nous sommes détruits*. The English are in Havre. They have occupied Harfleur, and the railway line beyond that point is blown up. The Forts de l'Heure and de Tourneville have fallen, and they are attacking the Fort de Frileuse. General Bonnemain says it is a question——"

De Rosny stared at the officer during this recital with the horror of absolute mental collapse in his gaze.

"There is no question," he cried. "I will at least make a third attempt to serve France!" and, drawing a revolver from his holster, he blew his brains out before any member of his staff could interfere to prevent him.

. . . . . .

At nine o'clock that morning Lord Roberts had heliographed a message to Lord Charles Beresford that all was well on land and that the enemy were developing the attack on the lines anticipated.

The Admiral immediately gave orders for the return to Havre of the fleet and remaining transports with troops on board, the latter steaming leisurely and accompanied by a number of tugs and flat-bottomed boats.

In an hour's time the full strength of the fleet was again engaged in the bombardment, and a reconnaissance pushed well home showed that the Army Corps at Harfleur, Confreville and Videmare had hurried off in the direction of Bléville. The fort behind Ste. Adresse was silenced and the battery, Bastion de la Floride and Fort de l'Heure were in ruins.

Everything was ripe for the crowning blow.

Several gunboats advanced right into the Avant Port and vigorously engaged the citadel and the coast defence vessels, whilst thousands of troops made a dash for the Boulevard Maritime, the first landing being effected opposite the Hotel Frascati by the 1st Battalion of the 18th Royal Irish.

At the same time the tugs were rapidly towing a fleet of 300 boats, each holding 100 men, up the estuary to a point opposite the Vallée d'Oudalle, where a feeble opposition was speedily silenced by the fire of four cruisers, which had no difficulty in approaching close to the shore as a high spring tide was now available.

"We have occupied Havre!"

The 3rd and 4th Battalions of the King's Royal Rifle Corps were charged with the duty of seizing the approaches to Harfleur and Gainneville. They experienced a temporary check at the canal, but the 60th is seldom at a loss for expedients. Two barges were seized, placed lengthwise across the canal and lashed together, thus providing a capital bridge for the passage of infantry.

Major Vere gained the D.S.O. by leading a detachment of twenty men who swam to the other side and swung the barges under a heavy fire from troops advancing through the valley.

Some sharp fighting took place at this point and in the streets of Havre.

But the British forces considerably outnumbered their opponents at both places, and the spirits of the men had

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been raised to the highest pitch by the sounds of the inland battle, from which they had been debarred.

By noon a junction was effected opposite Harfleur, which was carried at the point of the bayonet, and Major-General Lord Methuen, who was in command, personally led a rapid advance upon the Fort de Frileuse.

Here a slice of luck aided the British troops.

The flight of fugitives through the main gate of the fortress had frightened a team of commissariat horses, and a bad smash-up of waggons jammed the drawbridge.

Before the wreckage could be cleared, the Royal Irish Regiment dashed upon the guard, and in ten minutes all defence was at an end.

Some 8,000 troops, under the guidance of Brigadier-General McCalmont, had been detached from the main Havre contingent and marched through the Place de l'Hotel de Ville, Rue Thérèse and Ingouville, towards the Fort de Tourneville, whose commander promptly capitulated, a feat for which he would have been shot had he fallen into the hands of his enraged fellow-countrymen afterwards.

By nightfall Havre was fully occupied, but there was no rest for the weary troops, who at once proceeded to throw up field fortifications on all the roads which offered easy access for troops coming from the north or centre of France.

The victory had cost us some 8,000 men in killed and wounded, besides the loss of a cruiser and some gunboats, but the official estimate of the French loss was 30,000, and no fewer than 42,000 prisoners were taken.

The most valuable prize that fell into the hands of the British was a park of artillery, 850 field guns, with 400 rounds of ammunition per gun, which were stowed away on the vessels in the Basin de l'Eure, together with a vast quantity of useful stores, in which the British Army was sadly deficient owing to the haste in preparation for the invasion.

* * * * *

Throughout the fight round Blèville a small knot of civilians attached to the Commander-in-Chief's staff took a professional interest in the proceedings quite apart from that felt by the combatants.

The representatives of the English and American Press were almost as anxious concerning "copy" as they were for the result of the engagement.

Chief among these were the war correspondents of the Times and the New York World. The Times' man was more experienced in war alarms than his *confrère* from the States. He knew almost as well as Lord Roberts the exact moment when the battle had irretrievably gone against the French, and by reading the heliographs from dispatch vessels in the offing he was also acquainted with the progress of events at Havre. Indeed, this was common knowledge to all.

The New York World's correspondent was disgusted when he saw his rival turn his horse's head and gallop off towards the shore, whilst the issue was apparently trembling in the balance, but he had his reward.

Shortly afterwards Lord Roberts hastily scribbled a dispatch, and handed it to a field officer, whom he instructed to proceed at once to Southampton in the *Racer*, and supplement his brief announcement of the victory by a more-detailed statement written during the passage.

Mr. Chauncey sought and obtained permission to accompany this officer, as did all the other correspondents, and as they raced to the landing place they saw a steam tug laboriously throbbing its way seawards.

"There goes the slow old Times," he shouted gleefully to the others. "I guess we'll throw him a tow rope before three o'clock." It was then 1.15 p.m.

But in his headlong ride for the shore, Mr. Chauncey had not noticed, far out at sea, a small and graceful steam yacht, the *Enchantress*, belonging to a millionaire colliery proprietor—a vessel whose trials on the Clyde had created a sensation by revealing a speed of over thirty knots an hour.

As the *Racer* steamed away north, she passed the returning tug, and there was no Times' man on board that slow but useful craft.

The Times had long waited for a war which would seem of sufficient importance in the eyes of its conductors to warrant haste in collecting news—haste which might otherwise be unseemly.

Such a war had now commenced. The occasion was worthy even of the best energies of the greatest newspaper in the world.

CHAPTER XIV.

What "The Times" Did.

The Times correspondent was Lord Dunraven.

When he reached the cabin of the *Enchantress*, where an expert typewriter was awaiting him, he methodically arranged his notes, secured the current copies of the Army and Navy Lists, and devoted a good half-hour's thought to his subject before he uttered a word.

Then he started, and by the time the yacht had drawn up alongside the landing-stage at Southampton a ten-thousand word report, fully descriptive of the bombardment, the landing of the troops, and the battle itself was ready to be telegraphed to London. A Times official met his lordship as he stepped ashore, and told him that a large staff of telegraphists, with two Wheatstone instruments, were awaiting him at the post office. For this reason the editor had departed from his original intention of securing the delivery of the "copy" by special train.

Raced through the streets.

Lord Dunraven drove rapidly to the post-office, and having handed in his fateful message, demanded from the postmaster the use of the telephone.

"You cannot reach the Times office by that means," was the reply. "The wire only extends to St. Martin's-le-Grand, and we are forbidden to switch on to the National Telephone Company's system.

His lordship was about to burst forth into a bitter objurgation on red tape and its absurd restrictions when the postmaster continued.

"Those are the rules, but I'm jiggered if I don't break 'em. I'll have you through in half a minute, sir. Kindly step inside and sit down in front of the instrument." Then curiosity overcame the claims of duty, and he added: "Perhaps you'll tell us the news, sir, after you have finished."

It was five minutes past six, and the only cause of the excellent postmaster's momentary stiffness about the telephone lay in the fact that had the long telegraphic message been delivered for transmission a minute before the hour he could have charged a shilling for every seventy-five words instead of the cheaper press rate for night work.

The managing editor of the Times in person answered the telephone, and the following curious conversation took place:

"Who's there?"

"Dunraven."

"Oh, I'm Moberley Bell. Had a good passage?'

"First-rate. We've taken Havre!"

"Capital. How much?"

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"I have spent the night in reading and smoking and thinking."

"I beg your pardon?"

"How much copy have you sent?"

"Five columns. It is now on the wire."

"This is superb. Where are the rest?"

"The rest of what?"

"The other newspaper men."

"About two hours behind me, I reckon."

"Ah, that justs suits my plans. Now dictate me about three hundred words of the events of the past two days."

Lord Dunraven gave Mr. Moberley Bell the desired synopsis, adding, at the conclusion of the recital, "I'm off back again after I've bought some things I'm short of, and the telegraphists assure me the message has gone through all right."

"Very well. There will be a cable laid by the middle of the week. Good-bye, and good luck!"

"Just one final word. I am short of cigars. Send some. The Chief's staff would appreciate a few boxes."

At 7.30 p.m. Lord Dunraven bought a copy of the Southern Echo containing, "by the courtesy of the editor of the Times," a reproduction of his telephonic message, and the following remarkable announcement:

"The proprietors of the Times have purchased the use of our printing machines for the remainder of this evening, and a special edition of the Times will be issued from this office at 8.30 p.m. containing a full descriptive report of the capture of Havre. Similar arrangements have, we understand, been made in every important town in the United Kingdom."

When Mr. Chauncey quitted the *Racer* at the landing-stage at eight o'clock the first person he met was Lord Dunraven.

"Been here long?" he inquired.

"Two hours," was the laconic reply, and his lordship handed the American the paper he was reading.

Chauncey cast his eye over the double-leaded paragraphs already referred to. He was too good a fellow to bear malice, so he smiled as he said:

"It's a clean scoop. You might wait five minutes and take me back. I guess we taught you a bit whilst you were trying for the Cup!"

* * * *

By special resolution, Parliament sat every day during the war at six p.m.

The House had barely opened when Mr. Balfour entered, and his obvious excitement as he intervened in a debate concerning the remission of income tax on small incomes, sent a thrill through the Chamber.

"We have occupied Havre!" he shouted, and the yell with which his news was received departed from all Parliamentary precedent. Mr. H. W. Lucy devoted a large part of his "Sketch in the House" to comparison of that particular cheer with the usual *roulade* of applause which obtains in St. Stephen's, and came to the conclusion that the record established on the night of the downfall of the second Gladstone Ministry—when Lord Randolph Churchill gave the time by jumping on to the front Opposition bench—was hopelessly broken.

The Leader of the House exclaimed, as soon as he could obtain a hearing, that the only intelligence received

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by the Government was that placed at their disposal by the Times. "But," he added, "this is not the first occasion when a great newspaper has outpaced the authorities in the conveyance of news of national importance and rendered signal service to England by its enterprise and resource."

For one fierce moment Dr. Tanner longed to leap to his feet and cry "Remember Piggott!"

But he was now the pampered hero of the House of Commons, and his popularity was too new-born to be exposed to the chill blast of an untimely interruption.

At Exeter Hall a May meeting of the Peace Society had assembled in earnest conclave. Speaker after speaker had urged that the present iniquitous war only demonstrated more clearly the imperative necessity for general disarmament and international arbitration, suggested by the Tsar the year before, when the deep roar of a vast crowd in the Strand penetrated to the spacious room where the members of the society were gathered.

Suddenly a young cleric entered with a newspaper in his hand, and gave it to the chairman. Lady Henry Somerset, who was delivering an impassioned address on the horrors of war, paused as the elderly chairman rose from his seat.

"Brethren," he said, "it is given here, on the responsibility of the Times, that the English arms have prevailed, and that the French are in full retreat along the north bank of the Seine."

No member of the Peace Society ever afterwards alluded to the scene that followed, but the room was not required for the evening meeting.

And imperial London herself gathered together in the stupendous majesty of her millions, tossed her head in mad delight at the news. Her people raced through the streets and did absurd things in the delirium of their joy. Distinctions of class and rank disappeared in the face of such glad tidings, and fabulous prices were given for copies of the late edition of the Times, which was turned out at the rate of a million copies an hour, every printing machine in Fleet Street being utilised, as the elements of journalistic competition did not enter into that pæan of national rejoicing.

It was afterwards estimated that four million copies of the Times were sold that night throughout the country at a recognised cost of one penny each.

The great paper next day modestly confined its references to the feat to a bare enumeration of the different journals by whose kindly help it was enabled to supply Great Britain and Ireland with the intelligence so eagerly looked for.

"The cost of the undertaking amounted to about £5,000," said the Times, "and the proceeds of the sale will probably leave a profit of an equal sum. We have determined to devote that amount to head a list of donations which we ask from our readers for the purpose of providing the necessary funds for an organisation which will be named the Army Aid Society.

"This Society will undertake to supply our armies in the field with such medical comforts and other simple but necessary luxuries as cannot in the nature of things be arranged for departmentally.

"It will be administered by two members of Parliament, two experienced commissariat officers, two army chaplains, and two doctors, who, with the managing editor of the Times, will form a committee of nine persons charged with the efficient and discriminating purchase and distribution of the requisite articles."

Thus was inaugurated the famous Society which did so much during the subsequent progress of the war to lighten the suffering of the troops serving abroad and to cheer their rare moments of relaxation.

Money was subscribed in tens of thousands of pounds, and the Army Aid Society kept Tommy well stocked with extra clothing, blankets, costly surgical appliances, wines, preserved fruits and pickles, selected brands of tobacco, books, periodicals, musical instruments, and the like.

Never was fund so successful, and never had a philanthropic proposal received so magnificent a send-off as £5,000 from the originating journal.

It may be here mentioned that months later, when Lord Dunraven was the guest of the evening at a banquet given in his honour by the staff of the Times, Mr. Walter, the principal proprietor, presented him with a handsome volume containing a copy of every newspaper which had published the Times' report on that eventful night.

In sheets of many sizes and different colours, in every variety of type and headline display, they formed a unique and remarkable collection, of which the recipient might well be proud.

* * * * *

The only man in London who was not carried away by the exultation of the moment was Lord Wolseley.

With characteristic caution he waited calmly until Lord Roberts' dispatch had arrived, and he then closely questioned the staff officer who brought it regarding various passages in the longer report the latter had prepared.

Still the Commander-in-Chief's face wore an anxious expression. He passed some time at the United Service Club, and then returned to his room at the Horse Guards.

Realising that he could not sleep, and that departmental work was impossible at so late an hour, he took a small volume of "Plutarch's Lives" out of an inner pocket of his overcoat, and settled himself in an easy-chair with a cigar.

But ever and anon he started to his feet and paced the room with quick, uncertain strides, as the same perplexing problem presented itself to his mind. By sheer force of will he would resume perusal of the book and lose himself in its marvellous pages, until some chance allusion would again conjure up the difficulty which he had resolved to dismiss as impossible of solution until the next day should have passed.

On Sunday morning the Adjutant-General, on his way to the Horse Guards, encountered thousands of Londoners hurrying to church and chapel to return thanks to Providence for the victory vouchsafed to England, and to ask aid and sustenance in the future.

Entering Lord Wolseley's apartments he was surprised and alarmed at the hard appearance of his chief.

"Have you had no rest?" he said, with some degree of perturbation.

"No. I have spent the night in reading and smoking, and thinking—the latter unwillingly."

"Let me send out for some breakfast," said Sir Redvers Buller. "You must not allow yourself to run below par in this fashion."

"I will take some tea, thank you, Buller," replied the Commander-in-Chief, "but I can neither eat nor sleep until I have heard from Evelyn Wood. Roberts has won half the game; the other half is settled by this time, but we cannot know before to-night."

(To be continued.)

ONE MILLION COPIES

OF

THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

READY OCTOBER 14th.

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A Coward and a Hero.

IT was the sixteenth of December, before Son-Tay. For two days we had splashed in the mire of the rice fields, the water up to our knees. I knew well we could get used to it, but it was worrying all the same. Nevertheless, we marched steadily on, as regular and attentive as if we were at drill.

I tell you, this is true. I am an old hand; I have been nine years in the service and six with the rank of sergeant, and the number of young soldiers I have trained and commanded "right about face" is incalculable, but never have I seen men march like these, shoulder to shoulder, as exact as if drawn by a line; and that, I tell you, in two feet of mud. *Sapristi!* but it was superb. I was jubilant, and yet a little vexed, to see how well the scamps could keep step when they chose. Ah! well; I had nothing to complain of that day.

Halt! Well, not a bit too soon, I thought, and yet a droll place to halt in. No matter. I filled my pipe, and looked round to see where we were. Rice fields to the right and the left, and behind us a thick slush made by our trampling feet. A little corporal who has a tongue well hung, indeed, too well hung, called out to me:

"Sergeant Bertrand, Sergeant Bertrand, no need to light your pipe. Wait a while, they will light it for you."

The jackanapes! As if I didn't know we should soon be under the fire of the enemy. Suddenly I heard them calling the roll of my company, and saw my brave fellows break ranks and trot like rabbits across the rice fields to meet the baggage-master, who was returning with a great package under his arm.

Letters! Now, I ask you, was this a good time to distribute letters? There they were, running like so many madmen. I was the only one to remain tranquil. It is true, I have no one to write to me, no family—no friends, nobody—all alone in the world, like an old bear. Heaven help me! At last I see my men return to their places, holding up their hands to keep their letters from being soiled by the water, as carefully as if they were guarding the last words and testimony of their dying mothers. Ah! Jacque has a letter.

"News from home, Jacque?"

Jacque is a sergeant in my company. I am chief of the first section, he of the second. A handsome young fellow with a bright boyish face, a beardless chin, and cheeks as smooth as a girl's. Nevertheless, I have a little grudge against him. It is always vexing to see these brats of twenty-two promoted alongside of an old trooper like me, but for all that he is a nice boy, and the men would go through fire and water for him. He is well connected, of good family, and often receives letters with the seal of the war department, but that is his business, not mine.

I watched him out of the corner of my eye as he ran through his letter. Then I saw him wipe away a tear, a little tear, which glistened on the end of his eyelash. I pretended not to see it, even joked a little, to make him laugh.

"What has she written to you, Jacque? What says my fair lady?"

He turned to me without a smile, and gravely said:

"I have no lady fair, Bertrand. It is from my mother."

"Ah!" I felt as if I had made a fool of myself, and said no more, but Jacque continued:

"Do you see these letters, Bertrand? It would be better not to receive them in times like these."

That was my opinion, as I have already said. It was not good to allow them to break ranks, the scamps; they ask nothing better. But out of politeness to Jacque, I said:

"It is always pleasant to receive good news from home, no matter where one happens to be. I hope you have heard nothing disagreeable."

Jacque shook his head.

"Oh, no; on the contrary."

That was all. Really Master Jacque was not talkative this morning. His eyes were fixed on the horizon far away, where there was nothing to be seen but a bit of blue sky. I wondered what he could see over there.

"Forward, march!" I repeated, at last. "Forward, march!" for my section.

Jacque, no doubt, was still dreaming, and did not hear the command, for I heard the lieutenant behind me say:

"Ah, well, Sergeant Jacque, lagging behind—already?"

I hoped to hear a reply of some kind, no matter what. When an officer so far forgets himself as to speak in that way to a subordinate, I like to see a little indignation. *Parbleu!* you dare not speak out loud; that is against the rules, but a muttered word under your breath is a solace to your self-respect.

But Jacque said not a word, he simply repeated "Forward, march!" in a dragging tone, as if he were weary. That is to say, it was not the tone a French sergeant uses when he commands "Forward, march!" They never mumble those two words, but shout them out with enthusiasm. What was the matter with Sergeant Jacque this morning? He was not like himself.

Ah, that was a rough day, I tell you. When night came, we were still in the water, but up to our waists this time. And all round us little field-pieces were spitting fire, like so many demons. But we marched steadily on, until we were within 500 yards of the citadel. Not a gun-shot, not a movement; the rascals

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were saving their powder until we were nearer. I said to myself:

"Wait, old fellow, you will have something to warm you up by and by; don't be discouraged."

When, behold, we were again commanded to halt. The captain stepped in front of the ranks, and asked in a low voice—all the same it was distinctly understood:

"A non-commissioned officer willing to undertake a secret and dangerous mission."

Naturally I stepped forward. Now, I have the misfortune to be a little too well appreciated by my captain, an old toughskin like myself, who had been my lieutenant in Africa.

"Not you, Bertrand. I know you well, and when I want you I will find you. Just be kind enough to remain quiet."

You see, some officers will not grant you the least favour. Then I said to myself:

"This is just the thing for Jacque."

The captain seemed to be of the same opinion, for he stopped exactly in front of him and repeated under his nose:

"A non-commissioned officer willing to undertake a dangerous mission."

It was plainly to be seen he was making advances to Jacque, and you will think I am joking when I tell you my fine fellow lowered his eyes under the gaze of the captain and said not a word. You may be sure the captain was angry, for it is not pleasant to make advances to any one and have them thrown back in your teeth. I heard him sneer under his moustache:

"Well, he means to take good care of his skin."

Ah, it was rough. Jacque turned as red as a beet, but said not a word; only when the captain had passed he raised his eyes and fixed them on that bit of blue sky far away on the horizon, where I could see nothing, nothing at all. Then I said to myself:

"Well, my fine fellow, you are decidedly a coward."

To be brief, Berthelot of the third division was chosen for this expedition; he returned without even a scratch, the jackanapes, when my poor Jacque——

Well, we set off again: there was no lagging behind this time. About two hundred and fifty yards from the walls the scoundrels gave us a broadcast in the face. *Sapristi!* how it rained. The balls fell to the right, to the left, in the rice fields, making a "flic floc" as they struck the water. We answered them; but it was like firing in the air, the rascals were so well protected by their walls. This fusillade lasted only about ten minutes, but I shall remember it a long time.

However, it could not continue in this way. The bugle sounded the charge. *Sapristi!* That music always sends a shiver of gaiety through me. Behold us running with fixed bayonets, like madmen! But, as I had already noticed, the gateway of the citadel opened upon a high embankment, scarcely three yards wide; to enter that we must climb the narrow ascent and push in, two by two, under a terrible fire, and that, too, through a palisade of bamboo, which the rascals had constructed to bar the way, already narrow enough. Ah, it was sufficiently difficult without that bamboo, and goodness only knows what it cost us. I saw my two lieutenants fall, the adjutant of the battalion, and many others. Impossible to pass that confounded bamboo. My captain raged like a demon. At last he commanded:

"A section up there!"

This time it was serious—very serious. No time to hesitate; all who climbed there would go to certain death. I think the captain must have retained some spite against Jacque, for he turned to him and said:

"Go up there, sir, and tear away that bamboo."

It is but justice to say he did not wait to be told a second time. Touching his cap, with "All right, captain," he started in a quick run. In passing me he drew a package of letters from his pocket.

"Take care of this for me, Bertrand," and in the twinkling of an eye he was up with his section.

Brave boy! It was beautiful to see him, so cool, so calm; not a loud word, not an oath, only quick, determined orders. "Tear away this," "throw that in the ditch." He was as tranquil as if superintending a squad of soldiers on fatigue duty. And all the time the enemy were pouring upon them a deadly fire, the balls whistling, tearing the bamboo, ploughing up the ground, every now and then crushing in a shoulder, carrying away an arm, or breaking a leg. What a sight it was! They were all left there, all my comrades — Jacque among the number, but he was the last. Just as the work was finished a ball struck him between the eyes. Just as he raised his arms to shout a great "Hurrah!" he fell dead, face foremost.

Perhaps it was not very proper, what I did next morning, but really it was too much for me—that packet of letters that Jacque gave me as he went to his death. I would not keep them, I thought, "a boy who acts like a coward, and a few hours after dies like a man. It is unnatural, there must be something under this;" and I felt I had the explanation there under my hand in those letters. They burned me. It was impossible to keep them. *Ma foi!* I could not; then—then I drew out the packet.

Upon my word there was only one letter, the one he had received that morning. Nothing else. And what a letter it was! He was right, poor boy. One ought not to receive a letter like that just before a battle. As for me, I cried like a baby, and was scarcely able to read it for the tears in my eyes. It was from his mother, and here is what the good woman wrote to her boy as she ended her letter:

"Now, my precious Jacque, take care of yourself for my sake. Remember, you are all I have in this world, and if anything should happen to you, I should surely go mad. It is true the time passes very wearily when one is waiting, but I try to be patient, to forget the present, and only think of the future when you will return. Above all things, my precious boy, be prudent. Do whatever you are commanded to do like a brave soldier, but do not expose yourself unnecessarily. I forbid you. No, no, my darling Jacque, I forbid you nothing. I implore you, before entering into any engagement, to think of your mother, who is always thinking of you, and do not risk too much. Promise me this. will you not? And remember, a man is not a coward because he loves his mother."

The letter fell from my hands. I understood all now. He had thought of his mother, the brave boy, and waited until he was directly commanded to go. And, no doubt, that morning, when he was looking far away to that bit of blue sky where there was nothing to be seen, he was thinking of his mother and of that promise he had sworn to keep.

And that is why Sergeant Jacque, who died like a hero with his face to the enemy, was considered a coward earlier in the day.

HARRY DUNSTAN.

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CAUGHT IN MY OWN TRAP.

DORA and I had been silent fully fifteen minutes—an unusual occurrence for us—when she suddenly broke out into one of her gayest, sweetest peals of laughter. The train was going at the rate of forty miles an hour, but Dora's laugh rang out above all the noise and confusion.

"What is it, Dora, you witch, you?" I said, half piqued that she had not first told me what pleased her, and laughed afterwards.

"Nothing, Nell, only I was just thinking of something funny," she said, in a hoarse whisper. "Do you see that gentleman in the opposite corner, with the beautiful black moustache and dreamy brown eyes? Well, he's been watching you behind that book for the last half hour, looking as if he would love to take a bite of the red roses on your cheeks. Don't blush, but he is in love with you. I know it. I was just thinking of some of the stories I have read about young ladies mistaking handsome young fellows for their brothers, and thought what fun it would be if you could only manage to mistake that gentleman for your brother Fred."

I was ready for fun in a moment.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," I broke out eagerly. "You know I haven't seen Fred since I went to Cambridge, three years ago, and of course he's changed a great deal since then. Well, if that literary gentleman with brown eyes (he is handsome, isn't he, Dora?) should get out at our station, I'll wait till he gets mixed up in the crowd, see him suddenly for the first time, rush up to him in a flutter of delight, call him Brother Fred, and give him such a kissing as he hasn't had since he saw his sweetheart last."

"Yes, I would, if I were you," said Dora sarcastically. "You daren't, you know."

"Don't I dare, though? Wait and see."

And so I dropped back into the cushion in silence till the train stopped at our station.

Dora gave me a wicked look, and whispered that she knew my courage would fail me, for the gentleman was really getting out.

I was not to be triumphed over, though; and so, as we stepped on to the platform I saw the literary gentleman standing amidst the crowd, and with a little bound threw myself in his arms, and kissing him full on the mouth, hysterically exclaimed:

"Fred, you dear brother, how do you do?"

I caught a glimpse of Dora—she was in danger of going into convulsions. I was expecting to hear the stranger say, confusedly, that there was some mistake, but, to my surprise, he gave me a hearty embrace—kissed me two or three times—said he was well—that I had grown a great deal, and inquired for my little friend Dora—who, all this time, was exciting the sympathies of the crowd, as they supposed she was insane, judging from her frantic laughter.

"Father and mother are expecting you, Nellie, and are so impatient they can hardly wait to see you. I was afraid you would not know me, but I am really glad that my image has been treasured up so carefully in my sister's heart."

I was bewildered beyond measure. It really was Fred, then, and I had not known him! I felt slightly ridiculous, and while introducing Dora to my brother, whispered her to keep quiet in reference to my intended trick.

I was too much confused to think of inquiring how he came to be in the compartment without seeing me; so we all went to the carriage which was waiting for us, and drove rapidly to our home.

I had never known Fred to be so affectionate. He held my hands in his own all the time, and kissed me at unnecessary intervals; but to tell the truth, I had never loved him half so well before—never thought him half so handsome.

We reached the gate. Mother kissed me and cried over me; father repeated it; and finally a frank, hearty voice broke out with:

"Hallo, sis! aren't you going to notice your scapegrace of a brother at all?"

And to my astonishment a handsome fellow I had not yet seen gave me a genuine hug, and a kiss that you could have heard across the garden.

"There is some mistake," I murmured; "are you my brother Fred? I thought that gentleman was," pointing at the handsome gentleman I had embraced at the station.

"Why, sis, are you crazy? Of course I'm your brother, and that fellow there is my college chum, Archie Winters, who went half way up to London to meet you. What are you blushing at, Nell? I didn't have time to go, and let him take your photo with him, so that he would be sure and know you. He's been playing off some of his mad pranks, and passing himself off for me, I'll warrant."

I looked at Archie Winters beseechingly, and as they were all going into the house, I whispered to him:

"For pity's sake, do not speak of that mistake. How could it have happened?"

"I overheard you talking in the carriage, and will keep your secret only on one condition."

He whispered something to me that made my face flush scarlet; but I was at his mercy, and said I would think of it, reader; and to the delight of the whole family—Dora and Fred in particular—Archie and I were married in less than six months. And Dora said to me, as I bade her good-bye, that it would give unspeakable delight to Fred and herself, if I would attend their wedding in two months, and I did so.

GERTRUDE TRAVERS.

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THIS is the story of Jean Bisson and Margaret Icart, the bravest man and the fairest woman in Grève de Lecq, which is the prettiest sea-nook on the north coast of Jersey—as it was told by honest Jean himself one summer's night at sea nearly twenty years ago to a wandering stranger who was whiling away a few weeks of rest and leisure in the little fishing village, and had a fancy for moonlight cruises over the changeful waters that lie between the Islands and the mainland of France.

"Marget and I grew up together from childhood in Grève de Lecq yonder, and many is the time I have carried her out on my back into the surf to meet her father's boat as it came in from the fishing before he went away to Newfoundland, and we never heard any more about him; and many is the time, too, that I have mourned that things could not have remained as they were then, when there was no care in all the world, and Marget and I loved each other with the child-love that is the best of all loves on earth.

"But, alas! we grew up as everyone must, and in time the friends and neighbours got to look upon us as made for each other, and talked about our marriage as something that would come round as surely as the next fishing would happen in due course. Marget and I, too, had understood each other about this ever since we had built sandhouses on the beach together, and played at housekeeping with shells and bits of drift-wood for furniture.

"When my elder brother Robert married, we were doing very well as partners in the fishing, and my share was quite enough to warrant me in going to Marget's mother and asking her to let my sweetheart come to me for good and all. She welcomed me as my own mother would have done, and so the matter was arranged, and Marget and I were as happy as any pair in the six islands.

"There seems to me to be some fate which prevents men and women being as happy as they think they ought to be; and that fate stepped in and kept Marget and me apart just when we thought we were coming together for the rest of our lives.

"A week before the day fixed for our wedding, I climbed the bluff that rises to the left of the harbour to have a look round with my glass, and saw a big three-masted schooner about twelve miles away to the north-west, seemingly waterlogged, and flying signals of distress. I ran down to the cottage and told my brother. Ours was the handiest boat for launching, so we found two other men who were willing to risk the run out, and after a bit of hard work, we had the boat safely outside the harbour and headed for the schooner.

"There was a very big sea running, and by the time we had made an offing of five or six miles it blew so hard that it was all we could do to keep the boat on her course. The vessel we were trying to make was drifting down the Channel before an easterly gale and steering very wild, as water-logged ships always do. She was evidently making water fast, for the nearer we got to her the lower she seemed to lie, and the heavier she seemed to pitch in the sea-way. When we were a couple of miles or so from her, working as well as we could to windward, so as to run down sharp when we got abreast of her, she was making such bad weather of it that we began to doubt if she would hold out till we reached her.

"It was like a race between the water and us which should have the lives of those on board, and at last Robert said:

"'Boys, if we don't get on a bit faster the schooner will be gone before we make her. D'ye think the boat'll stand another reef?'

"She was already staggering a good deal under the close-reefed lug, but we saw that Robert meant trying a bit more, and if he was ready to run the risk we were not going to hang back, and so we just nodded, for the wind was screaming so across the water that talking was not easy, and shook the reef out as quickly as we could with our numbed fingers. Then we hoisted the sail again, and sat close under the weather gunwale to keep her in trim.

"All this time the gale was blowing harder and edging more round to the south-east, and at last Robert gave the signal to me to ease off the sheet and run down to the schooner. When the boat's head fell off the wind, Robert half stood up in the stern sheets to mark her position, and as we rose to the top of a wave we all looked ahead and saw—nothing. The water and the leak had beaten us in the race, and our errand had been in vain. There was nothing to do but to go back. We took one last look over the water through the spray that

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drove nearly level across it, and then we dowsed the sail and got on the other tack to make for home.

"When we brought her head up to the wind we found that we could not get her to lie within three points of the island. The gale had kept veering southward, and we found ourselves half-an-hour later a good twelve miles off the shore and dead to leeward of the land. There was nothing for it but to try and beat up, and so all that afternoon and night we toiled against the ever-increasing gale, now gaining a mile and now being beaten back as far again, until we had lost all idea of where we were in the wilderness of blinding spray and black darkness.

"It was about two hours before daylight that we began to suspect that the boat was making more water than came over her side, and soon we could hear it spurting under our legs as we sat on the thwarts. We felt for the leak, and what we found told us that unless a miracle saved us, we were on our last trip on blue water. The pitching and straining of the boat had opened one of her seams almost from stem to stern, and every time she plunged, the water spurted in through the rent in her side in gallons. When we discovered it the rent was on the weather side, and consequently the open seam was mostly out of the waves, but if we had put her on the other tack she would have filled in an instant.

"This made things about as hopeless for us as they could be, for we couldn't go on the other tack without sinking, and yet if we kept on as we were going we knew enough of our position to be pretty certain that we should run under the full force of the gale on to the Paternosters, that great reef of rocks which lies off Cape Grosnez, and be dashed to pieces or drowned as the fates might decide.

"Therefore we had to decide between certain drowning and the chance of weathering the Paternosters, and so making some point on the island. Of course, we took the open chance, and kept the poor old leaky boat as close to the wind as we could.

"For over two hours more we drove on, breasting the great white-topped waves which broke over us in a hail-storm of spray as we rushed through them, and keeping the boat as clear of water as we could with the dipper and our hats, until the morning at last broke grey and dim over the misty sea, and showed us the long line of black cliffs that marked the coast of Jersey, looming to the southward under the low driving clouds, and right ahead the white broken water that was foaming round the sunken reefs of the Paternosters.

"Tack we dare not for fear of sinking before we reached the rocks, and to keep on meant only another kind of death.

"My brother, sitting at the tiller, took in our desperate situation at a glance the moment it was light enough to see clearly. He looked at the line of rocks to windward, then at the breakers ahead, and then at the rent in the side of the boat, and said:

"'There's only one chance for us now, lads. We must stop that leak somehow and tack, or none of us will see home and friends again. Take off your stockings and jam them into the seam and hold them there while I put her about; it's our only chance, and please God we'll keep the water out enough to float her until we make the harbour.'

"The next minute our sea-boots were off, and the next we were caulking the leak with our long woollen stockings, driving them in with thole-pins as best we could. Then at the word from Robert as he brought the boat's head to the wind we downed the sail, shifted it over, hoisted it on the other tack, and stood away for the island.

"We cleared the rocks, and our two mates kept the stockings jammed into the leak while I took the dipper and bailed the water out for dear life—and Marget.

"We headed well up for the harbour, and it was just a matter of whether we could keep afloat long enough to make the land or not. When all was done that could be done, Robert stretched out his cold wet hand to me and I grasped it, and he drew me to him and said in my ear—

"'Jean, it will be a miracle if either of us gets back alive. If I am taken and you left, promise me that you will care for Lorette and the little one, and the other little one that is coming, as though they were yours. They will have no one to look to but you, so promise me, Jean, in the name of the mother that bore us both.'

"In such a moment even Marget was forgotten, and I answered—

"'If it shall be so I will be a brother to Lorette and a father to the little ones as long as God shall give me strength to be so.'

"My brother made no reply, but he smiled and gripped my hand again, and so the promise was made good for ever.

"Half an hour later we were within a hundred yards of the mouth of the harbour, and we could see the neighbours running down to the end of the jetty to give us what help they could, though that would not be much if we failed to make the harbour mouth.

"We drove on heavily, for the boat was now nearly half-full of water, and just as we came within earshot of the shouts of encouragement and welcome home we sank in the trough of the sea and lost the wind for an instant. The sail flapped once and the boat's head fell off till she lay broadside-on to the end of the pier. The next moment a huge wave rose up behind us, and swept us like a straw upon its crest towards the granite wall that was now but a few yards off. I remember nothing more save the hiss of the seething wave as it hurled us forward, the cry of the people on the jetty, and a crash of splintering wood that was drowned by the roaring of water in my ears, and I sank amidst the ruins of the shattered boat.

"It was twenty days before my eyes opened on the world again, and when they did so I was lying in the best bedroom in Robert's house, and on one side of my bed stood Lorette and on the other Marget. My first question was for my brother and my boatmates, and as I asked it in a strange weak voice that startled me with its unfamiliar sound, I saw Lorette put her hands to her eyes and leave the room with bowed-down head.

"Then Marget, in answer to the mute inquiry of my eyes, sat on the side of the bed, and took my wasted hand in hers, and told me how the boat was dashed to pieces against the end of the pier, and how Robert and the two others were stunned by the shock and sank instantly, only to be picked up two days later bruised and dead on the rocks of St. Brelade's, while I, by a miracle, was carried past the pier-head and into the harbour, which was full of great breakers rolling over each other through the narrow mouth and heaping up in white mountains of foam inside.

"I heard her voice tremble as she told me how my senseless body was flung four times on the beach and four times dragged back again by the hungry under-tow, but I did not learn from her how I was saved at last. It

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was Lorette who told me the next day how Marget, when my body came back for the fifth time, knotted a light line round her waist, and, shaming the men in the strength and daring of her love, flung herself into the surf and clasped her strong arms about me, holding me in an embrace that the cruel sea itself could not tear loose, and so was dragged ashore with me back from death into life again.

"Later on, as I lay in the sun on the bluff above the harbour, slowly getting strong again, I thought of all this, and marvelled at the strength of the love that could nerve a woman to such a deed as that, and then, like a dark wall between this love and the life that it should have blessed, rose the memory of the vow that I had pledged to my dead brother out yonder on the dark stormy sea the last time that our hands had met this side of the grave. How could I keep that oath as it was written in the Book of God and marry Marget? No half-keeping would do, for if the sea had not spared me to keep it fully and with a whole heart, why did I, of all the four that went out that fatal day, come back alive?

"When I was strong enough to get to work again I was strong enough also to keep my vow, and so one day I took Marget up the glen for one of our walks, and told her of the promise that lay between us, dividing her life from mine through the long years that I had sworn to succour and cherish those whom my brother had commended helpless to my hands.

"I did not insult her with the mockery of releasing her from her promise to me. I knew that our love was given and taken for good and all, and only He who had put it into our hearts could take it out again. Like the brave, true girl that she was, Marget saw the path of duty lying before me as plainly as I did, and told me with her hands on my shoulders and her sweet eyes brimming over with tears, as she spoke the death-sentence of her life's happiness and all the hopes and longings that had grown up with her growth, that only one thing could kill the love that she had for me, and that would be the baseness of breaking such a promise as mine.

And when she had told me this she put up her face to mine and said:

"'Kiss me now, Jean, for the last time, and tell me that you will be faithful to Lorette and her little ones, for in the sight of Heaven your life belongs to them henceforth.'

"Then I stooped down, and with my heart almost breaking for sorrow, sealed on her lips the oath that I had taken in the presence of death, and which she had bidden me keep at the cost of all that made life sweet to her.

"So we parted as lovers, henceforth to meet only as friends with our love buried deep in our hearts—never, so far as we could see, to bear the fruit of which it should have been the seed.

"Thus it came about that I took up my abode with Lorette and her little son and new-born daughter, to devote to them the life that I had given. Lorette, like the kind, brave soul that she was, made many entreaties that I should leave her and go to Marget; but when Marget told her at last that if I did so she would turn her back on me for ever, she saw that my course was fixed and said no more.

"From then the slow years dragged on, and we each went our way apart with unclasped hands—we who had all our lives longed for the time when we should clasp them so fast that only death should loose them again. Of course, at first the neighbours wondered; but when they knew, they were silent and respected our unseen sorrow, and no stranger in Grève de Lecq would have suspected that a tragedy was being played out beneath the calm surface of our simple lives.

"But at last, after nearly five years, the wound was torn open again, and all the work of patience and endurance undone in a few hours of mad regret. It happened in this wise.

"Marget and her mother were very poor, for all they had to live on was what they could earn between them at net-making, and when the mother lost the use of her hands through rheumatism, Margaret could barely make enough to find them in food. We fisher-folk were all very poor in those times, and only won a hard living from the sea at the best; so though we helped each other as we could, the help did not amount to very much. Now, there was living at St. John's, a mile or so inland from Grève de Lecq, a young farmer so well-to-do that, compared with us, he was rich, and he had loved Marget for years, but had never spoken his heart to her, for he and I were friends, and he respected my older right. But now as the years slipped by and she and I still went our ways apart, he began to hope again, and at last came to me like an honest man as he was, to have the truth from me.

"No words can say what it cost me to tell him that Marget and I had long since given up all idea of marriage, and to bid him God-speed in his suit with her. Yet God gave me strength to do it, and, more than that, to plead with Marget herself for him, and ask her, for the sake of her poor old mother and for the sake of her own young life that she was wasting, to say 'Yes' to Maurice Guerin's question if she could.

"She listened, and, after much sorrowful heart-proving, she said 'Yes' to him and 'Farewell' to me.

"Then the tightened chain of my endurance broke, and when she left me to go to him, I cast myself to the earth and prayed that the hand of the dead might be taken off my heart, or else that it might close upon it and chill it to death in its grip.

"Even as I spoke it in my bitter despair, my unrighteous prayer was answered, for, as I returned to the cottage, Robert's little girl ran out towards me, screaming out that her mother had fallen down dead. I rushed into the room and found Lorette lying on the floor, with her hand clasped to her heart, and just breathing. When I raised her head and asked what had happened, she summoned strength enough to whisper, 'It's my heart. I have had pains there often. Something seems to have broken. You and Marget will take the children, won't you?'

"Then her head fell on my shoulder, and Robert was no more alone in heaven. As soon as she was buried I went to Maurice Guerin, and told him the story of my promise and its fulfilment, and asked him to stand aside for me as I had stood aside for him.

"Poor fellow, he was to have been married in a month from then, but when he knew all he took me by the hand and said:

"'If that is so, who am I that I should compare with you in her eyes? You have served for her better than Jacob did for Rachel. Take her, and may the good God bless you both as you have deserved of him.'

"And so as Lorette's grave closed over her the shadows parted, and the light that had been quenched in the sea sprang up again and will shine until the shadows close once more, and the cup of Marget's life or mine shall be full."

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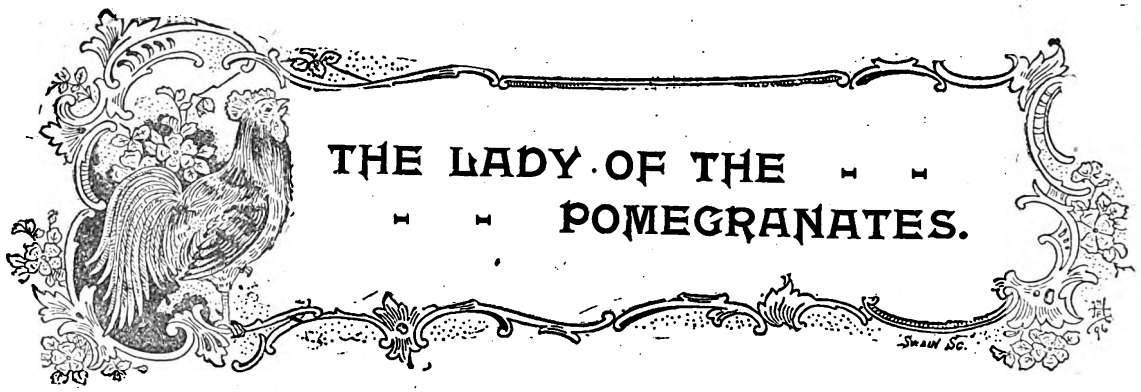

THE LADY OF THE POMEGRANATES.

I WAS preparing for my final examination at college, when I received an extraordinary visitation which affected my whole life and gained for me my wife, whom I love most devotedly.

Early in life it was noticed that my mind had a remarkable philosophical and scientific tendency, and I was educated with a view to a life of study. I was particularly attracted by all psychical phenomena, and even in my schooldays I became convinced that there was an element governing our lives of which we know not the first principle. I believed that there were real manifestations of an unknown power in the universe, one that was as truly and simply ruled by fixed laws as are the phenomena of physics and chemistry.

By the time I first went to college I had already attained a distinction as an experimental scientist, and of course I continued my efforts in the same direction. I may say, without appearing conceited, that I gained honours which far exceeded those of former collegians, and soon became the pet lion of the faculty.

Often as I compared our present attainment with what was known in the time of Roger Bacon, I became more and more impressed with the fact that his theories had also been looked upon as far beyond the possibility of human existence, and he was believed to be a disciple of the evil one. My own theories gained no better reception from the world. And yet Roger Bacon had opened the way to the mysteries of nature, which were now as simple and plain as the transition from daylight to darkness. I fancied myself as standing in about the same relation to our era, and believed my theories would lead to revelations even greater than those of this pioneer investigator.

I had experienced a theory that the soul was a natural composition capable of being experimented with as truly as the atmosphere or water. I also believed that communication between persons separated by the greatest distance would in some simple way be attained and regulated as readily as our voices are now carried by the telephone.

I had read all that had been written by the scientists of France and Germany, and I felt that the time was not far distant when their gropings would be rewarded by discoveries in the realm of psychical phenomena and open an entirely new era in scientific research. I was a militant member of many psychical societies, and examined the realm of ghost lore, with a mind freed from the superstitious fear that has ever been an obstacle to seekers for truth.

I was left an orphan in the hands of an honest and capable board of trustees, who managed my immense fortune. I had no near relatives and no taste for society. I was entirely free, and resolved to devote my life to the investigation of the so-called "occult" phenomena, which I was confident I would show to the world were as clearly regulated by laws as the principles of hydraulics or pneumatics.

At all events, I had resolved that my final thesis should be a discussion of strange future possibilities that would certainly command attention, and announce my intended line of research.

I was at work upon this paper one afternoon in my study, when I had an extraordinary experience. I had written for a long time when I seated myself comfortably to think my way to a clearer expression. In a few seconds I saw the door slowly open, and a woman of great beauty stood before me, with a shining branch of pomegranate in her hand.

She advanced and placed it on the desk, and I quickly arose from the chair, amazed and startled. She turned, looking at me with appealing eyes, and departed.

I saw the door close as she went, and followed in great haste down the corridor, but could see no one.

Then I returned and found the branch. I examined it closely and saw at once it was a product that could not grow in this latitude. It was certainly a real substance, for I could handle it and feel it. The fresh green foliage and reddish-yellow fruit were real entities. I cut a piece of the fruit and saw the brilliant scarlet of the seed and pulp.

Then my mind reverted to the bearer and I remembered every detail of her appearance. I was powerfully moved by the fact that she was beautiful; and it seemed strange, for I had paid but little attention to the beauty or plainness of women. Why, I wondered, should I be so impressed by the exquisite grace and sweetness of my strange visitor?

Nothing about her had escaped me, yet her coming and going could not have occupied more than a moment of time. She was fair, and her head bore a luxurious growth of golden hair; her hands were finely shaped, and her form slender and perfect in contour. Her carriage expressed a subtle grace as natural as it was rare.

Her dress I recalled with equal minuteness. It was, certainly not adapted to an April morning in England. It was more suited to the hottest of summer days. I also noticed that while her complexion had been so fair, she had lustrous eyes of deepest black. I pondered on this fact as showing that she was of foreign origin.

During the days following this event I did not seem myself. Indeed, I began to fear that I should never again

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go about my studies as contented as I had been. I constantly found myself dreaming of this daylight apparition—for apparition I became convinced it was I made an effort to do my work, but my mind could not be stayed from wandering, and I had difficulty in commanding the concentration to do the work at hand, while nothing of original research was accomplished.

I made inquiries of many persons, but no one had been seen to answer my description, the nature of which always aroused curiosity. Useless as I felt it to be I investigated every clue that might prove I had received a genuine guest.

But the Lady of the Pomegranates had not been seen.

One night, a month after this experience, I spent a long evening in the room of one of the professors, with whom I was on good terms. I told him my story, and when I had finished I showed him the branch of pomegranate of which I had taken the greatest care. He examined it so closely that I knew at once he was really interested. He said it could not have been produced except in the warmer latitudes, and asked if he might show a bit of it to a botanist. I reluctantly consented.

As kindly and gently as possible, he told me that he believed I was influenced by the mood brought on by the writing I had been doing. I was under considerable stress, he explained, and he could easily understand that my fatigue and nervousness had been the cause of this phantom of my mind. But by the branch of pomegranate he admitted he was mystified. He had no theory for this. Probably some perfectly natural and explainable means had brought it to my room. Quite likely it had been intended as a joke by some of the students.

I, of course, did not accept his opinion that my visitor was a passing phantasy of my mind. I daily became more strongly entrenched in the conviction that I was on the eve of events which would affect my life. But I found myself obliged to adopt the "rest cure" upon which he insisted, or he would have taken strong measures. In a few days I was informed that the botanist had discovered the branch to belong to a rare species of pomegranate, which grew only in warm latitudes, and generally along the north-eastern shores of the Mediterranean Sea.

A month's stay in a quiet village soothed and rested my shaken nerves, but more truly was I grounded in the faith that the woman I had seen I should see again. My mind was fully made up as to my movements when I had finished my university career.

I was bound to realise that my whole life was wrapped up in this woman, and that I was deeply in love with one of whom I knew nothing. To find her was to be the fulfilment of my whole existence. Out into the world I determined to go and search until I had found her, even if it required a lifetime. My dear old friend, the professor, was pained by the calm and determined manner in which I spoke. He told me flatly that I had become a monomaniac, as insane on this subject as others are on all things. But, except in this, he regarded me as sound, and would not interfere to restrain me.

My real purpose was to be able to meet the woman I loved in a style suited to her rank.

At the earliest moment I set out for Rome, where I intended to stay first. I set up a household that astonished the good people, and I replaced my valet by an Italian, one who had served an old count of one of the oldest houses in Italy. The old man's estate had depreciated so that he was obliged to relinquish his household and live in retirement on a small pittance. It will appear later that the change was a most fortunate event.

My method of procedure proved even better than I had expected. I found that palaces and villas, castles and châteaux, opened their doors wide for me on production of my letters of introduction, and my progress was almost impeded by the necessity of remaining several days at each one as a guest of honour. For I was convinced that the woman I sought was of noble birth, and must be sought among the highest classes.

As I needed time to make a thorough examination of all the noble families, I was not disturbed by the delay.

I posed as an Englishman of wealth and education desiring to see and know the Italians and their country, but in all the attention I was accorded I gained no pleasure. A restless impatience possessed me, and grew upon me each day. It required a greater effort to appear interested in my entertainers, and I grew to fear the strain would cause me to break down.

Another fear possessed me and made me long to make more progress in my quest. I knew I had left the professor of psychology the sole possesser of my secret. He could not fail to be impressed by what he read of me in the papers, and should he tell the true cause of my extravagance, I felt that my scheme would be spoilt.

For six months I travelled, without making any apparent progress. My faith was by no means weakened, and I was about to turn from Italy to Spain when an incident of the merest triviality held me back.

I have said that my valet had once served an Italian count whose financial condition had driven him to the most humiliating economies. I had listened to several recitals from my servant on this man's character. He was an entertaining talker, and I fancied I was always a hero to my valet. I, however, interested myself but little in his affairs, until I was told that his whole *entourage* was to be laid under the hammer by a forced sale. The many financial embarrassments with which the estate was encumbered, demanded an immediate settlement, and the poor nobleman was now obliged to part with all, leaving him nothing but his title. My valet probably supposed it would be a mere bagatelle for me to buy up the property, and at last persuaded me to inspect it.

The villa and demesne were only twenty miles from Florence. The aged count and his family had retired to a humble Swiss chalet near Lucerne, which had served as a simple summer residence. We set out in considerable state, driving our own carriage, passing through a most delightful country. I had never seen anything in nature so surpassingly lovely, and the experience appealed most gratefully to my senses. Before we reached the villa I was possessed with a wild desire to own it.

The estate was one of the finest in Italy, and I could never understand how the family had met with such reverses. The building dated from the middle of the Renaissance, and was erected in the best style of that time. It was a most superb pile and its harmony and poetry were entrancing. In the court was one of those magnificent Italian gardens, to which antiquity has added an unspeakable glory and which is sanctified by the care of generations of devoted gardeners.

There was a presence here which overwhelmed me with peace and happiness. It followed me through the vast corridors and endless suites of chambers, each

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supremely elegant with the artistic taste of the greatest Italian decorators. What is it, I asked myself, that thrills me so? What power renders me so blissful here, and so far from my quest?

I sat for a long time on a balcony overlooking the serene inner court in the afternoon light, whence came a soothing perfume from myriads of flowers and shrubs nodding in the spray of the fountains. Something attracted my attention. I looked and saw—the fresh green and glowing fruit of the pomegranate!

Surely, I thought, I have been here before. I have seen that. Is it, can it be the property of my love, the "Lady of the Pomegranates?"

I hastened to the garden, and my valet, noticing my white face, asked if I were ill. But I paid no attention, nor stopped until I had reached the spot and had a branch in my hands.

Forgetful of the presence of another, I kissed it tenderly and rapturously. It was the same that my botanist had said was so rare. But my valet would know, and I asked him in great excitement.

Amazed at my excited manner, he told me its interesting history. It was one of the prized possessions of the villa. It had survived in the garden for three hundred years, but it seldom flourished unless there was a daughter of great beauty in the existing generation.

It was a singular fact in the family history that now and then a daughter would be born gifted with great beauty and attainments. This had happened three times during the past three hundred years, and it was observed that there was a strong resemblance, as, he said, one could see by the paintings. The lives of these women had been most remarkable. They had married out of their own country, and to their inferiors in rank. The pomegranate possessed a strange connection with these daughters of the noble house, and their births were heralded by its freshening growth and the subsequent blossom. It was always carefully tended by the maiden herself, and seemed almost to be conscious of her presence.

At the time of the wedding its growth was most luxurious, and it served as the chief decoration of the villa.

The first of these three countesses had married a Spanish planter, the second a Mexican. By each a branch had been taken away, and had lived and thrived in new lands.

I could hardly maintain my composure when my servant continued. The present daughter of the count bore a striking resemblance to her two famous ancestresses, and, as the pomegranate had begun to revive during the past few years, it was believed that she was fated to the same peculiar destiny. It was the great sorrow of the count, to whom the daughter was the only comfort.

Vain endeavours had been made to persuade the girl to accept the hand of one of her many lovers among the Italian nobility. She had declined, affirming her belief in the family tradition, and insisting that she did not love them.

My amazement at this recital can be imagined. I now understood the influence I had felt throughout the day. Then the portrait gallery came to my mind, and I eagerly asked where it was, for I had passed none in my rounds. I was told it was locked, as the pictures had not been removed, and the count was obdurate in his determination that no one should see it.

My disappointment was plainly visible to the servants and agent of the count. My suspense was indescribable. I had one resource, however, which I felt would bring me into the presence of her who I knew was destined to be my wife. I informed the agent that I would buy the property, but that I was extremely particular in all my business transactions, and I did not wish to make the purchase through any intermediary. My one condition was that we should make a personal exchange of documents. I made the agent understand that he would not suffer pecuniarily.

In order to be able to start as soon as possible for the Swiss chalet at Lucerne, I gave the agent three days for an answer to my ultimatum. The count had always entertained a dislike of Englishmen, but he was not his own master and his creditors made him submit to my conditions.

We set forth in great state. My valet was almost as radiant as I in the expectation of again seeing his beloved master.

Assured as I was by my belief that no earthly power could keep us long apart, I yet took every precaution that there should be no unnecessary delay. My greatest obstacle was the father's prejudice for my nationality. Thus I had arranged to take him by surprise, and had purposely left the day of my appearance a matter limited to ten days.

The ruse was successful. I called at the count's chalet before sending my horses to an hotel, and was told that the count was out. My handsome outfit made its impression, however, and I was invited to alight, enter, and wait his arrival.

I had hardly entered the house when I again perceived the delicious atmosphere of my affinity. I had scarcely been in the modest drawing-room ten minutes before the mystic power of our two personalities brought us together.

I was as certain she would enter as I should be to expect to see a friend in London when calling at her home. During our wedded life, I have studied this psychical instance carefully. I have also endeavoured to explain the material reality of the pomegranates I saw first. But although I have been baffled so far, I shall in time add the explanation of this to my many other marvellous discoveries in psychical science.

I heard footsteps, and turned toward the door. It opened, and the young countess entered as she had that day in April. There she stood, the same person I had seen, breathing and real. I advanced to meet her. She came to meet me at once, placed her hands upon my shoulders, and raised her lips to mine before a word had been spoken.

Then in a few words it was all explained, and we talked and chatted as naturally as if we had know each other always. We could not have been two more perfectly blended personalities if we had known each other from childhood.

We knew each other's faces. She first saw mine, she said, one day during last April, when on gathering a branch of pomegranates, she seated herself on the same balcony where I had first seen the tree. With eyes wide open, she had seen me in my study, and placed the branch at my side. When she awakened from her reverie, the pomegranates were nowhere to be found.

We heard the count's footstep, and he stood before the door. I shall never forget his face; it was such a study of misery and disgust.

But my wife said: "Father, dear, he whom I have expected has come at last, and you are saved, and we are happy."

S. E. JOHNSON.

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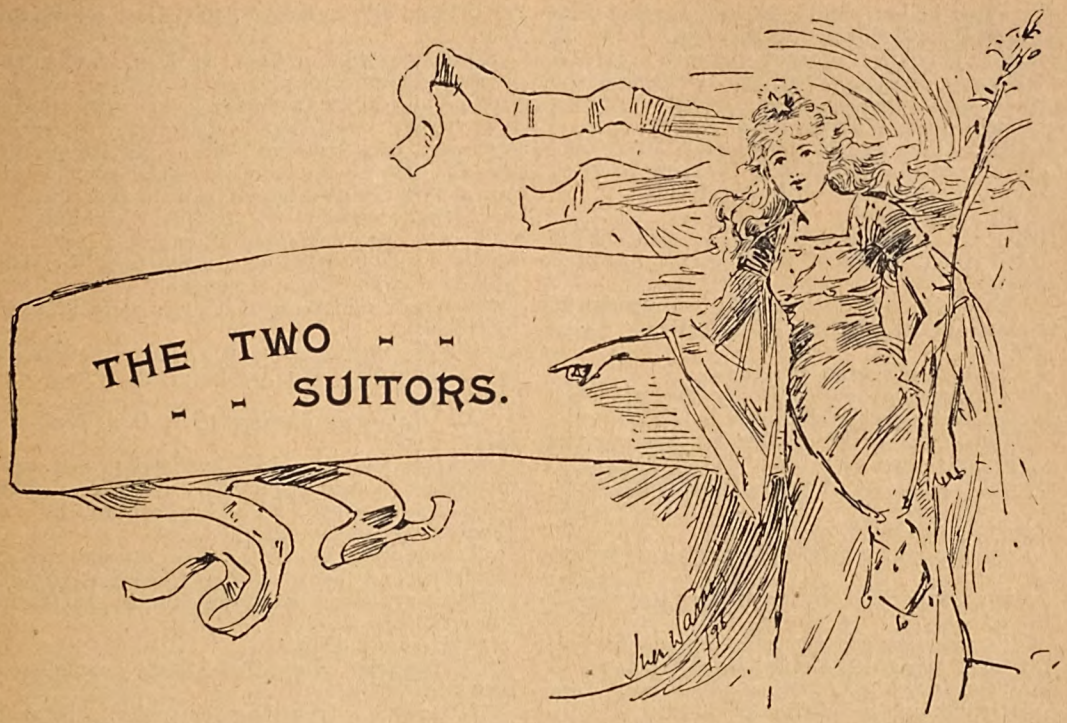

THE TWO SUITORS.

All through that long July day, as Emily Howland paced backwards and forwards across the schoolroom floor, hot, weary, and worn, the tall mansion of Squire Morrison loomed up before her eyes.

In the distance it seemed cool, inviting, and sweet, its white sides gleaming out from the shadows of stately oaks and elms. She could see the network of gravelled paths cross and recross the spacious grounds, the blossoming shrubs dotted about here and there, and once in a while catch a glimpse of little Gertie Morrison as she walked beneath the trees.

A flush, something very like pride, rose to her cheek at the thought that, if she so willed, it might be all her own. She was nothing but a poor girl; a poor, proud girl, perhaps I should say, teaching from day to day to earn the bread she ate and the clothes she wore. Her father lived on a stony, poverty-stricken patch of land two or three miles from the village, just managing, the year through, to keep his family from starving.

Emily, by dint of hard, persevering study, had scraped together knowledge enough to teach in the village school.

Mentally, she found breathing space, and from a shy, reticent, almost stupid girl, grew to a dignified, thoughtful young woman. Comely, too, in looks, with clear, dark face, well-defined features, and sunny brown hair, and a straight, well-rounded figure.

Looking over her life, as she did repeatedly that day, it is not to be wondered at that the girl's eyes brightened and her cheeks flushed hotly, thinking of the conquest she had made; for Squire Morrison, who had asked her to be his wife, was the wealthiest man in the village, nay, in the whole county, and dozens of young ladies would have gladly become mistress of his home, if not his heart.

That night the Squire was coming for his answer. In her heart she had no love for him; her pride and vanity alone were touched, but the better part of her nature was not gladdened or warmed. She was weary; this man could give her rest. Her people were poor, very poor; if she became his wife, her purse would be well filled. Her brothers and sisters were growing up ignorant and uneducated; here was a chance close at hand whereby she might give them aid.

On the other side—and her breath came in quick, short gasps, while thinking of it—she had a lover, in every way her equal; a young man with brown face and hands, 'tis true, but brave, manly, and thoroughly devoted to her.

She thought of the two homes that were offered to her. In one she could sit in white-handed ease, dressed in silks, jewels, and laces, her carriages and servants at her command.

She could have books to read without stint, pictures to look upon, velvet carpets upon which to walk, and, more than all—and she tried hard to make herself believe that this was the paramount thought—she could help her poor people at home!

In the weather-stained house, with its three or four rooms, she should have—well, first of all, Mark, dear, good, true Mark—but there would be floors to scrub, dishes to wash, paint to keep clean, and Monday's washing to do. No fine dresses there; no luxury nor ease; but close economy, a little better than that which she had known perhaps, but still close, for Mark had his widowed mother to take care of. No help for the boys and girls at home, nothing beyond bread and meat, if they were starving.

So she went over the ground, times without number, sometimes determining, with a firm-set mouth, to become mistress of the fine mansion, and then again vowing to cling to Mark's love, no matter what

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temptations rose in her path. At last the first class stood up to spell, and, walking up and down before it, book in hand, Emily almost forgot where she was. A shadow fell across the open door, and, looking up, she saw Mark Browne, dressed in his Sunday suit, his forefinger pressed roguishly upon his lip.

"It has been a hard day for you," he said later, looking into her feverish face, while the noisy group bounded out of doors at the welcome word "dismissed."

"Yes," with a little sigh.

"Sit here," he said, placing her a chair. "while I get your hat and jacket. I wish I had a carriage to take you home in."

"A carriage," she repeated, smiling that he should strike the tenor of her thoughts so perfectly. "I wish so, too, Mark."

His handsome face lengthened a little.

"It will all come in good time, Emily," he said hopefully, caressing her glossy brown hair. "If I haven't that, I can save you a little labour by fastening the windows, locking your desk, and afterwards — why, here's my arm to lean upon as we take the cross-cut home."

"You are so good, Mark."

This to him in a low, earnest voice, and yet to herself a great deal more.

"What is it, Em? Has anything unusual occurred? You speak so oddly."

"Do I?" quite ignoring the question, and turning her head that he might not see the blush that rose to her cheeks. "You've been having a holiday?" she added quickly, taking her hat from his hand.

"Yes; as we walk across the field I'll tell you about it. But now let me say that, for some reason, I cannot tell what, you have not been out of my mind five minutes to-day."

She started and looked up nervously into his face. Did he know, had he heard of the Squire's proposal?

"To tell the truth, Emily, I think you've passed enough of your time in this school," he said, turning the key in the lock. "Mother is getting old, and the old house is lonely; it needs some one younger to look after it, and I think you'd better give up teaching and come home this autumn."

Her heart fluttered strangely. Their path, winding across the green field, was nearing a rise in the ground that overlooked Squire Morrison's house and grounds. East of it Mark's brown cottage lay, small, poor, and insignificant.

"Isn't it lovely?" she exclaimed.

"I think it can easily be made so," his eyes lighting up as he spoke.

"Oh!" said Emily.

The young man looked inquiringly into her face.

"I was speaking of Squire Morrison's."

He was silent for a little, and then said, as he bent down to snatch up a handful of ox-eyed daisies:

"It has everything to make it beautiful, but I'd sooner be Mark Browne in the poorest hut than the Squire in all his luxury!"

"You would?"

"I would, and wouldn't you, Em?"

"I don't know. I think, just now, Mark, I'd like a little taste of wealth and refinement, as a change."

"Refinement and wealth do not always go in pairs," he said impulsively.

Again there was a silence.

Mark walked along with his eyes bent upon the ground. Emily studied his face eagerly, the clear, honest face with its bright, hopeful look a little subdued now.

Should she tell him, then and there, of what she had been thinking that day?

Would he care for her when he knew that she stood, like an idle woman at her shopping, comparing his love—rich, great, and true—with a glittering, vain show that the years would leave a miserable ruin at her feet? No, she would give herself a little further time; she would warm herself in the sunshine of this man's heart a little longer, and then, if duty to herself and her family demanded that she should turn from him, she would never, never look back again.

"You have something to tell me," she said, to change the subject.

"I had quite forgotten it, and now it seems hardly worth noticing. It's nothing; only I went over to Archer to-day."

"And got your photograph? Oh! Mark, I'm so glad!"

Her face was all aglow, and the young man, not comprehending her mood, looked at her wonderingly.

"You are nervous," he said, placing the little proof-picture in her outstretched hand.

"It isn't quite you, Mark; these likenesses never quite satisfy one, you know. Nevertheless, I'm very glad to get this," she added quickly, seeing that his face wore a serious look.

"Yes, I know, Em."

"Do you know, Mark, that I think you ought to have been an artist?"

"If I ought to have been, or ought to be, shall be," he said confidently. "I am young yet, and our talents won't bury themselves. It'll all come about in God's good time. We will do the best we can, and wait."

"If one can only wait patiently," she sighed.

"Two can, if one cannot. We are very strong together, Emily. Love gives everybody strength. If I hadn't you I should be hopeless at times, and should not care which way the world went."

While he said this she was plucking at the night-green moss which clung to the roots of the old trees. She almost wished for the moment that he did not love her quite so well. It would be so hard to break from him. It would wreck and blacken his whole life. The sound of carriage wheels aroused her. She started up, knowing, intuitively, what presence was nearing them.

"I ought to go home; I have an engagement to-night."

She did not mean to say this, but it escaped from her in the moment's confusion.

"An engagement?" wonderingly.

It was an odd thing for Emily to speak of engagements. He did not question her, but rose to his feet, saying something about going after pond lilies with the boys.

Just then Squire Morrison whirled by. He lifted his hat with his white hand as he passed. A deep blush overspread the girl's face, but she did not look at Mark.

"It's late to go on the pond," she said, trying to speak indifferently. "I believe I can see a cloud through the trees—don't go to-night."

"I shall go," in a low tone.

"Well, then, good-bye; you must not accompany me any farther."

"Good-bye!" just touching her fingers, and turning from her down the path.

She did not move from the spot where she was standing. Her heart grew heavy as lead. When should she

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see him again? How would they meet after that hour?

"Mark, dear Mark!" she cried, springing after him.

"What is it, Emily?" coming sedately back to her.

"Nothing, nothing, only don't go in that way—say good-night better. I love you, Mark!"

He held her face for a minute tenderly between his hands and looked down into her wet eyes.

"Good-night, my darling! God keep you! Good-night!"

The storm rolled up black and heavy from the west, but it did not detain Squire Morrison at home. Carefully dressed, cane in hand, he went down the village street to the cottage where Emily Howland was living with an old couple.

She sat in her room watching the inky cloud with feverish anxiety and peering into the gathering darkness towards the pond that lay south of the village. Just as the fury of the cloud burst in wind and rain, shaking at the windows, flinging back shutters spitefully, and carrying great blinding clouds of dust before it, her middle-aged, aristocratic suitor gained the house.

"If he were only in Mark's place," she thought, little knowing the substance of her wish.

"The storm is fearful," he said, taking her cold hand and leading her courteously to a seat.

There was a protecting tenderness in his manner that touched her. She looked up into his face, hardly knowing what she was doing, and then dropped her eyes timidly before him. The man of the world was charmed.

She was trying to read his heart, he thought, and he had got a glimpse of her beautiful eyes.

He talked soothingly to her in a gentle, well-modulated voice, never once alluding to the subject which was uppermost in his mind, until the wind lulled away to a whisper, and there was a glimmer of light in the west. Then he said, taking her hand—

"Have you decided—will you be my wife, Emily?"

She had been sitting quietly beside him, her white face half turned from his gaze—going over the old ground again, weighing his wealth and position with the priceless treasure of Mark Browne's love. Things seemed terribly mixed to her; there was a dim mist floating before her eyes, and she was like one in a dream. His question, like a sharp blade, divided the darkness before her, and meeting the swift light she started to her feet. Squire Morrison looked at the transfigured face in wonder, almost in awe.

"What is it?" he asked, trying to arrest her eager gaze, which was fixed on something above and beyond him.

"Forgive me, sir," she said, sinking down, "but it has come to me—I cannot be your wife."

She was trembling in every limb as she spoke.

"Why?"

She turned her eyes slowly to his face in a way that startled him, and said, in a voice scarcely above a whisper, yet clear and distinct:

"Because I love Mark Browne, and do not love you. In God's sight I am his wife."

Just then there was a confused murmur of voices in the street. It came nearer—crying, moaning and lamenting. The Squire flung back the shutters. Three men were carry a burden, followed by a little crowd of men, women and children.

At that moment a saffron light shot out from the west, showing the white, dead face of Mark Browne.

"Drowned in the pond when the storm first broke. He was out after lilies," a voice said.

And they passed on.

S. Ardley.

A - TIP-TOP - MAGAZINE.

PEARSON'S FOR SEPTEMBER IS A BRILLIANT ISSUE.

PEARSON'S MAGAZINE for September is an unusually brilliant issue. It is crammed with interesting articles, stories to suit every taste, and illustrations and photographs such as can be found in no other Magazine published. It is a tip-top issue.

The following table of contents speaks for itself:

PICTURES AND THEIR PAINTERS. (Illustrated). Here is some bright art gossip, illustrated with photographs of beautiful pictures, superbly printed.

SNOWED-UP IN JUNE. By John S. Begg. (Illustrated).—All about the observatory on the summit of Ben Nevis, about the strange phenomena there to be seen, and about the arctic weather experienced even during mid-summer.

SIGNORS OF THE NIGHT. By Max Pemberton. (Illustrated).—The fiction element begins with another of Mr. Max Pemberton's brilliant stories, under this general title. This is a vividly written, powerfully descriptive story of old Venice, for the sake of which alone the Magazine is worth procuring.

FROM READING TO PARIS IN A HOUSE-BOAT. By Walton Adams. (Illustrated).—Describing how a journey was made from Reading to Paris in a House-boat, a wonderful voyage of adventure occupying three weeks.

THE LAST OF THE BORGIAS. By Fred M. White. (Illustrated).—A wonderful story, one of the series describing the strange history of Victor Colonna, Professor of Science, and his experiments in the lost art of poisoning.

LIQUID AIR. By Charles E. Tripler. (Illustrated).—Mr. Tripler, the famous American scientist, gives in this article the first authentic account published in this country of the marvellous manner in which he can liquefy air. The photographs explain at a glance the wonderful properties of this new liquid and the revolutionising effects of its application to every-day life. Liquid air is the newest wonder of science. The extraordinary account of its properties reads like a story of magic.

MOTHER BUNCH. By Edwin Pugh. A bright story. The love-making of old Mother Bunch, a workhouse inmate, affords excellent and amusing reading.

OURSELVES *versus* THE WORLD. By J. Holt Schooling. (Illustrated).—One of the most interesting of Mr. Holt Schooling's well-known statistical articles. It will make you proud to read how nobly the old British Lion holds his own against the world.

THE VICOMTE'S DOUBLE. By E. W. Jennings. (Illustrated).—Another powerful story, written in an inimitable style which will appeal to all.

HOW CRIMINALS ARE IDENTIFIED. By Tighe Hopkins. (Illustrated).—In this article there is an extremely interesting account of the Bertillon System and its introduction into England. It is illustrated with photographs specially taken in Wormwood Scrubbs, showing how all possibility of error in identifying criminals is eliminated by the use of the system.

LIFE'S LITTLE WORRIES. By W. L. Alden. (Illustrated).—In this feature the well-known humorist continues his philosophical thoughts, dealing with telephones, chests of drawers, and clocks; little worries all have experienced.

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN KETTLE. By Cutcliffe Hyne. (Illustrated).—A more exciting half-hour's reading than is afforded by this marvellous adventure of Captain Kettle cannot be imagined. The intrepid little Captain's deeds have attracted such attention that they need no further recommendations here, suffice it to say that no one will be disappointed in the expectations which Mr. Hyne's stories always arouse.

WIRE WALKING. By Austin Fryers. (Illustrated).—A description of some marvellous feats on the tight-rope, illustrated with photographs which will fairly take your breath away.

GOD AND THE PAGAN. By W. A. Fraser. (Illustrated).—With this powerful story, last, but not least, this September Number of PEARSON'S MAGAZINE comes to an end. It will be acknowledged that it would be a hard matter to bring together a better collection of stories, articles, and illustrations.

SEPTEMBER, 1898. ***PRICE SIXPENCE.***

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Professor Winthorne's Prodigy.

For over thirty years, I, Professor Amos Winthorne have directed and superintended Bridgely College to the best of my ability. More properly speaking, perhaps, my prosperous institution should be designated as Bridgely School, for I regret to say that I possess no authority whatsoever to apply to my house of learning the pompous affix by which it is generally known. My boys, however, are prepared for college, and I can affirm with a just pride that many of the most brilliant and prominent men of England have been pupils at my school before passing through Cambridge or Oxford with honours due in some respect to my untiring efforts in their behalf.

The number of my pupils at no period was less than thirty, and in busy years fifty and more. I took personal charge of the higher classes, and was assisted in the discharge of my duties by two experienced teachers, also by Miss Atherstone, my niece, who directed the primary department with a discerning tact that I cannot too highly praise. The pupils under her care varied in age from five to ten years, and occasionally I examined them myself, and when I noticed that some individual child was particularly bright, and gave promise of future excellence, I invariably would make him an object of special study, and then, after a short time, if I discovered that his intellect was of a stronger calibre than that of his little comrades, I would place him in a higher class even before the close of the school term.

French and German were taught my boys by Professor Dupré, while Professor Henderson, a celebrated Hellenist, gave instruction in the classics. The higher English branches, mathematics, elocution, etc., fell to my charge, as well as the class in botany, while Spanish and Italian were also taught by competent instructors.

Bridgely Hall was in reality more of a pleasant home than a school because, while attending to the mental welfare of my pupils, I likewise heeded their many juvenile desires with parental affection. All of us lived quite *en famille*, and my reputation for leniency seemed to check all ideas of license and mischievousness among them, for a more properly behaved set of youngsters I have rarely seen. I endeavoured to be just and kind, rarely scolded, and, in fact, had little reason to do so, for my pupils loved and respected me, appreciated my tender feelings towards them, and recompensed me with zealous endeavours to improve.

One pleasant afternoon in April, as I was enjoying a favourite meerschaum in my study, the servant handed me a card, saying that a gentleman and his little boy were waiting to see me in the library. I glanced at the card, on which was engraved in heavy Gothic characters:

"James Sanderson, Barrister, London."

"A new pupil, perchance," I murmured.

"Oh, he's a wee darling, sir," said the servant. "He has butter-coloured hair, and doesn't speak English. I never heard the like of how he talks. He's French I think, sir."

"Very well, Mary, I will be down in a moment."

Inwardly congratulating myself that the renown of the school had crossed the Channel, and totally forgetting the indisputable proof of Caledonian origin in the gentleman's name, I hastily slipped off my loose coat and, attiring myself in scholastic black, slowly descended the stairway, and, with an expression which I knew to to be urbane in spite of studied efforts to make it appear severe, I entered the parlour.

Mr. Sanderson was standing near the table in the middle of the room, turning the leaves of an album containing photographs of my former pupils. At a glance I knew him to be a gentleman. He was fully six feet in height, with closely shaven cheeks, dull grey eyes, and an intelligent forehead.

He was faultlessly dressed, but there was something in his appearance which suggested the sporting man. His son was employed playing marbles on the carpet. He was a fair, rosy litttle fellow with a slight squint, which was by no means a deformity, and which lent variety to his chubby features, He was dressed in a blue jacket, and his yellow hair had been pomatumed into a preposterous top-knot. He picked up his marbles and leered at me.

"Good afternoon, Professor," said Mr. Sanderson. "I have heard a great deal about your school—I, ahem! beg pardon—Bridgely College, and the praise bestowed upon it by my friends has induced me to bring my son to you. I have read your prospectus; the terms and the locality suit me exactly. I am not, I admit, what the world would call a wealthy man, and I have been seeking a cheap establishment of this kind for some time."

This last remark wounded my feelings, and I could not refrain from observing; "Mr. Sanderson, the invariable price for a pupil under ten years of age at Bridgely is two hundred pounds per annum, and I cannot agree with you in regard to its inexpensiveness."

"Oh," he ejaculated, rapidly. "Beg your pardon, Professor, you misunderstand me, by Jove, you know! I didn't wish to make any allusion to—to, let me see Dotheboys Hall and old Squeers. Lord, no! Everything here is stunning." And so saying, he began toying with my album. I perceived nevertheless, that his vulgar apology was tinged with irony; I knew it by the look in his dull eyes.

"No excuses necessary, Mr. Sanderson. Has your son had any rudimentary instruction?"

"Oh, very little, but he's a precocious young beggar and needs discipline. I give you *carte blanche* for an occasional flogging when he deserves it."

"But my dear sir," I interrupted. "it is not my habit to flog my pupils. When boys are wayward I endeavour to make them feel ashamed of their bad behaviour, and use gentle persuasion. I prefer to win them by——"

At this moment I received a moist mud pellet full on my cheek, and, turning with rage and mortification, I saw my new pupil in the act of making faces as only a Drury Lane clown could have done.

"No, no!" he yelled, "no cane!"

His father laughed.

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"Excuse Jack," he added, "he's full of fun;" and then turning to the boy, he said:

"You won't be flogged this time, Be a good boy, learn your lessons, and if you get to the top of your class I'll send you half a sovereign a month for toffee—don't cry."

I looked at Jack and saw that he had not the slightest intention of weeping; on the contrary, an expression of ineffable joy pervaded his rosy countenance.

"The child," I remarked, "seems to be advanced for his age. What might that be?"

"He will be seven next July. He was born in France; his mother was a Frenchwoman and Jack speaks the language fluently; English also."

Jack then cried out in infantile glee:

"I speak both admirably."

"Oh, oh," I said, patting him on the cheek. "So young and already vain?"

"The boy knows the alphabet, and reads a bit," said the father; "I hope you'll be able to shape him into something. I am obliged for business reasons to leave England, and, if anything happens, here is my address, and, by the way, Mr. Winthorne, will you kindly excuse me offering you the payment of the first year in advance? I know it is against your rules" (it was not), "but I take this liberty, being uncertain as to the duration of my sojourn abroad."

"Thanks, Mr. Sanderson. I will write you a receipt and assuredly do my best to develop your son's talents."

"Yes, Jack has *decided* talent for such a snip; he takes it from his mother, bright and quick, to the point. Now I will bid you good afternoon, Mr. Winthorne. Good-bye, my child," said Mr. Sanderson. So saying he seized the boy, lifted him to his face, kissed him on both cheeks, interrupting his demonstration of affection by peals of laughter. I could not understand the man. The child stuck out his tongue and roared like a fiend. An hour later he was studying his lessons in the primary department.

About a week after this event my niece entered my study, saying she had something to tell me about the new-comer.

"Has he misbehaved, Miss Atherstone?"

"Oh by no means. He is remarkably quiet and industrious. but from what you have told me I begin to think that Mr. Sanderson has underestimated his son's ability, because I have never met, in my whole experience with such a wonderful scholar."

"Indeed, pray tell me of his powers."

"When on Monday last I gave him two easy lessons in spelling and simple addition, he surprised me by mastering them and the entire multiplication table besides, in one afternoon, and during the week he has made such progress in orthography and geography, that I would like you to examine him yourself. He is head of the class, and keeps the position. You know I am not prone to exaggerate."

"Ah!" I said smiling, "he spells difficult words, does he? What, for instance? *Constantinople?*"

"Indeed he does, and *phthisis, rhythm, parallelogram, scissors, syntax, conchology.*"

"Is it possible? Does he appear to know their meaning?"

"Certainly; and his explanations are very lucid. As for that he is continually poring over the encyclopædia, and his memory is simply prodigious."

"Well, well, I will examine this sucking Webster to morrow."

Upon repairing to the primary the following day, I found that Miss Atherstone had assuredly not exaggerated. In answer to my questions Jack gave a chronological list of the French and English kings with unfaltering precision. I tried him with geography, and he furnished me with the capital of every country I mentioned, occasionally adding several of the most important towns, with their population: and, furthermore, I found to my astonishment when I called Jack to the blackboard that the rule of three had no secrets for him, and in orthography he was unassailable.

Of course such a boy could not remain in this department, and I gave orders for his transfer to the third class, formed of boys from ten to fifteen, and, without losing any time, I wrote to his father, asking as a particular favour the authorisation to take Jack under my personal charge and begin a Latin course. Mr. Sanderson replied that he felt highly honoured, and requested me to direct Jack's studies in the way I deemed most judicious. Forthwith I began the interesting experiment, and Jack seemed delighted to have other opportunities afforded him for advancement, and, at his own solicitation, he entered Mr. Henderson's Greek class, beginning the Latin rudiments with me.

Two months had barely elapsed when this prodigy stood at the head of the third class in French literature, English composition, mathematics, German, and the classics. His progress in Latin was incredible; he would translate Horace and Virgil with the greatest ease, and Greek he had mastered equally well. I at first imagined that he used "cribs," and, aided by his formidable memory, learned his lessons parrotwise, but I was soon undecieved, and began to look upon this strange child as a new "Admirable Crichton," and unexpected honour to my school. He was sent to the second class a few weeks later, and began Spanish and Italian simultaneously.

His method of learning foreign words was curious. He would select from his dictionary about three hundred words and adjectives, copy them on a long slip of paper, and number each word.

He then would read them over twice attentively, and without a mistake recite them all, giving the number likewise.

"What is bird in Spanish?" would ask Señor Alzamora.

"*Pajaro*, masculine, *ave* also. Nos. 8 and 191."

The boy, in spite of his labours, enjoyed good health: he was full of fun and the incarnation of jollity. Of course he was greatly beloved by his comrades, old and young. They looked upon him as a marvel and were even respectful to him. He was perfectly conscious of his phenomenal powers, but was by no means conceited.

Further surprises, however, were in store for me. At the July examinations, Jack carried off all the first prizes in all the branches.

He was as strong in the composition of French and German verses as he was competent in botany, trigonometry, and languages. He would cite from over one hundred authors, but philology was his strongest point.

I wrote once more to Mr. Sanderson asking permission to keep Jack by me during his holidays, as I considered the dear boy one of my family. Mr. Sanderson called in person, and was received by Jack with every demonstration of delight. His father brought him a well-filled

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purse and some rare Italian books he needed, and I left them together. The interview lasted for over an hour, and from my study I could hear outbursts of laughter, Jack's squeaky treble blending with his father's sonorous baritone guffaws.

"A happy reunion, indeed," I murmured.

When the bell rang, Mr. Sanderson reappeared and gave his consent to my proposal. Jack was to stay with me. During the summer vacation the majority of my pupils remained at Bridgely. Those who wished to pursue their studies could attend the morning and evening class, but this was not obligatory. Jack never missed one, and continued to improve in the most miraculous way.

One event occurred during the vacation worthy of notice. I have the well-established reputation of being one of the best Orientalists in England, and had made the study of Eastern languages the chosen occupation of my life. In my study I possessed a valuable collection of manuscripts, grammars, and dictionaries in Sanskrit, Arabic, Turkish, Armenian, Persian, Hindustani, Tamil, etc., and I often sent contributions to our leading reviews on matters appertaining to those languages.

One afternoon, having been suddenly called away from my labours, I left upon my study table an article relating to a disputed passage in the Gulistan, giving what I considered to be the correct translation.

On my return I found, in amazement, on the margin of the article, a totally different rendering of the question, written in Persian, and, worse than that, I was forced to admit that it was the genuine reading, elucidating what had hitherto been obscure to me! Who could have written it?

No one at Bridgely College knew a word of Persian. I acknowledged that I instantly thought of my wonderful boy, but I dismissed the idea with a shrug of incredulity.

However, I resolved to find the key to the mystery, and continued my article, purposely filling it with the most outrageous blunders.

An hour later I found Master Jack correcting them.

"Heavens! this is sorcery! Where did you learn Persian?"

"In your library, Professor, and all the rest, too."

"What! Armenian? Turkish?"

"Yes, sir."

I instantly proceeded to examine him, and, with the first real pang of envy I ever felt in my life, I was forced to admit that the boy spoke the truth. He could converse in seven Eastern languages with Satanic ease.

My envious feeling was of short duration, and, transformed to stammering wonder, I clasped him to my arms, crying:

"My boy, my boy, you are a second Mezzofanti, the greatest living linguist."

"Oh, no, sir!" he exclaimed, disengaging himself violently. "Mezzofanti knew seventy languages; I only know fifteen."

"You will surpass him, my boy; you are the eighth wonder of the world," I cried in rapture. "I will write to Rome, to London, to Paris. I will call a meeting of linguists and philosophers here—*here* at Bridgely *College!* I will make you famous, Jack; you have given me an imperishable fame. You shall learn even more—Dutch, Icelandic, Hungarian, Swedish, Portugese! Think, Jack! Danish, Chinese, Russian!"

I saw him smile faintly when I mentioned Russian.

Deeply impressed by this extraordinary revelation, I immediately proceeded to compose a circular containing all the facts and events I have mentioned in this narration, and lost no time in forwarding it to all the universities and important colleges of Europe, cordially inviting the leaders of literature and science to Bridgely for the purpose of publicly examining my prodigy.

Answers poured in from every portion of the Continent; people flocked to our quiet village from every institution of celebrity, and, in a word, six weeks later Bridgely was crowded with the literary *élite* of Europe.

I will pass briefly over the colossal success of this glorious day. Suffice it to say that Jack passed through the ordeal, grandly, triumphantly, magnificently. The omniscient child, hailed with tumultuous applause after every signal victory, proved his modesty as well as his genius. His powers were tested by grey-haired professors, and with such difficulties that I was exasperated; yet the wonderful child answered them all.

His refutation of Luther in Greek was sublime, and his dissertation proving conclusively that spiritualism was known to the Egyptians, founding his reasons from lately discovered inscriptions on Theban obelisks, was eminently applauded; likewise his impromptu odes in eleven languages, and his essay on the Basque dialects.

At the conclusion of this solemn and imposing exposition of genius, Mr. Sanderson, who had been roaring with laughter, I grieve to say, during the whole proceedings, took Jack away far a short trip to Paris.

A week later I received the following letter from my old friend, Professor Clarke, who had assisted at the examination:

"Dear Amos,—I congratulate you upon the great success of your infant prodigy! He is truly a wonderful creature! I did not wish to expose you to ridicule in public, otherwise I would have told you how cruelly you have been fooled. Your marvel-child, your 'second Mezzofanti,' etc., *is not a child.* Professor Ivan Paschkoff (alias Jack Sanderson) is the most distinguished linguist in Europe. You know his name well; he is a walking encyclopædia of general knowledge, besides being Professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Moscow. He is a dwarf, a native of Odessa, and is at present in his forty-eighth year. A Russian student informs me that this is not the first time that Paschkoff has played this trick. While at your school he shaved twice a day, used powder and paint artistically and arranged his hair with all the skill of an experienced actor.—Yours sincerely,

J. Clarke.

"P.S.—Mr. Sanderson, Jack's alleged father, is the wealthy Lord Dennymore, the sporting earl. He is the greatest practical joker in England, and I presume rewarded Paschkoff munificently for his trouble."

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LAST WRITTEN - - - - FIRST READ.

F. H. T.—The reason why ships are not struck by lightning is attributed to the general use which is now made of wire rope for rigging purposes, as well as to the fact that the hulls of ships are usually constructed of iron and steel. Thus the whole vessel forms an excellent and continuous conductor, by means of which the electricity is led away into the ocean before it has time to do any serious damage.

Q. S.—The chief warder in one of Her Majesty's prisons receives a salary of from £165 to £215 a year.

D. M. B.—Night blindness is a peculiar affection of the eye, in which the the patient sees very well during the day, but becomes blind as night approaches. It is mostly met with in warm climates, and usually gives way to mild treatment.

M. N. — So far as I am aware Canton is the only city in the world in which wheeled vehicles are never seen. The streets are so narrow and ill-paved that the only alternative to walking is to ride in a Sedan chair, or to employ the services of a donkey.

A. D.—Anyone who knows anything about zoology will tell you that monkeys have neither fleas nor any other parasites whatsoever. When monkeys begin to pick each other about in the friendly manner you have observed, they merely detach bits of hardened sebaceous matter which has been excreted by the glands.

FROGGIE.—It takes any given portion of the Gulf Stream two years to travel from Florida to the coast of Norway.

TOBIA makes the following inquiry: "Is there any country where children are allowed to choose their own names?" ————Reading between the lines it occurs to us that "TOBIAS" is not exactly satisfied with the name his parents chose for him when a helpless infant. It may afford him some grain of satisfaction to know that there are two such countries. In New Zealand the Maori priest repeats to the infant a lengthy list of the names of its ancestors, fixing upon the one which the child by sneezing or crying when it is uttered, apparently prefers; while in Russia, the Cheremiss shakes the baby till it cries, and then repeats a string of names to it till it selects one for itself by ceasing its tears.

A. T.—Yes, it is true. At one time the Jews were a fair-haired race; now they are, with few exceptions, dark. Such is the case, in a lesser degree, with the Irish, among whom, 150 years ago, a dark-haired person was almost unknown.

F. C. M.—The greatest diving feat ever achieved was in moving the cargo of the ship, *Cape Horn*, wrecked off the coast of South America, when a diver named Hooper made seven descents to a depth of over 200 feet, remaining at one time forty-two minutes under the water.

A. B.—The remains of all the Tsars of Russia since Peter the Great lie in a memorial chapel built on one of the Islands of Neva. All the cenotaphs are exactly alike, each being a block of white marble without any decoration whatever. The only distinction by which each one is marked is the name of the deceased emperor.

AMATEUR.—The biggest billiard-room in the world is underneath Charing Cross Railway Station, London. It is a great haunt of Germans, Frenchmen, and others of our Continental visitors. There are thirty tables.

D. R. S.—Two wealthy Jews of Bagdad now own all remains of the ancient town of Babylon.

SIMETHA.—The eye of the vulture is so constructed that it is really a high-power telescope, enabling the bird to see objects at an almost incredible distance.

QUEENIE.—The proper way to brush the hair is not to brush it lengthwise, but to hold the ends of the hair, if it is long enough, and simply scrub the scalp with the brush. This process promotes the circulation of the blood and excites the pil-glands to action. After the hair has been thoroughly brushed in this way, it should be then finished with a few vigorous strokes lengthwise of the hair.

WOOD.—The advantage is on the side of the iron ship. Mathematical calculations show that an iron ship will carry 116 tons to the 100 tons carried by a wooden ship of the same dimensions and loaded to the same draught of water.

TRAMP.—The total strength of the United States Army, regular and volunteer, up to July 19th last was 227,000—44,000 being regulars and 183,000 volunteers.

OTTO.—Sir Henry Irving made his first appearance on the stage on the 29th of September, forty-two years ago, as "Gaston" in *Richelieu*. His first appearance in London was made in 1866, in the St. James's Theatre. He has been manager of the Lyceum Theatre since 1878.

B. B. writes to say that: "It is a fact not generally known that if one holds his breath, wasps, bees, and hornets can be handled with impunity. The skin becomes sting-proof; but should the smallest quantity of air escape from the lungs, the sting will penetrate at once." B. B.'s explanation of this phenomenon is that holding the breath partially closes the pores of the skin.

OSTLER.—Your kicking horse might possibly be cured by the following treatment. Tie one of his forelegs with a rope to the hind leg on the other side; then, as soon as he commences to kick, he jerks his front leg off the ground and goes down in a heap. I am told that two or three doses of this kind will cure the worst case possible.

H. E. L.—The Parliamentary exclamation "Hear, hear," was not always an expression of approval; and it was not always "Hear, hear." It was originally, "Hear him, hear him," and was used to call attention to a speaker's words. It is easy to see that this exclamation was occasionally derisive; it was described by one Member in 1770 as "disorderly."

J. N.—The Queen's will is engrossed on vellum, quarto size, and is bound as a volume and secured by a private lock.

N. B. has heard that seaweed is edible. He wants to know what sort of a food it makes. ————Although not the diet for an epicure, seaweed is, when dry, richer than oatmeal in nitrogenous constituents, and takes rank amongst the most nutritious of vegetable foods.

A. P. S.—Angle worms can be obtained anywhere by wetting the ground with a solution of blue vitriol or with soap suds, which will bring them out in surprising numbers.

R. B.—When two rainbows are seen at one time, the inner is brighter than the outer; moreover, the position of the bands of colour is reversed. This is because in the one the sun's rays are reflected once, whereas in the other they are reflected twice.

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£5 FOR CORRECT ANSWERS.

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On the vote for public education, Sir John Gorst explained in the House of Commons that it was estimated the sum spent upon education in the course of the coming financial year would be £11,690,000. This sum was an earnest of the conviction of the people that education was a national necessity, and that the country depended for its greatness on an intelligent and instructed population, just as much as it did upon fleets and armies. All readers of this paper will, doubtless, endorse this view, and we, the publishers of "HOMELAND," now offer you an opportunity to display your knowledge and receive most generous payment for a little study. The object of this contest is to give an impetus to many dormant minds to awaken and think; also, we expect by this competition of brains to extend the circulation of "HOMELAND" to such a size that we shall be able to charge double the present rate for advertising in our columns. By this plan of increasing the number of subscriptions, and receiving more money from advertisers of soaps, pianos, medicines, books, baking powders, jewellery, etc., we shall add thousands of pounds a year to our income, and with this mathematical deduction before us, we have decided to operate this most remarkable "missing letters" contest.

HERE'S WHAT YOU ARE TO DO.

There are thirty words in this schedule, from each of which letters have been omitted, and their places have been supplied by dashes. To fill in the blank spaces and get the names properly, you must have some knowledge of geography and history. We want you to spell out as many words as you can, then send to us with a Postal Order for 1/6 to pay for a One Year's Subscription to "HOMELAND." For correct lists we shall give £5 in cash. Also, if your list contains twenty or more correct words, we shall send you a beautiful Egeria Diamond Scarf Pin (for lady or gentleman), the regular price of which is 2/6. Therefore, by sending your list you are positively certain of the 2/6 prize, and by being careful to send a complete list, you have an opportunity of the £5 cash award. The distance that you live from London makes no difference. All have equal opportunity for winning. Full particulars of the prize awards will be published in "HOMELAND."

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Prizes will be honestly awarded and promptly sent. We publish the list of words to be studied out. In making your list of answers, be sure to give the number of each word:

1. **-RA-I-** A country of South America.
2. **-A-I-I-** Name of the largest ocean.
3. **M-D--E--A-E--** A sea.
4. **-M--O-** A large river in South America.
5. **T-A--S** Well-known English river.
6. **G-AS-OW** A great Scotch city.
7. **H-----X** A Yorkshire town.
8. **N-A-A-A** Noted for display of water.
9. **PO-TL-ND** A place in England.
10. **-A-RI-** A city of Spain.
11. **H-V--A** A city on a well-known island.
12. **D-BL-N** An Irish city.
13. **G--R-L-A-** Greatest fortification in the world.
14. **S-A-LE-** A great explorer.
15. **C-L-F---I-** One of the United States.
16. **B-SM---K** A noted ruler.
17. **--CTO-I-** Another noted ruler.
18. **P-R-U-A-** A country of Europe.
19. **A-ST-A-I-** A big island. [American.
20. **M--IN-E-** Name of the most prominent
21. **P-R-SM--TH** A famous English seaport.
22. **Y--KS--RE** An English county.
23. **B--G-T-N** A south-coast holiday resort.
24. **T-NN--ON** A noted poet.
25. **W-ST-IN-T-R** A famous abbey.
26. **J-RS-Y** An island in the English Channel.
27. **H-M-L-N-** A popular family magazine.
28. **B-H-I-G** A sea.
29. **A-L-N-I-** An ocean.
30. **M-D-G-S-A-** An island near Africa.

In sending your list of words, mention whether you want prize money sent by cheque, money order, or registered post; we will send any way that winners require. The Egeria Diamond is a perfect imitation of a Real Diamond. We defy experts to distinguish it from real except by microscopic test. In every respect it serves the purpose of Genuine Diamond of purest quality. It is artistically mounted in a fine gold-cased pin, warranted to wear for years. This piece of jewellery will make a most desirable gift to a friend if you do not need it yourself. At present our supply of these gifts is limited, and if they are all gone when your set of answers comes in, we shall send you 2/6 in money instead of the Scarf or Shawl Pin, so you shall either receive the piece of jewellery or the equivalent in cash, in addition to your chance of winning £5 cash prize. This entire offer is an honest one, made by a responsible publishing house. Now study, and exchange light brainwork for cash. With your list of answers send postal order for 1/6 to pay for twelve months' subscription to our family magazine, "HOMELAND," which is only sold by subscription; also send a stamp for immediate reply. If you have already subscribed, mention that fact in your letter, and we will extend your subscription from the time the present one expires.

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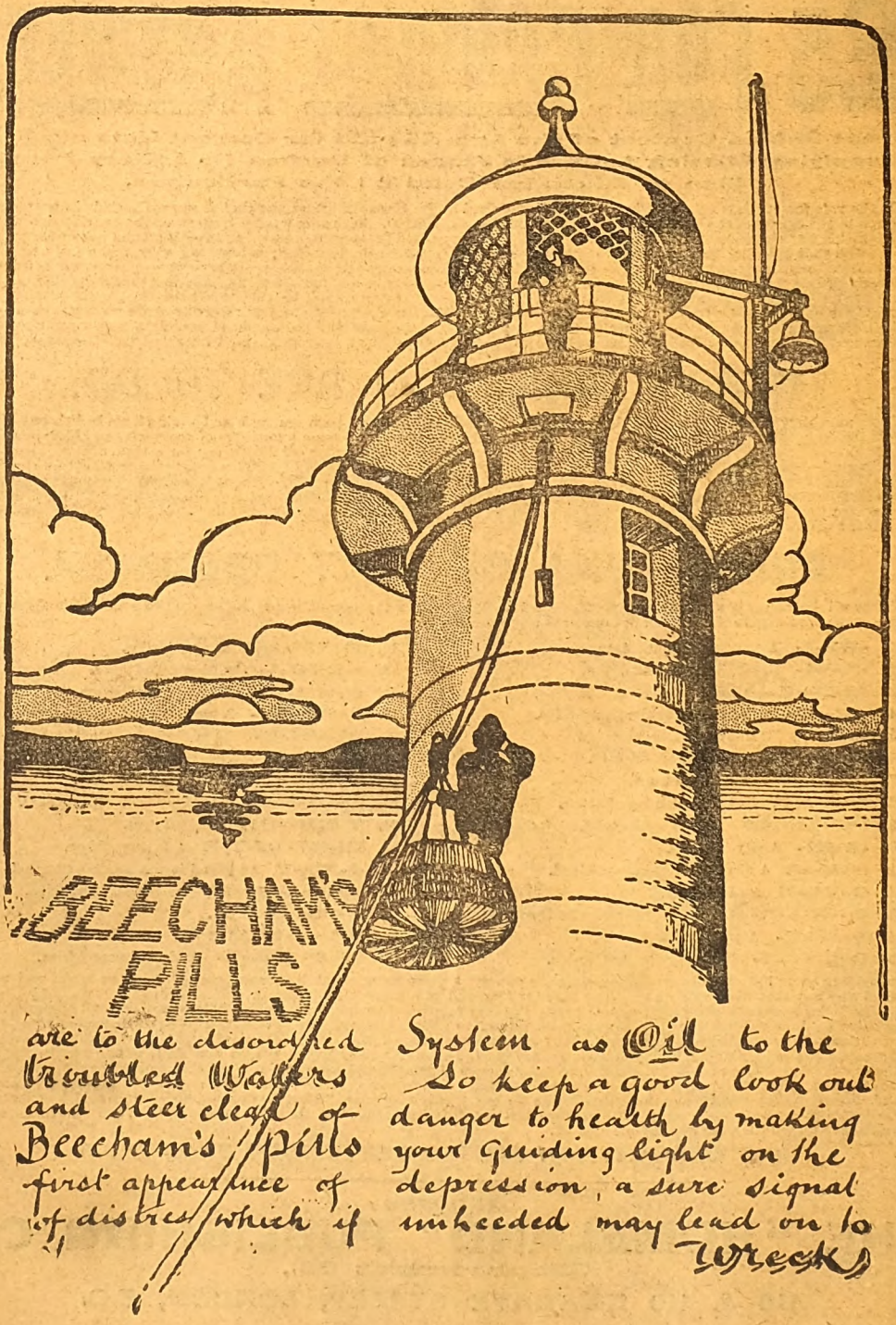

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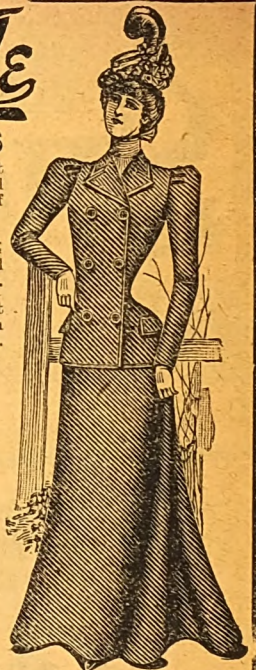

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A Cousin's Welcome.

THE *Mystic* had been at her moorings some little time, and quite a number of her passengers had disembarked, when a hansom dashed down the pier and halted at the foot of the gangway. Its occupant leapt out, and hurried up to the steamer's deck. He was a young man, tall, lithe of limb, clear cut as to feature, and conforming to the latest fashions in dress.

"How long's she been in?" he panted to an officer who stood by the entrance to the companionway. "Anybody gone ashore yet?"

"Yes, sir," was the reply. "Quite a number."

"Miss Murray," went on the young man. "Do you happen to know where she is? I——."

"There she is, sir, over yonder, by the rail, looking straight down among the people on the pier."

"That's it. She's looking for me. Much obliged," and he was off in a trice, pushing his way among kissing, handshaking, and generally embracing couples, who would have been quite embarrassed at another time,

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but whom nobody minded in the excitement of the moment.

The girl chanced to turn her head just as he reached her side. She had a sweet face, with large brown eyes, and the rich colour of an English complexion.

'Did you think I wasn't coming?" exclaimed Orville, tucking his stick under one arm so as to give her both his hands. "But I had a rush to get here. Well, what do you think of us?"

'Oh, I think it is all charming—perfectly jolly, we should say at home, but I suppose I must begin to break myself of that now."

She looked at him for an instant with an expression in the brown eyes that Orville did not quite understand.

"Oh, don't think of giving it up for the world!" he exclaimed. "Your letters have made me picture you as about the jolliest girl going. But we must be off if we're to catch the last train for home to-night. I'll see if I can't hurry matters with those Custom fiends."

But these gentlemen managed to delay their victim just long enough to cause them to miss that train.

"I think we might as well reconcile ourselves at once to spending the night in town. You don't mind, I hope?"

Orville snapped his watch shut, and glanced a little anxiously at that English cousin of his, to note if she might appear shocked at the suggestion. But there was no sign of disturbance in her face; there was even a note of relief in her voice, as she replied:

"Then I shall have a chance to get a little more used to you before meeting the others."

Again she looked at him in that odd way that puzzled Orville, but then one does not mind being puzzled if the perplexing factor is at the same time a fascinating one, as in this case it was.

"What luck to have her turn out so pretty!" he told himself. "And to think that she is going to spend the summer with us!"

Orville led the way to his hansom, and the next moment they were jolting over New York's rough pavements, towards the central part of the city.

"Well," began his companion, and looking up at him demurely, as soon as a pause in his rapid series of questions about her voyage gave her an opportunity to originate a remark: "are you disappointed in me? You know that we are doing a very unusual thing. And yet, somehow, I do not feel as if I had met you for the first time in my life only half-an-hour ago."

"Of course, you're not expected to feel that way. I'm sure I don't. I am not one bit disappointed in you. But do you really think you'll like it over here? You will find a good many things very different."

"But I haven't found you different, have I?" she asked quickly. "That is, different from what I had expected. I mean, different in the sense of my feeling strange with you. In other ways you are quite different."

"Oh, am I," laughed Orville. "That's good. Won't you be kind enough to particularise?"

"Well, you won't be offended now, will you? In the first place, you dress a little more—more stylishly than I thought you would."

"Dress better!" broke in Orville. "What did the girl expect to see—a tramp?"

"There, now, I was afraid you would misunderstand me; and perhaps I had got a wrong conception. To be sure, you are not a regular clergyman."

"Well, I should say not," laughed Orville; "but here is Madison Square. Isn't it pretty? And see that tower, in the garden over there. We quite pride ourselves on that. We'll be at the hotel in a minute now."

"I suppose you want to go straight to your room and rest," he said, when he came back to her, after registering.

"Yes; I find I am growing a little nervous."

"Nervous? Why, what on earth is there to be nervous about? We'll get a train the first thing in the morning, and as soon as the girls get hold of you, they'll make you feel at home in short order."

"The girls! What girls?"

They were ascending in the lift with the boy, who was to show them to their rooms. His companion put the question with such a suggestion of sharpness in her tones, that Orville stepped to one side, so that he might get a better view of her face. There was utter surprise depicted there.

"Why, my sisters, to be sure," he replied.

"Your sisters? Why, you never mentioned——"

But the lift stopped at the third floor, and the boy opened two doors on the opposite side of the hall from each other.

"Now I will go to my own room, and leave you to lie down and take a little rest," said Orville, as he handed her the handbag he had been carrying. "Then we can have dinner, and spend the evening in any way you like."

"Our not going to your house to-night will not disarrange anything in the preparation for the—the ceremony?"

She laid a timid, detaining hand on his coat-sleeve. She spoke softly, while a flush stole into her cheek. The boy had been tipped and taken his leave. There was no one but themselves in the long hallway.

"The ceremony?" gasped Orville. "What——"

"Oh, I suppose you Americans call it something else. But of course this delay won't interfere; it was very silly of me to inquire. But you are sure you don't want to draw out from the bargain, now that you have seen me? It is not too late yet, you know."

She looked up at him, mirth and gravity struggling for the mastery of her eyes. Even while he felt that the girl must be bereft of her senses to talk in such enigmas, he was more impressed by her beauty than ever.

But what could she mean? He could call to mind no bargain in which she was concerned. Even his readiness at repartee deserted him in this crisis. He hesitated, trying to catch her meaning.

A change instantly swept over her face.

"You are disappointed. I can read it in your eyes," she said, the merriment all gone out of her own. "I ought not to have come. I should never have consented to the thing in the first instance."

Her head dropped. She put one hand against the side of the doorway, as if a sudden weakness had overcome her.

Orville was dazed—stupefied. He had not the remotest idea why a girl, who was simply his English cousin, and whom he had gone to the steamer to meet, should talk in this strain. He feared that she might begin to cry at any minute; and Orville could not stand the sight of woman's tears. He felt that he must get away, at all hazards, and gain time to think the matter over.

"What nonsense you are talking!" he exclaimed in his brisk way. "Of course, I'm not disappointed in

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you. You go in and lie down, and be ready to eat the dinner I'm going to order now."

He gave a rapid glance in either direction along the hallway, then bent over and kissed her on the lips. His intention was to flee then on the instant, but her arms were about his neck, and he was held a willing prisoner for a second or two. Then she broke from him, fled into her room, and closed the door.

Orville walked off down the corridor towards the lift, his brain in a whirl. He had counted on his cousin Celia and himself proving very good friends, after their long years of correspondence, but to have her talk as she had talked was altogether outside his calculations. He took out his handkerchief to mop the perspiration from his brow as he recalled several of her odd speeches.

"She must be touched here," he murmured, allowing the handkerchief to rest on his temples for an instant.

"There can't be any other explanation. She's been queer all along, ever since we started from the steamer in the cab. But her letters were always straight enough. It was odd, though, that she would never send us a photograph of herself. I paid her back though, for that, when I sent her a view of my back hair. What am I going to do with her now—sweet little thing as she is, too? What a thousand pities! I hope she won't become violent."

He kept on in the lift down to the office floor. He felt that he must have a smoke, to try and quiet his nerves.

Quietude was not long in coming. As he strolled about the marble corridor, and watched the wreaths ascend from his cigar, the strangeness of certain things about this foreign cousin of his seemed to follow them into misty space and disappear. In its place came the recollection of the sweetness of that kiss, and of the clinging arms about him that had followed it.

"Perhaps cousins are always affectionate in England, as brothers and sisters are sometimes here," Orville mused. "Still, it's queer I never heard of it being so. And there was that talk about ceremony. The deuce! Why, perhaps the girl expects I'm going to marry her. She wouldn't have let me kiss her otherwise. What could I have said in my letters? But, no—no! It can't be that. It's all with her. An awful predicament for me to be in, truly. But I must worry through and humour her till I can get her out to mother and the girls. They'll know what's best to do."

He finished his cigar, ordered dinner, and at half-past six presented himself at the door of his charge's apartment. She had evidently been waiting for him. Her smile of welcome gave him a peculiar, yet pleasurable sensation.

"I'm afraid you are spoiling me," she said, as they entered the ornate dining-room, and took seats at the table reserved for them. "We can't always expect to be so luxurious. And—and aren't you a little bit extravagant?"

"Perhaps I am," he replied, carrying out his idea of humouring her as much as possible. "But then, you know, you can only arrive in America for the first time once. Now, what do you want to see to-night?"

She arched her brows in perplexity for an instant.

"See!" she repeated then. "I am perfectly satisfied with what I am at present seeing."

She was looking straight at him. Orville grew red, in spite of himself.

"Thank you," he replied, "but you can see me at any time, you know. What do you say to a comic opera? There is a pretty good one at the Casino."

"A comic opera?"

She dropped her fork with a little clatter on her plate.

"Well, a comedy at the Lyceum, then?"

"But do you go to the theatre?"

"Certainly; why shouldn't I?"

Orville forgot his companion's infirmity, and expressed all the surprise he felt in his tone and look.

"Well, I know that in the Established Church the clergy see no harm in it, but in your case I——"

She paused, and Orville hastily interposed with

"Oh, my case is all right; you can be assured of that. We'll call at the Casino, eh?"

"Of course, wherever you think it right to take me I shall be content to go," was the reply.

And to the Casino they went. Her enjoyment of the music was great, and in talking the opera over with him, Orville found her perfectly rational. In fact, from the close of the dinner until they separated for the night, he enjoyed her society extremely.

"She must be only touched at certain times," he said to himself when he reached his own room.

The next morning she seemed somewhat agitated in the train that was bearing them out to New Hope.

"What if your people don't like me?" she said.

"They're sure to like you," he replied.

"You are very good to say so, and I suppose I shouldn't worry over that, for we shall be with them such a short while."

Orville opened his mouth to utter an exclamation of surprise, but shut it again as he recalled his companion's sad affliction.

"As soon as I get her safe into mother's hands," he reflected, "I suppose it would be advisable for me to take a long trip somewhere."

He had telegraphed by what train he might be expected. When he drew up at New Hope Station, he was surprised to see the coachman with the dogcart.

"Why didn't you bring the carriage, John?" he asked. "We can't all three ride in that. You'll have to walk over."

"I thought you was alone, sir."

"I can't see how you came to think that; but never mind, run over to the house by the short cut, and be ready to take Rex. Then you want to come over for Miss Murray's trunk."

"I took that over last night, sir."

"You are certainly dreaming, John. The trunk came by this train. Now be off with you. Such a stupid fellow," he remarked, as he gathered up the reins.

It was a beautiful spring day. As they drove up to the house, a commodious structure, the family were seen to be sitting on the piazza.

"Better late than never," exclaimed Orville as he halted Rex under the *porte cochère*.

Just at this moment he caught sight of a stranger among the others on the porch—a woman, plain, and apparently thirty-five years of age.

"How did you come to miss Cousin Celia, Dean?" exclaimed his mother, coming forward.

"Miss Cousin Celia!" he repeated. "Why, I've got her safe enough. Here she is now. We missed the train yesterday."

He sprang out of the dogcart, and offered his hand to his companion. She drew back, while a look of perplexity, quickly giving place to dismay, appeared on her face.

"Cousin Celia!" she murmured faintly.

"Cousin Celia!" echoed Mrs. Orville, glancing from the occupant of the carriage to the strange woman on the piazza. "Why, here is Cousin Celia. She came

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yesterday afternoon, and had to find her way out alone as best she could."

"Then who is this——" began Orville, the world and the things in it seeming to swim before him. But his own amazement quickly merged into pity for her who was placed in such an embarrassing position by this outcome of the affair.

"This is Helen Murray," she now said faintly. "A frightful mistake has been made. What must you think of me? When I remember——"

But she could not bear the recollection. She covered her face with her hands.

"Don't fret yourself about it," said kind-hearted Mrs. Orville. "Come, get out and rest after your long journey."

Orville assisted her to alight, and the three went into the house together. Here Helen Murray lost no time in making explanations that satisfactorily accounted for what, to Orville, had seemed to be mental derangement on her part.

It appeared that she had always been a close student of the habits and customs of the Japanese. Her greatest ambition had been to live among them. She had written an article for one of the reviews on the Japanese in England. It had excited considerable interest, and several letters of inquiry came to the author, one of them being from a certain Samuel Wescott, an American, who was fitting himself to be a missionary in Japan. One letter led to others; a brisk correspondence ensued: resulting presently in mutual confidence and eventually in an engagement to be married. The ceremony was to take place as soon as the girl arrived in America, after which the young couple were to start immediately for Yokohama.

She had expected him to meet her at the pier. He had written her that he had shaved off his beard since his last photograph was taken. When Orville came up to her so confidently she did not question his identity. She knew nothing of any other Miss Murray on the steamer.

"And now I must go away at once," she said, when she had finished her story. "I realise how foolish I was to come to America at all."

"But you can't go away till this afternoon, in any case," Mrs. Orville told her. "There are no trains. Now make yourself comfortable here. My son will send any telegram for you you may wish to dictate."

"Samuel will think I haven't come, I suppose," she replied, musingly. "Oh, I don't know what to say—what to do."

Orville knew very well what he did not want her to do, and that was to marry the missionary.

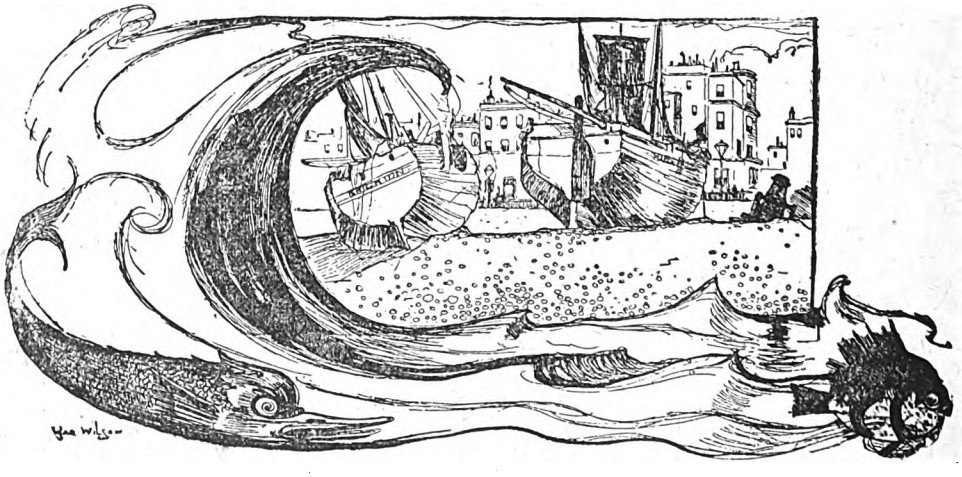
"Isn't she charming?" he said to his mother.

And when he was introduced to the plain Miss Murray, who was really his cousin, he wondered however he could have thought her letters bright.

They finally prevailed on Helen to remain in New Hope till she could hear from Mr. Westcott, to whom she sent a telegram, announcing that she was there. He came to see her at once, but that she was disappointed in him was at once apparent.

Helen Murray did not marry the missionary. She had found sight a more trustworthy guide than fancy to lead her in the selection of a husband. While threatening to return to England by every steamer, she continued to stay on at the Orvilles', who were loath to part with her; and, from all indications, when she does leave their roof, it will only be to find shelter beneath another of the same name.

Arthur Middleton.



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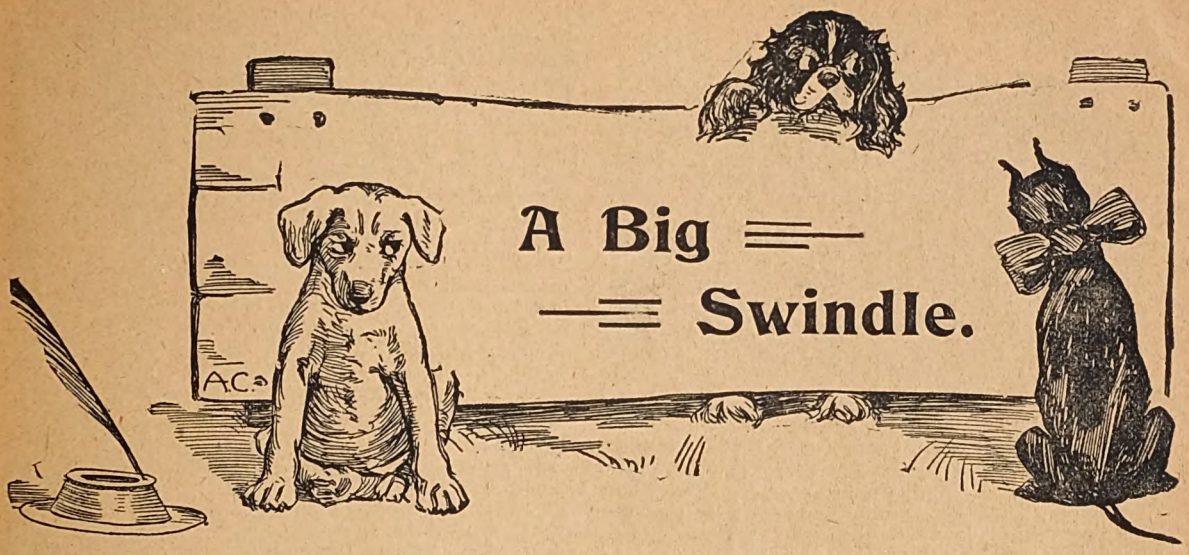

A Big Swindle.

Monsieur Bouloy was a broker and banker in the Rue St. Augustin, Paris. On February 5th, 1860, an elderly lady, in widow's weeds, accompanied by a young man about twenty-five years of age, who walked with a crutch and a stick, alighted from a carriage at the door of M. Bouloy's office, which they entered.

The lady, who was shown into the private room of the principal, introduced herself as the widow of a M. Duperre and the young man as her son Henri.

She assisted the young man to sit down in a comfortable position, saying:

"My son, monsieur, has the misfortune to be lame, owing to an injury he received when a child."

M. Bouloy expressed regret, and asked the lady how he could serve her.

"My late husband," she replied, "left some valuable stocks, and I am anxious to dispose of a part of them. My physician, Dr. Tocanier, recommended me to apply to you as a gentleman of honour, and one well acquainted with the best methods of transacting such business, and was good enough to send us hither in his carriage."

M. Bouloy bowed and assured the lady that it would give him great pleasure to aid her in any way in his power. He glanced through the window and recognised the handsome bays and the livery of the famous physician.

"These," she continued, drawing forth a large envelope from her handbag, "are what I thought of parting with at present."

"I regret to say, madame," he said, "that at present this stock is selling far below par. I may inform you, however, that it is liable at any time to take a rise!"

"That is just it, monsieur," she said, "and I desire you to keep it by you until such time as you think it judicious to sell."

After some talk M. Bouloy opened the safe and placed the envelope with its contents therein. While he was so occupied the young man gave a groan. The lady arose hastily and cried:

"Dear me; another of those dreadful fits!"

M. Bouloy turned and saw the lady with her arms round the neck of the youth, gazing, with tearful eyes and an expression of anguish upon her countenance, at the closed eyes and drawn face of her son.

"Ah, it is very sad, madame," he said. "What can I do for you?"

"Oh, monsieur," was the answer, "if you could procure him a glass of brandy it would speedily restore him."

"I will do it with pleasure," he replied, and left the room, going into the adjoining one, and directing a clerk to get the restorative. Then he returned to the private apartment, and said that he had dispatched an employé for the brandy. It was speedily brought, and the young man revived soon after a few drops had been swallowed. Then, with many thanks and expressions of gratitude, the widow and her son withdrew accompanied to the carriage by M. Bouloy, who then returned to his sanctum, locked his safe, and attended to further business.

Next day a M. Plat visited M. Bouloy, and the latter gentleman, knowing that the former had a short time before held a large amount of the stock which Madame Duperre desired to sell, asked his visitor what he had done with it.

"Why," said he, "I hold it still, and should be glad to have more of it."

Then M. Bouloy said he had a large quantity of it to sell, and M. Plat asked to see it. M. Bouloy opened his safe and took out the envelope. On opening it, his astonishment was great when he found inside a lot of blank script.

"What means this?" he exclaimed as he examined the worthless stuff. Then he turned towards the safe and began nervously to remove its contents. "I am robbed!" he cried. "Robbed of over a million francs in notes of the Bank of France. I was directed by General Thomet to realise for him on valuable securities, and to keep the proceeds at hand to give him at a moment's notice, and I am robbed of all. I am a ruined man!"

"Have you any clue to the thief?" asked M. Plat.

"I am dazed—I cannot think," was the answer. "I will at once consult the police. I beg that you will say nothing of the affair to anyone."

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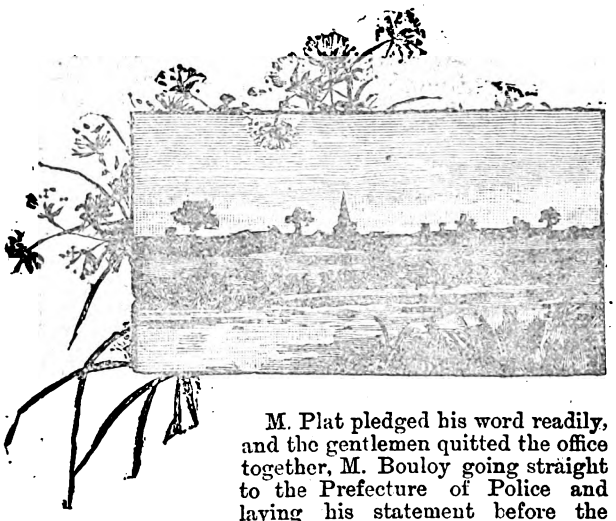

M. Plat pledged his word readily, and the gentlemen quitted the office together, M. Bouloy going straight to the Prefecture of Police and laying his statement before the chief there. Roquepine, a famous detective, was called in, and all the facts were disclosed to him.

"It is all very clear to me, monsieur," said the detective. "Madame Duperre and her son are the thieves, without doubt. The fainting fit was a *ruse*, and the request for brandy was made with the hope that you would quit the room and leave them alone with the safe. The groan and the fit came on just as you had placed the envelope in the safe, and before you had time to secure it, and the package of money was abstracted."

"But how did the thieves know the money was there?" asked M. Bouloy.

"At present that is hard to say, but by-and-bye the question may be answered," the detective replied.

"But they came in Dr. Tocanier's carriage," said the banker, "and said they were recommended to me by him. He is my physician and an intimate friend."

After further talk M. Bouloy departed, and soon after his arrival at his office he was joined by Roquepine. The latter examined the safe, listened anew to the recital of all the facts, and departed.

He first went to the residence of Dr. Tocanier, and found that gentleman at home. As he related to the doctor the circumstances of the visit of the lady calling herself Madame Duperre, and the young man whom she represented as her son, to the office of M. Bouloy, and the subsequent disappearance of the money from the safe, the doctor's astonishment grew beyond description.

"I had never seen the lady or young man before," he said. "She represented that she had been recommended to consult me as to the fainting-fits to which she said the young man was subject, and after questioning him I prescribed for him. They were about to take their leave, when the young man was seized with a fit. The lady seemed almost distracted with grief, and appeared most anxious to get her son home.

"'How ever shall I get him home?' she exclaimed, 'for, to tell you the truth, doctor, I am too poor to hire a vehicle.'

"My carriage was at the door, and what could I do less than place it at their disposal? It was accepted with thanks, and, out of delicacy, I told the coachman to receive his instructions from the lady."

Dr. Tocanier summoned the coachman and questioned him. He said that he was first directed to drive to the Rue de la Paix, and that the lady requested him to take them to the office of M. Bouloy, in the Rue St. Augustin. There they alighted, and he was asked to await their return. As he had been directed by Dr. Tocanier to receive his instructions from the lady he thought that it was all right. When they returned to the carriage the lady directed him to drive to the Rue d'Enghien, soon after turning into which they alighted, and he saw them no more.

The detective was more puzzled than ever. These persons had evidently been cleverly disguised, and probably the lameness of the young man had been assumed for the occasion. They were not likely to go in company again, and he might search months in a vain effort to come across either one of them.

Then another thought struck him. The stock which had deceived M. Bouloy was probably counterfeit. Were this lady and this young man connected with a gang of forgers? Supposing they were, in what direction must he look for the outlaws? One thing the detective thought was certain—namely, that by some means they must have known what valuable property was in the safe. Another thing seemed equally clear, namely, that they must have known the position of the safe.

Roquepine made his way once more to see the envelope and its contents. He examined these mementoes of the crime with great care, and he made a discovery. Inside the flap of the envelope were a few figures in pencil. They were very indistinct, but with the use of a powerful lens, Roquepine made them out thus:

17,400 francs.
270 „

17,670

Now the question was, what did these figures signify? To what did they relate? The detective copied them, meditated over them far into the night. He reached no satisfactory conclusion. Next day he went to see M. Bouloy.

"Monsieur," he said, "what do you think those figures mean?"

"It is very hard to say," was the reply. "All that strikes me is that it is an addition of 17,400 francs and 270 francs."

"Under what circumstances would you add figures together in that way?" the detective asked.

M. Bouloy smiled.

"How could I tell?" said he. "Under any circumstances, when I wished to reach the amount of two numbers."

"When do you do this kind of sum most frequently, monsieur?" was the next question.

"When I am adding the interest to the principal," was the answer.

"That is it!" exclaimed the officer. "Now I have it. One or the other of these parties had 17,400 francs on deposit somewhere, and, on drawing it, they put the figures down and added the interest. I have a clue at last."

Roquepine went on a tour of the banks where deposits were usually made. In the Rue de Maubeuge he found a small private bank, the cashier of which told him that on January 26, 1860, Madame Fourcy had drawn from the bank the sum of 17,400 francs, leaving on deposit

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1,237 francs, and that the interest due to her on the whole deposit was 270 francs and some centimes.

"Where does Madame Fourcy reside?" asked the officer.

"Her address, as given to us, is No. 9, Rue de Laval," was the answer.

"Did she usually come herself to the bank?" asked the detective.

"She came herself, as a rule, but she was sometimes accompanied by a young man," the cashier replied.

"Many thanks, monsieur," said Roquepine, and departed.

As he went along the street, he said to himself, "Now I think I am on the track."

He went to the Prefecture of Police and reported progress. Accompanied by another officer, he visited the Rue de Laval. No. 9, Madame Fourcy's residence, was a respectable, well-kept dwelling. Roquepine rang the bell.

Was Madame Fourcy at home? No. Was the young gentleman at home? No. When was either expected? The domestic did not know, but thought both would be in soon.

The detectives watched, one at each end of the street. Presently a well-built, good-looking young man, dressed very becomingly, came along. Roquepine strolled after him. He went up the steps of No. 9. As he entered the door with a latchkey Roquepine was upon him with a revolver to his head.

"You are my prisoner," said the officer; "offer no resistance, or it will be worse for you." He offered none, for a very good reason. He was so utterly amazed and taken aback that he became as limp as a wet rag. Roquepine put handcuffs upon him and led him into a side room, closing the door so as to leave it slightly ajar.

In a few seconds there came a ring at the bell. The domestic's footsteps were heard, and the door was opened. The next instant there was a scuffle, and Roquepine knew that his assistant was doing his part of the work. But a prolonged struggle and many screams in a woman's voice were heard before a well-dressed elderly woman was forced against the door and into the parlour, the officer grasping her by the wrists and preventing her, so far as he was able, from biting him.

The two prisoners were made to sit down, and, while his assistant stood guard over them, Roquepine searched the house.

The domestic, who appeared to be an innocent young person, was greatly alarmed at what had happened, and was hastily preparing to leave the house. Roquepine marched her into the parlour, and placed her in charge of the officer on duty there. Papers were seized, and Roquepine, calling a cab, conducted the woman and the young man to the Prefecture of Police, leaving the other officer in care of the house.

Investigations showed that the young man, whose name was Frederick, was in reality the son of the woman known as Madame Fourcy. He had been for some time in the employ of General Thomet as private secretary, and had thus become acquainted with the fact that M. Bouloy had converted the general's stock into money, and that it was in the safe awaiting the general's pleasure. As soon as the letter informing the general of the fact came into young Fourcy's hands he conceived the idea of getting possession of the money. How to do it, however, was the difficulty. As a preliminary measure, and to prolong the time for consideration, he poured into the usual noonday cup of coffee of the general a drop of a powerful drug, which brought on a sudden and violent attack of dysentery. Then the young man's active brain concocted a scheme which his mother, a very unscrupulous woman, readily undertook to aid him in executing.

The following day the general was too ill to go out and, at his own suggestion, the secretary visited M. Bouloy to inform him that the general would call upon him probably the next day or the day after. He carefully noted the position of the safe, and then immediately went home and, assuming the disguise which he had prepared, departed with his mother, also thoroughly disguised, to carry out the plot they had devised. The fact that Dr. Tocanier was the general's medical attendant, and always drove about in a handsome carriage, suggested to young Fourcy the first part of the programme.

The money was recovered, and mother and son convicted of the robbery and sentenced to terms of penal servitude.

R. Allen.

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NOT WANTED.

A STORY FROM REAL LIFE.

No; there didn't seem to be any more use for him, in this world at any rate. You see he was old and shaky—both in mind and body, his daughter used to say, when she thought the deaf old man couldn't hear her. But he did catch what she said sometimes, and his poor, dim eyes would grow dimmer for a moment with a mist that used to clear away in two or three big drops that trickled through his thin, big-jointed fingers, as he rested his poor puzzled head on his hands and tried to think why things should be as they were.

They had not always been so. The last ten years of his life were only a confused, blurred sort of picture to him—something like a landscape seen through a telescope out of focus. But beyond them the mists cleared away and the afterglow of a sun that had set for ever lit up a pleasant land whose paths he had trodden with firm tread, and whose vales had echoed with the clear, strong notes of his manhood's life-song.

Yes; life had been a very different matter with him then. He did good work in the factory, and made good money by it, and he had a nice little sum saved up for the rainy days that had come so quickly. That was before Joe Buckley, his daughter's husband, had persuaded him to take it out of the bank and put it into the rotten building society that had only given him back half-a-crown for every hardly-spared pound he had trusted it with.

It was true that Joe and 'Lina had taken him in and promised him a home for life when "t'owd woman" died and took the last of the earth's sunshine with her to Heaven; but that arrangement had not worked somehow.

It was only the stubborn Lancashire pride that kept them from letting him drift into the union, and now things had got so bad that every now and then his dull ears, quickened by a deadly fear, would catch fragments of such sayings as Joe let fall that last fatal day when he came home at dinner time and bluntly told his wife that he had "had a row wi' t' gaffer, and wasn't going back to work."

It was in the angry discussion that followed between Joe and his wife, that Joe let fall the cruel words which broke the old man's cowering spirit for good, and brought home to his fast-clouding mind the one clear, terrible truth that "he wasn't wanted."

"Thou'rt a great lazy lout, and tha'll never stir thysel' to keep a job while tha thinks thy wife 'll work to feed thee."

That was what 'Lina almost screamed at him in her anger and despair at the dreadful prospect of a wageless Saturday, and the hard words roused Joe's blood, and he struck the table and shouted:

"Howd thy lip! I'll work when I like and play when I like. There'd be plenty to eat till I'm workin' again if we didna waste brass feedin' them as should be in t' union!"

In the silence that followed Joe's outburst the angry man and woman heard a little broken moan, and saw the old man's shrivelled frame shrink smaller in the bare, high-backed arm-chair, where he sat blinking through the mist in his eyes at the flickering fire.

'Lina felt a pain at her heart for a moment, for he was her father, after all; and Joe went rather aimlessly into the back kitchen, as if to end the discussion, but in half-an-hour the cruel words were forgotten except by the one who was not intended to hear them.

The Union! No, he was old and poor and helpless, and nobody in the world seemed to want him any more, but there was somewhere better than that if he really had to go. It was a fine afternoon, and he thought he would go out for a bit and try and think about it.

It was no intention of his that took him past the workhouse on the outskirts of the town. He only wanted to get into the fields beyond, down there by the river. He could think better there, for the river banks were part of the picture that he could see so clearly when he looked back at the time beyond the mists.

But as he passed that great, cold building, with its high walls and narrow, barred windows, he turned his head away with a shudder, and looked towards the river, sparkling in the bright September sun. He tottered on down the road, stopping every now and then to lean upon his stick while he took fresh breath, and so, by slow stages, he made his way out of the town and nearly half-a-mile along the field-path till he came to the shaky little foot-bridge which crossed the river just above the weir.

There had often been a talk about repairing the broken hand rail of the bridge, and many a one had said that somebody would be drowned through it before it was mended. So it happened that there was quite an outcry when old Binns Hedle's body was found down by the weir the next morning.

It was a sad business, they all said, but, after all, "t' owd mon's time was very nigh," as a gossip said to 'Lina on the day of the funeral over the cake and cheap wine, and perhaps she was right. Nobody missed 'Lina's father after a week or so, and that would not have been the case if some promising lad or lass, or the bread-winner of a family, had stumbled through the rickety hand-rail into the deep, dark water in which the poor old fellow who wasn't wanted in this world had found his way to the next.

G. H. P.

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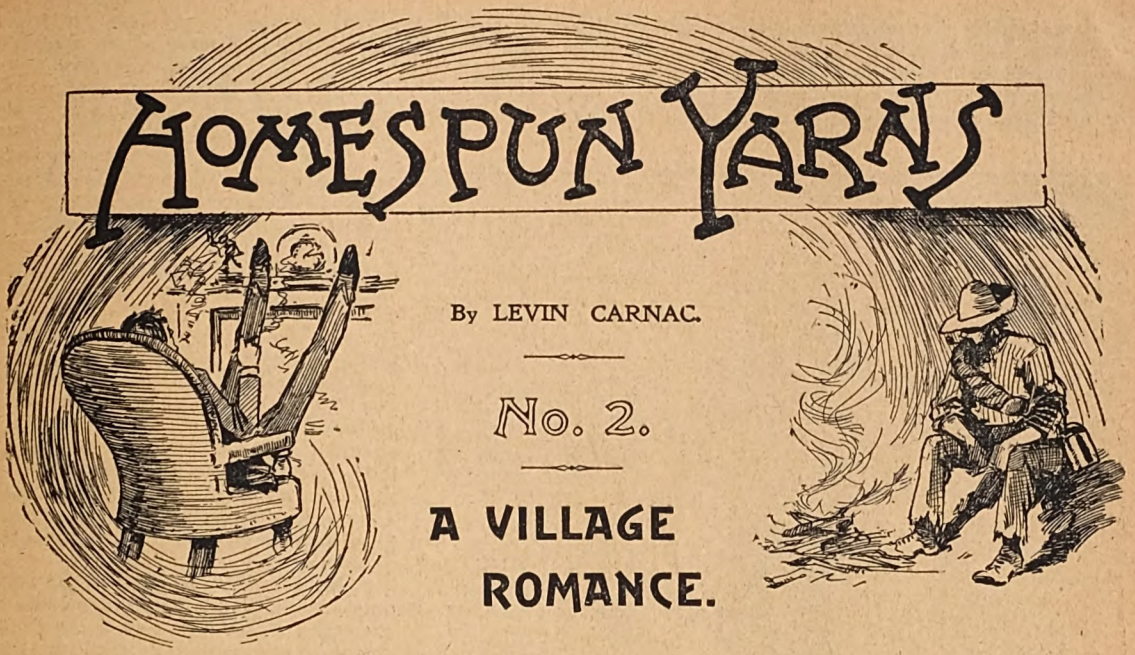

By LEVIN CARNAC.

No. 2.

A VILLAGE ROMANCE.

In the summer of '95, being weary for the time of foreign travel, I decided to spend the early weeks of the autumn in renewing my acquaintance with the pastoral beauties of the Western counties, which four hundred years ago were the Debatable Land of the Welsh border, and in due course I found myself located for a few days in a pretty, out-of-the-way little village, lying about half a day's walk from the spot where William of Longland sat in the olden time on the western slopes of the Cotswolds and dreamed the vision of Piers Ploughman.

It was while I was examining the old brasses and time-worn tombs of an ancient church that I made the acquaintance of the narrator of the tale which I am about to relate. He was the rector of the parish, and as fine a specimen of the English country parson as one would meet with in a long day's march.

Of course he was in love with the antiquities of his own church, and an interesting discussion of these, in which he did most of the talking, resulted in an improvement of our acquaintance, and a request that he should lunch with me at my inn and join me in my afternoon exploration of one of the neighbouring valleys.

He accepted, and during the meal our conversation turned on the somewhat well-worn topic of the relative merits of town and country life. When we got out into the fields, he took up the thread of our discussion again, replying to a statement that I had hazarded as to the lack of human interest in the life of isolated villages.

"I grant you," said he, "that in such a place as this, for instance, we lack the intense interest which springs from the complicated conditions of life in great towns, but we villagers are by no means without both tragedies and comedies, which, though played on a smaller stage and by fewer characters, are just as full of pathos as the dramas of town society. If you like I will tell you of one that was played out a few years ago in what is now my own parish. As it turned out it was all comedy, but it might easily have become a tragedy for all that."

"Nothing I should like better," I replied, and without further introduction he began the story which is set out here as he told it to me during that afternoon ramble.

"About ten years ago a young lady artist took up her quarters in the village down yonder for the purpose of studying rural scenery from nature, and after a while she found the time hang so heavily on her hands that, for lack of better diversion, she started a flirtation with an unworldly curate, who some two years before had come from Oxford to try his 'prentice hand on the villagers of Arden-on-Severn.

"He was an impressionable man of about thirty-three, younger than his years, fairly good-looking, and interesting withal. At least, so the fair artist seemed to find him, for she certainly allowed the affair to go beyond the limits of a mere casual flirtation. In fact, I am afraid I must say that either she was much more in earnest about it than he gave her any reason to be, or else she was making a most unjustifiable use of her opportunities for amusing herself at his expense.

"For his part I am able to say that he was perfectly heart-whole when she had done her worst. He had no thought of making love to anyone, and moreover she was by no means the sort of girl who would have attracted him under any circumstances. He had simply extended to her the usual courtesies demanded by the occasion; but these, whether for amusement or some more serious reason, she chose to exaggerate into the attentions of an undeclared lover.

"After a month or so of innocent dalliance on his part and what may have been serious enterprise on hers, he woke to the uncomfortable conviction that the young lady was beginning to look upon him as the lawful captive of her bow and spear, and, being in no wise disposed to regard himself as such, he gave her indirectly,

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but unmistakably, to understand that she had jumped to a conclusion which was by no means warranted by the circumstances of the case.

"She concealed what chagrin she might have felt with all the art of one who had graduated in the best

They tramped away over the wet field-paths.

society; but that she must have felt the failure of her little enterprise you will see by the time I have done my story. There must be a great deal of truth in that savage saying about 'a woman scorned,' or Miss Gray, as I may as well call her, would never have so far forgotten herself, as a lady and a Christian, as to seek the mean and unjust revenge that she tried to take for the slight that she fancied had been put upon her.

"The day before she left the village, the then rector gave a sort of garden-party in the vicarage grounds to the Sunday-school children and their teachers. Among these were two maiden sisters, who were quite the Dorcases of the village, and between them and the curate a strong, healthy friendship had existed ever since their work had brought them together. The fact that they were neither very young, pretty, nor well off, made their friendship all the more attractive in the young parson's eyes.

"Nevertheless, two more sweetly, womanly women never existed, and how it came to pass that neither of them had ever married was a mystery to everyone but themselves. The younger of them, Dora, was, at the time I speak of, a month or so over thirty-two, and her sister was nearly five years older.

"Just as the garden party was breaking up, a sharp, sudden shower, such as we often have in the West, came on, and by some combination of chances the curate had to choose between offering the protection of his umbrella to Dora Lester or to Miss Gray. Without a moment's hesitation, he offered it to the elder lady and the older friend, and in doing so altered the whole course of his future life.

"As they tramped away over the wet field-paths towards Miss Dora's home she playfully rallied the curate—as such a good friend well might without offence—on the village gossip that had of late connected his name with that of the young lady artist from London. The curate, being perhaps still a little sore on the subject, answered, with a good deal more earnestness than was warranted by the circumstances:

"'My dear Miss Dora, I may as well say, once for all, that I have no more idea of marrying Miss Gray than I have of proposing to my landlady. In the first place, I am not in love with her, and in the second place, she would be about as impossible a clergyman's wife as one could very well conceive. When I marry—if I ever do—I shall seek someone who can join me in my work as well as in my home—someone like you, for instance, if there were any chance of your having me.'

"The last words were, of course, spoken in jest, for Miss Dora was such a very pronounced old maid in those days that the idea of their being taken in earnest never for a moment crossed her companion's mind. If he had had a little more experience of the ways and weaknesses of womankind he would have chosen his words more carefully, and understood better than he did the flutter of the little hand that was tucked under his arm.

"When Miss Gray reached home that evening there was shaping itself in the depths of her slighted soul as venomous a plot for the destruction of an innocent woman's piece of mind as feline malice ever conceived.

"She possessed another and a much more dangerous gift besides the power of counterfeiting nature on canvas. She could imitate almost any kind of handwriting with wonderful fidelity, and she decided to employ this contraband skill in playing what, by virtue of some curious moral squint, she seems to have regarded as merely a pungent practical joke on the curate and the old maid.

"The idea was probably suggested by a note from the former which she had received a week or two back about some sketches he had lent her. You would hardly believe that a lady, however jealous she might be, would do such a thing, and yet it is a fact that after an hour's careful practice she actually sat down and deliberately wrote a proposal of marriage to Dora Lester in an excellent imitation of the curate's handwriting.

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"The next morning she drove off betimes to the station, calling at the post-office on her way and meeting there the curate, to whom she said good-bye with a cordiality that was almost tenderness. Then she went on her way, leaving behind her the elements of a very pretty little rural tragedy or comedy, as the Fates might decide to make it.

"Twenty-four hours later, the chief actor in it received a letter from Miss Dora, which first amazed and then saddened him beyond measure. It was quite a short note, and ran somewhat in this style:

"DEAR MR. MAXWELL,—Your letter has so completely taken my breath away that I am quite unable to answer it as soon as you ask me to. I had no notion that what you said on our walk last evening was meant for anything more than one of your jokes. As the matter is really such a serious one for both of us, don't you think it would be best to talk it quietly over before I say anything definite about it? If you agree with me you will find me at home all the evening.

"Always your friend, whatever my final answer may be,

"DORA LESTER.

"I will not attempt to describe the state of mind in which the hapless curate passed the greater part of the morning, for if I did I should only fail. Of course he saw the cruel trick that had been played on this unoffending woman and himself, and equally, of course, he was not long in guessing whose hand had done the mischief. Finally, as was usual with him in difficult situations, he decided to take a long stretch over the hills and fight the matter out with himself.

"When he came back doubt had given place to resolve, and the angry pain at his heart had been driven out by the great joy that comes so seldom into an earnest man's life.

"That evening there was no happier man and woman in all the West Country than Dora Lester and Frank Maxwell as they shook hands at Dora's garden-gate, and wished each other *au revoir* till the morrow.

"Did Miss Gray ever hear how well her little scheme succeeded? Well, yes, she did. Maxwell took his wife up to town the summer after they were married, and one day as they were having afternoon tea with a friend, who should walk in but the young lady to whose wickedness it was due that the best wife and mother on the country side did not waste her sweetness on the desert air of single blessedness. It is only common justice to Miss Gray to say that she received the news with an air of pleased surprise that was every whit as well counterfeited as the forgery that had so woefully failed in its aim."

"And now," said the rector of Arden, halting at the top of a green lane that led down to the most delightful of country parsonages, "you have made the acquaintance of Frank Maxwell already. Come in and have some tea, and I will introduce you to Mrs. Maxwell."

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The Shepherd's Love Story.

A girl and a man were riding along Bauhinia Creek, on a station in Western Queensland.

Suddenly the girl leant forward upon the saddle, looked about her curiously, and pulled up her horse.

"Ugh! what a horribly desolate place—enough to give one the blues," said she, with a shudder.

It was a desolate scene. A dense mulga scrub had been growing there at one time, but now the ground was encumbered with leafless, gnarled mulga trees that had been felled to feed the sheep during the big drought of 1884, '85, '86. Herbage was now struggling to grow amidst the withered tree-trunks.

The foundations of an old woolshed, the remains of a horse-yard, the uprights of a shepherd's hut were there, and a dilapidated stake fence (which had inclosed a sheep-yard) had fallen in, amidst a luxuriant crop of horehound that was growing on the old sheep-camp.

An air of misery and a strange hush was about the place; even the birds seemed silent. A heap of rough logs lay piled up near to the old horse-yard.

"I'll try a jump over these logs!" said the girl gaily, as she was backing her horse. "I say, you go first and give me a lead, will you?"

To her surprise, the man quietly took her rein and led her horse carefully round the heap.

"Shouldn't spoil sport!" pouted the girl. "Why did you do that? It was mean of you. Why did you? Goodness me, you're in a brown study!"

The man was thinking deeply; he sighed, and nodded his head once or twice.

"W—what?" said he absently. "I beg your pardon. Oh, why did I lead your horse aside? Oh, I hate to see a woman jumping—it's dangerous."

"That wasn't it," said the girl shrewdly. "Tell me, or I'll go back and jump it half a dozen times."

The man's hand tightened its hold of the rein.

"No," said he, "I'll tell you."

* * * * * *

"Fifteen years ago," he began, "I was managing this station for the owners. In those days we had no paddocks, and, consequently, all the sheep had to be shepherded—dingoes were thick.

"We had about sixty shepherds, and now and then one would become insane, and cut his throat, or hang himself to the wall-plate of the hut.

"Poor beggars, not much wonder they did—living alone, and only seeing the ration carrier once a fortnight, and stray travellers passing.

"I was down in Brisbane on business about that time, and was staying at one of the big hotels. There were a lot of young fellows there from up North. They were living at the rate of two thousand a year—spending their money freely; cabs and theatres, suppers and champagne every night.

"There were about half a dozen of them, but one amongst them took my fancy. He was a tall, strapping young fellow, with a well-bred look about him—dark, crispy hair, humorous grey eyes, and the gayest voice I ever heard in my life—a voice in a thousand. He was in the highest spirits, just like a boy on a holiday, and you felt he was a fellow you could trust your life with.

"These fellows dined at the table next to mine, and one night they were joking about being hard up. They had been to the races during the day, and lost, I fancy.

"But they were just as merry, apparently, and the one with the gay voice kept them in a roar of laughter After a little while they all trooped out.

"I beckoned to the waiter.

"'Who is that gentleman that went out first?' said I.

"'Tall gent, sir? In evening dress, sir? Dark moustache, grey eyes, sir?'

"'Yes.'

"'Mr. Dolan—Jack Dolan—from up North; squatter, I fancy, sir. Very liberal gentleman, plenty of money, sir.'

"That night I saw my grey-eyed friend with a party of ladies and gentlemen at the theatre. He was paying a lot of attention to the girl he sat next to; she was very pretty, but there was something cruel-looking about her mouth that repelled me.

"'Who is the girl in the fluffy yellow get-up opposite?' said I to a friend.

"'Forget her name,' said he; 'she's engaged to young Dolan.'

"'Then I pity Dolan,' I thought.

"That night I was introduced to Dolan and his friends in the hotel bar, and after we'd had a good many bottles

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of wine, I found they were going the pace a bit too fast for me, so I left them.

"I went home next morning. A few months later I had to go down to Brisbane again. I wanted a lot of new shepherds to send up to the station.

"To my great surprise, Dolan was there still with his friends; but the gay tone of his voice hadn't the same old ring, and there was a line in his forehead that was not there before. I couldn't make him out. He was spending money as freely as ever.

"Next morning, early, was the time I had advertised for the shepherds to apply. I was sitting waiting for them to turn up. A knock came. 'Come in!' I shouted, and in strolled Dolan, smoking a cigar.

"'Good-morning,' said he.

"'Morning, Dolan. Where did you get to last night? Feel rather out of sorts this morning, eh? Come and have something?'

"'No thanks,' said he. 'I'm here on business. By to-day's paper I see that you want shepherds.'

"'Yes,' said I; 'do you know of any?'

"'Yes, one.'

"'Good man?'

"'Pretty fair—used to sheep.'

"'Old?'

"'No, a young man.'

"'Steady?'

"'Well, yes; an occasional spree.'

"'Got a good dog?'

"'Yes.'

"'All right,' said I. 'It's a pound a week and rations. Single hut. Where is the man to be seen?'

"'I'm the man,' said Dolan quietly.

"'Nonsense; you're joking.'

"'Never more serious,' said he, taking the ash carefully off his cigar. 'I want to get clean away—I'm at the end of my tether. I can't whine—it's my own fault.'

"'It's that girl's,' said I to myself.

"I'd have asked him, but it's a bad game asking too many questions in Queensland. I gave him the billet. He came up and lived quietly by himself, never saying what he'd been, nor bragging.

"After he had been shepherding a good while, the ration-carrier came and told me that he was getting to look miserable, so I rode out one day and told him to take a holiday for a month, which he did.

"When he came back he seemed worse than ever.

"'What is up with you, Dolan?' I said to him one day. 'Why don't you pull yourself together and get out of this back-country? What about the girl down below? Look here, I'll lend you some money, and help you to get a fair start. What's the good of wasting your life here?'

"'The girl is married,' said Dolan, 'months ago. No, thanks, I don't want any help. I'm as well off here as anywhere.'

"I saw he didn't like being questioned.

"One day I was riding home. There had been a great storm up the creek that day. I saw a black fellow coming towards me from the direction of Dolan's hut.

"'Look here, boss, I been alonga Dolan's yard. Dolan nowhere. Sheep all huddled up—not let out. Dolan gone, I tink.'

"'I'll discharge Dolan, see if I don't,' said I angrily; and I got an old shepherd to come with me, and we went to let the sheep out. True enough there were all the poor brutes of sheep yarded up, looking wretchedly ill.

I was vowing vengeance on Dolan; the crows were cawing noisily in the scrub, and there were some great brutes of eagle-hawks hovering about, when suddenly Dolan's dog came towards me, whining.

"I got off my horse and followed him. He led me to the bank of the creek. . . . There was poor Dolan lying dead. He had been struck by lightning. He had got his discharge right enough—from above.

"So the shepherd and I buried him close to the old horse-yard, where those logs are—that was his grave."

"Poor fellow," said the girl, when the man ceased. "Did you ever hear of the girl again—the one he was fond of?"

"I met her a year afterwards. She was with her husband, the man she threw poor Dolan over for—old enough to be her grandfather, and enormously rich.

"I got a fellow to introduce them to me, and I began talking to her. When I told her I was from the West, she asked me if I had ever met Jack Dolan.

"'Yes,' I said.

"'What was he doing?' she asked me, glancing at her husband cautiously.

"'He was a common shepherd,' I said.

"She went very pale.

"'Where is he now?' she said.

"'In the better land,' said I.

"'Is he dead?' she whispered. 'How did he die? I—I never heard.'

"'He was killed by lightning.'

"She caught her breath, and put her fan to her face.

"'A dreadful fate—a dreadful fate,' she said.

"'There are worse fates,' said I. 'He might have married a heartless woman,' and I looked her straight in the eyes, and she——

"Why, you are crying! Now, you know, that is foolish—it's years ago—you never knew the two people concerned. Poor Dolan! he's better off now, and as for the girl——"

"She was my sister," said the girl brokenly. "She died some years ago. She spoke of Jack Dolan when she was dying. She—she really loved him. Don't they say that those who love each other dearly become re-united in Heaven?"

But the man was silent.

W. Bush.

A PRIZE FOR ARTISTS.

The Editor of *Short Stories* offers a prize of £2 2s for the best set of six decorative head-pieces, corner-pieces, or tail-pieces suitable for reproduction in the paper. Competitors may send all head-pieces, or all tail-pieces, or all corner-pieces, or some of each. The head-pieces should contain a space for the title of the story.

The winner will not only receive a cheque for £2 2s., but will possibly have the opportunity of securing a considerable amount of further work in connection with the various publications issued from this office.

Style, shape, and size, are left entirely to the competitors.

Attempts should reach the Editor, marked "Decorative," by Monday, October 3rd.

Should the quality of the competition justify it, a number of consolation prizes will be awarded.

All attempts become the property of the Editor.

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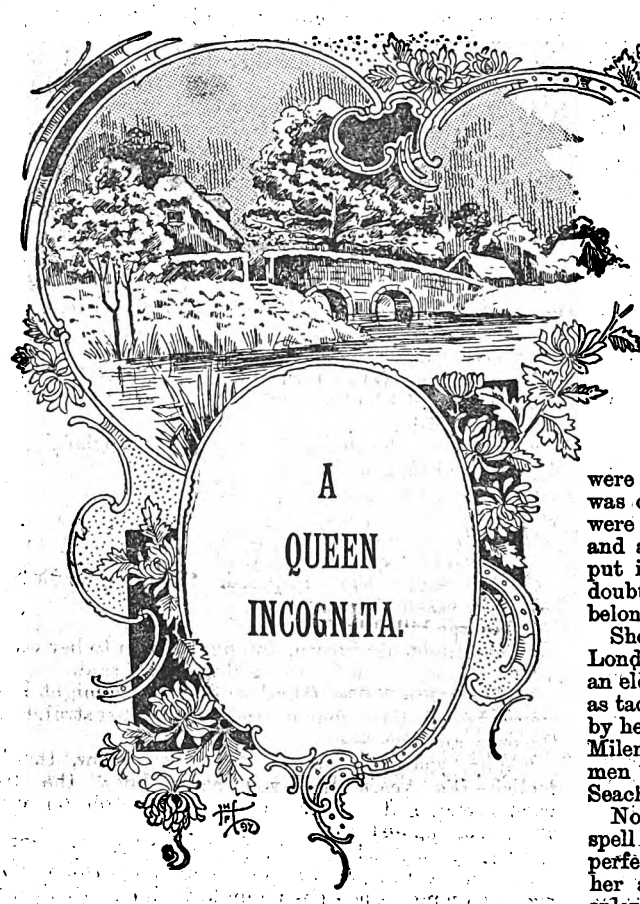

A QUEEN INCOGNITA.

ONE fine day in July a report ran like wildfire through the little town of Seachester that Fenton's Folly was taken—actually taken—and so late in the season, too. But the news was undoubtedly correct. An army of gardeners descended upon the grounds. The house was well and substantially furnished; but one van-load after another arrived of wonderful and beautiful articles.

Statuettes in carved ivory, in old Dresden china, or in antique bronze were set out upon the table and decorated the *étagères*. A number of books, chiefly French, in gay movable covers of silk or of velvet, an elaborate smoking service in wrought silver, and other costly adornments, made their appearance in the chief reception-rooms.

Of course, the quiet little seaside resort was thrown into a regular commotion by all these extraordinary proceedings. Who and what would the coming stranger or strangers prove to be? The arrival of a case of choice cigarettes from Roumania was set down as positive proof that there was to be at least one masculine individual amongst the new-comers, as were also the arrangements made for the accommodation of sundry dogs and horses.

And who on earth was the future tenant of Fenton's Folly—an artist? a foreign prince? a Yankee millionaire on his travels? Each and all of these conjectures were advanced in turn. And Mrs. Armstrong, the widow of a London surgeon, who had been a prominent personage in his profession, and was herself looked upon as one of the leaders of Seachester society, exclaimed enthusiastically while discussing the subject one day: "Suppose it should be one of the dear princes come down incognito to spend a little time on the coast." And really her supposition did not seem altogether improbable.

At last the riddle was solved—at least, so far as the sex and the number of persons that were coming to stay at the Folly were concerned. There was only one, and that one was a woman. The dogs were there—a superb Newfoundland, a black poodle, and a Dachshund—and the horses, six in number, duly put in an appearance, and the cigarettes were an undoubted fact; but all these masculine accessories belonged to a female owner.

She arrived late one evening by the last express from London, accompanied by a host of servants, including an elderly and inscrutable maid, stiff as a grenadier and as taciturn as the Sphinx. The lady's name was stated by her major-domo in making purchases to be Madame Milena; but that was too palpably an assumed cognomen to deceive even the unsophisticated denizens of Seachester.

Nobody caught a glimpse of her for several days. A spell of rainy weather, such as often mars the otherwise perfect beauty of an English summer, set in just after her arrival, and kept her within doors. Finally a splendid cloudless day, shining above a sea where the waves broke in lines of pearly foam not high enough nor strong enough to dismay an infant, lured the new-comer to make her first essay at sea-bathing.

Her *début* on the stage of Seachester life created a sensation. She drove down to her previously engaged cabin in the prettiest possible low pony-carriage, attended by her maid, and so wrapped up and veiled that nobody could even make a guess as to what she looked like. But when she emerged from her bath-house, ready equipped for her plunge in the sea, and the maid drew her peignoir of Turkish towelling from her shoulders, there stood revealed the loveliest woman by whom the sands at Seachester had been trodden for many a long day.

She was in the prime of life, apparently something over twenty-five, and was a radiant brunette, with magnificent large black eyes, a glowing peachy complexion, dazzling white teeth, and a host of dimples that came and went in a most bewitching way with her every word and smile. Her bathing-costume of dark crimson serge, though fashioned in the most decorous manner possible, with sleeves to the wrist, an ample skirt falling below the knee, and wide trousers, just giving a glimpse of a matchless foot and ankle, revealed the fact that her figure was of faultless symmetry.

She could swim like an otter, or like her own great Newfoundland, who stood on the shore whimpering dolefully, and only restrained by the chain in the firm

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grasp of the maid from plunging in to drag his adored mistress out of that treacherous water.

It must be confessed that Madame Milena's first appearance in public at Seachester awakened a vast amount of prejudice against her in the minds of the female society-leaders of the place. A vague idea that there was something wrong with the lady and her antecedents spread universally abroad like exhalation. In the first place she was a great deal too handsome in too striking and showy a style.

It was not proper, argued the British matrons in solemn conclave assembled, to have such big eyes and such a bright colour and such quantities of hair. Secondly, no woman who was really respectable would ever smoke; and though Admiral Brent ventured upon a mild remonstrance in the way of mentioning the well-known penchant of Russian ladies for cigarette-smoking, he was put down at once, mildly but firmly.

"Russian ladies? Horrid creatures that spoiled good tea by putting lemon in it, and that think their Czar is of more account than our glorious Queen. Why, the only daughter-in-law that ever gave our beloved Queen any trouble was the Duchess of Edinburgh; and no wonder, for she was a Russian princess."

So the old Admiral held his peace, and contented himself with casting an admiring eye on Madame Milena whenever he chanced to meet her.

But the real cause of the prejudice that existed in so virulent a form against the handsome tenant of Fenton's Folly was the mystery that surrounded her. Who was she? Where did she come from? What had brought her to Seachester? To none of these questions had any satisfactory response been given.

The lady kept herself to herself, neither forming acquaintances or receiving visits. She bathed daily in the ocean, she drove out every afternoon, either in her pony-carriage or in a landau, drawn by two superb black horses, and she was always accompanied by her dogs or else attended by her groom. Also, she made long excursions on horseback to all the interesting places in the environs. She showed herself to be a faultless horsewoman; and, as her exquisite figure was set off to full advantage by a riding-habit, whose fashion and fit betrayed the work of the best of the London artistes in that line, her appearance in it sufficed to embitter still farther the minds of the dames of Seachester against her. They one and all declared that Madame Milena was not, and could not be, a respectable person.

Of all these worthy matrons Mrs. Armstrong was probably the most uneasy and the most perturbed concerning the new-comer. Her eldest son, Frederick, who was just twenty-two, had manifested at once a most reprehensible tendency to admire the brilliant beauty of the obnoxious lady.

To be sure the infatuation was not likely to produce any serious effects. Frederick's divinity was as unapproachable as she was dazzling. All that he could do was to linger in the neighbourhood of Fenton's Folly watching for a chance to obtain a glimpse of her on her way to take her daily bath or her drives or rides. Occasionally he would hire a horse and follow her discreetly at a distance in the hope that something would happen—that her horse might run away, or her stirrup break, or some other trifling accident might occur, so that he might have a chance of approaching her, or, perhaps, even speaking to her.

Moreover, he commenced a portrait of her, which, as he was a young fellow of very real artistic talent, was not at all bad in the point of view of a likeness, though naturally defective as a work of art. All this aroused Mrs. Armstrong's dislike and irritation of feeling against Madame Milena to the very highest pitch, though the lady remained in complete unconsciousness of her young adorer's infatuation, and had never done anything to cause or encourage it except by being much more beautiful than most other women.

Everyone should Read
"M. A. P."
THE NEW SOCIETY PAPER.
Edited by T. P. O'CONNOR.
Every Thursday.
PRICE
ONE PENNY.

At last a paragraph in the well-known Society paper, *Scraps and Scandals*, which Mrs. Armstrong was in the habit of perusing weekly, gave that worthy lady's nerves a severe shock. It ran as follows:

"We have just learnt that Mademoiselle Morenski, the leading dancer at the Paris Grand Opera, is spending her vacation incognito at one of the most retired and healthful of our seaside resorts. The accomplished artiste has never completely recovered from the sprain she underwent by falling during the last rehearsals of *Diana and Endymion*, and she is trying what a season of total seclusion and repose will effect towards her restoration to health. As Mademoiselle Morenski is a Russian by birth, she is, as is customary with persons of that nation, a thorough linguist, and speaks English to perfection. We are happy to learn that she is rapidly recovering, and that her appearance at the Grand Opera will take place early in October."

"There, now," cried Mrs. Armstrong, stabbing with a fierce forefinger the paragraph in question as she thrust the paper literally under Frederick's nose. "We know at last who Madame Milena really is—a ballet-dancer. So, of course, she smokes cigarettes and drinks absinthe, and does all kind of horrid things. Frederick, I command you—now, do you hear?—I positively command you never so much as look at that dreadful creature again."

But, as fate would have it, Frederick was on that very day afforded his opportunity, long desired and watched for of rendering some service to the lady of his dreams. After taking her daily bath, Madame Milena, followed by her maid, and accompanied by her superb Newfound-

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land dog, strolled down to the pier, and, in compliance with the eager solicitations of her pet, she amused herself for some little time by throwing sticks into the sea for him to swim after and bring back to her.

Frederick Armstrong, hovering discreetly in the distance, looked on with intense interest, gaining fresh ideas for his unfinished portrait with every glance. Suddenly the dog, after seizing the piece of wood which his mistress had just thrown into the water for him, instead of swimming alertly back to land as usual with his prize, began to struggle and beat the water with his paws and to bark piteously, and gave other signs of distress. Evidently there was something wrong, and the animal was in danger of drowning.

"He's got caught in a tangle of seaweed, or else in a floating rope," remarked a bystander. "If he don't get loose soon it's all up with him."

"What! Prince—my dear Prince!" cried his mistress in wild agitation. "Will nobody save him for me?"

"There isn't any boat near at hand, ma'am," remarked the first speaker, "and it would take a good swimmer and a cool hand to go out there just for a dog. It's risky—that's what it is."

Madame Milena turned upon him, pale to her very lips, and with her great eyes all ablaze.

"Only a dog? I tell you, man, I have not many friends that I value as highly as I do Prince. Here, Anastasia, take my cloak—I'll swim out after him myself rather than stand here to see him perish."

But other help was at hand. Frederick Armstrong was an expert and fearless swimmer; so, only waiting to throw off his coat and to unlace and cast aside his shoes, he sprang straightway from the pier and hastened to Prince's assistance. He was just in time. The poor animal's anxious barks had already been exchanged for a series of feeble yelps, and the great curly head had more than once been submerged by the waves of the incoming tide when Frederick reached him. Seizing the dog by the collar he managed to drag him to a shelving part of the beach, whence it was easy to gain firm footing on dry land. The rescuer and the rescued were met by Madame Milena, who first covered her pet with caresses, and then turned and grasped Frederick's wet hand with enthusiastic gratitude.

"How can I ever thank you enough," she cried, "for saving my poor Prince for me? He was a present to me from the Prince of Wales, but I love him for his own sake as much as I value him for that of his donor. But I must not keep you standing here in your wet clothes. Hurry home, and, perhaps, some other time I shall be able to tell you how deeply I am obliged to you."

And, with a wave of her hand, the beauty hastened away, followed by Prince, whose drooping tail and ears betrayed the fact that he was rather discomfited by his adventure.

To describe the indignation wherewith Mrs. Armstrong heard of the incident of the Newfoundland's rescue is a task impossible to any ordinary pen. That her son—her son, the offspring of Dr. Archibald Armstrong, who would certainly have been knighted had he lived, and to whom there was once talk of an offer of a baronetcy, and whose mother had been one of the Greshams of Warwickshire—Mrs. Armstrong always prided herself greatly on her family—should have made himself conspicuous after that fashion by running such risks to save a mere dog, an animal belonging to a creature—a woman who was certainly an adventuress. It was simply unendurable. And the irate matron decided in her own mind that she would keep a good look-out in future over Master Frederick's movements.

That young gentleman, being none the worse for his dip in the sea, and all unconscious of the extra supervision of which he was the object, determined to put his adventure to profit by obtaining some extra studies and sketches for the portrait, the execution of which was absorbing all his time and thoughts. He had not, indeed, ventured to call upon Madame Milena, beyond stopping one day to inquire after the health and well-doing of the dog that he had saved. But between Prince and himself the friendliest possible relations had been established. The Newfoundland never failed to salute his preserver with a series of bounds and barks and ecstatic caresses, unless, indeed, he were in the company of his mistress, when his greeting would be confined to a vehement wagging of his great plume-like tail.

The young artist got in the way of stopping nearly every day at the garden gate to bring Prince a biscuit or a lump of sugar, and so established himself on a footing of intimacy with that jealous guardian of the premises.

He had found out the fact that Madame Milena was in the habit of taking her after-dinner coffee in the drawing-room, the long French windows of which opened on the garden, and were in fine weather always left wide open. With the room fully illuminated by the light of the great lamps Frederick was enabled, once established in the garden, to study at his leisure the beautiful original he was trying to reproduce on canvas as she sipped her coffee, and—alas and alas—enjoyed her after-dinner cigarette.

Seated on the roof of Prince's house, and with his canine friend nestling beside him, he spent evening after evening in sketching the fair features of the unapproachable beauty. The servants never frequented the gardens after nightfall; and if one of them chanced to come there the identity of Mr. Armstrong was well known to them as that of Prince's preserver, and so he was never molested or even questioned.

One pleasant evening in September Frederick, on arriving at his usual post, found that he would not be able to prosecute his artistic studies as usual. The radiant lady of his dreams was not alone. A very magnificent, though elderly gentleman, with grey hair and whiskers, commanding figure and a uniform blazing with gold embroideries, who had apparently been the guest of Madame Milena at dinner, was drinking coffee and sipping liqueur with her, on the evident footing of an old friend.

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Frederick in vain tried to catch, as he had vainly done a dozen times before, the graceful line of the swan-like neck and the perfect poise of the stately head. For Madame Milena did not remain as usual quietly seated, but, absorbed as she was in talking with her guest, she changed her position a dozen times a minute, and the animation of her eyes, and the flashing brilliancy of her smile, set off as it was by her dazzling teeth, and her ever varying dimples, made her face a subject almost beyond portrayal.

Frederick was just about to throw down his pencil in despair and to start off for home when his wrist was caught in a sudden grasp. Prince started up and growled, and if the young artist had not interposed he would undoubtedly have flown at the intruder, who was no other than Mrs. Armstrong. She was in a state of vehement indignation, and was almost beside herself with excitement.

"So I have found you out at last, you wicked, infatuated boy," she panted. "This is the way you spend your evenings, is it? Oh, that your poor father were only alive to compel you to relinquish such demoralizing pursuits. But as to the creature that has ensnared you, I mean to give her a piece of my mind at once and thoroughly."

And off she started, unheeding Frederick's efforts to restrain her. Up the low steps leading from the garden to the drawing-room windows she went at full speed, followed by her sorely abashed son. In a moment they stood in the presence of Madame Milena. She rose from her seat, imposing and dignified, in her dress of rich lilac brocade, adorned with draperies of costly white lace. There were diamond roses shining in the glossy masses of her jet-black hair, and the slender hands that held the folds of a purple mantle, embroidered with gold that had just slipped from her shoulders, were ablaze with splendid rings. Her guest rose, too, and they both looked at Mrs. Armstrong in amazement.

"What is it that you want with me?" asked the lady.

"I come, madam, to reclaim my son," cried Mrs. Armstrong; "to set him free from the net of your fascinations. Oh, I know he has never spoken to you but once, and that was when he put his life in peril to pull your dog out of the water. But he thinks of nothing but you. He is spending his days in trying to paint your portrait, and every evening he lurks in your garden, at the serious risk of taking cold, just to get a glimpse of you and to make a pencil-sketch of you."

"Is this true?" asked the lady, turning upon Frederick the full effulgence of her great, dark eyes.

The words and glance drove Mrs. Armstrong quite out of her senses.

"True? Of course it is—every word of it. And what are you doing here in this quiet, respectable place, turning the head of a foolish boy by your looks and ways? I think you might better go back to where you belong without loss of time. We are not used to mysterious strangers at Seachester. And who are you, madam, anyhow, I should like to know? What is your name?"

The lady advanced a step or two towards the speaker with an indescribable stateliness of gesture. The diamonds in her hair flashed as though they formed a diadem, and the trailing purple cloak assumed the aspect of a royal mantle.

"My name is Anna Milena Elizabeth of Montenegro," she answered with dignity; "and I am the Queen of Moldavia."

Her grandiose-looking guest came forward and raised one of her hands respectfully to his lips.

"And I, General Count Milenko, of the bodyguard of King Charles of Roumania, sent by my gracious sovereign on a special mission to her Majesty, am here to attest to her identity and to protect her from further insult."

How Mrs. Armstrong got out of the drawing-room of Fenton's Folly she herself never exactly understood. Her son lingered behind her for a moment and hesitatingly addressed the Queen.

"May I crave your Majesty's pardon," he said, "for having intruded on your grounds and for having tried to paint your portrait? I did not know."

"You are forgiven," she replied, with one of her bewitching smiles. "But you must promise never to do so any more."

A few weeks later *Scraps and Scandals* contained the following paragraph:

"Queen Anna of Moldavia, who has been spending some weeks incognito at the seaside resort of Seachester, on the north coast, leaves England, we understand, in a day or two to join her royal consort, King Alexis, in Paris. He has been paying a visit to the King of Denmark, and the royal pair will proceed to Aix-les-Bains to join there Queen Anna's sister, the Grand Duchess Feodor of Russia, and their two little sons, the Princes Nicholas and Michael. Her Majesty's health having been severely shaken by the effects of an attack of influenza from which she suffered last winter her physicians prescribed for her a period of total repose and seclusion, as well as a prolonged course of sea-bathing. We are pleased to learn that the healthful breezes and the ocean baths of Seachester have completely restored the royal lady to health."

Two years later Frederick Armstrong's portrait of the Queen of Moldavia was one of the sensations of the Paris Salon, and won for the youthful artist the honours of a medal. The winsome sovereign, on the occasion of her many visits to Paris, had consented to give the painter, young and unknown though he was, a series of sittings, the result of which was that he achieved a masterpiece.

Poor Mrs. Armstrong has never been able to forgive herself for her hostile invasion of Fenton's Folly. But for that she might have been received at the Court of Moldavia with the cordiality due to the mother of the rescuer of Prince; she might have been able to stun her acquaintances and associates on her return to England by speaking in an off-hand manner of "my friend the Queen."

H. Clavers.

All Lovers of Good Fiction

Should read the new serial story just starting in "Home Notes," entitled: "THE HERMITS OF GRAY'S INN." It is written by G. B. Burgin, a writer whose work is pleasantly familiar to a large portion of the reading public. Among the popular stories he has published may be mentioned: "Old Man's Marriage," "Fortune's Football," "The Cattle Man." The story is of interest to men and women alike, and is of a very original character.

Order a copy of *Home NOTES* from your newsagent.

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JOHN'S LITTLE SCHEME.

"Do you find the sofa pillow comfortable, dear? And does the shade keep the light from your poor, tired eyes? Have you heard about Mr. Dummer?—not old Mr. Dummer—he was his uncle; not Charles, but William. Charles married Mary Peters—but I'm afraid you're not interested, dear?"

"Oh, ah! Let me see. You said William married——"

"Oh, no!"

Silence, ominous but brief.

"John, the paper says that juvenile crime is on the increase. Well, I know that Dicky Smith stole Julia Welsh's apple the other Sunday, and right in prayer time, too. I don't feel as though I were doing half my duty—the children lack so much that we expect as a matter of course. Yet some of them are so bright. We were talking about postage stamps the other day, and Sammy——"

"Oh, yes, my dear! Quite true. And now, if you don't mind, I think I'll run out for a while. Bad plan, I dare say, to lie down in the evening. Be back in an hour or so."

"I'll have read the paper by that time, and I'll tell you all the news; that'll save your poor eyes and——"

But Chesley was out of earshot, whistling ruefully. If there were two things dear to his heart—beside his wife—they were an early and quiet perusal of the evening paper and a short refreshing nap after the day's office work.

He strolled along wistfully, gazing idly into shop windows, and noticing in one of them two or three phonographs, variously labelled, he sauntered in, dropped his coin in the slot and listened to "There's a good time coming."

"Great idea, isn't it, Chesley?' said someone, slapping him on the back. "Got one of my own; talk into it for an hour or so, typewriter comes in, turn it over to her, go fishing, come back, letters all written. Well, can't you say 'How d'you do,' to a fellow? Don't mind a slap on the back, I hope?" for Chesley was making for the door.

"Oh, no; that's all right. Fact is—just thought of something; see you later."

"Forgot to post his wife's letter, I suppose. Good fellow, Chesley; but frightfully fidgetty and offish since he married," soliloquised Jackson, turning to the phonograph for consolation.

The truth was that an idea had struck Chesley; a ravishing idea, full of delightful possibilities. Why not talk to his wife *per* phonograph instead of *per se*, when she wandered into the mazes of genealogy or upset his cherished nap with mistimed dissertations of philanthropy?

His conception was crude, but there were dazzling suggestions. Her talk, he reflected, ran largely in ruts Of course, the matter called for a certain amount of observation and careful averaging, while the phonographic replies must be, necessarily, of a general and non-committal nature—not that he need worry over that, however, since his share in the conversation was usually vague to the verge of incoherence.

Mrs. Chesley had no reason to complain of her husband's inattention for the next week. Indeed, she confided to one of her friends that "John really seemed to be getting interested in mission work, and to take an active interest in his relatives, too."

Meanwhile, Chesley was working out enough averages to qualify him for a census compiler. After carefully classifying his wife's remarks, he decided upon the following schedule:

Average length of remarks requiring assent, one minute and a half; requiring dissent, five and three-quarters; interjections, one per minute. These three divisions seemed likely to afford sufficient scope; it only remained to give them a certain qualified utterance, a cautious assent and yet a more cautious dissent—in

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snort to model them on the style that marks a good listener—and he was ready to interview the phonograph maker.

"Want an electrical attachment that will start and stop the cylinder at pleasure? And a megaphone that can be heard anywhere in an ordinary-sized room? Oh, yes; I can do it all right; send it home at the end of the week."

"Very well; the sooner the better," Chesley replied.

"Well, some folks have money they don't know what to do with," was all the phonograph maker said to his apprentice.

The phonograph and its attachments came home in due time. It was an easy matter to stow it away under the parlour sofa; the connections at the end of the slender wires could be held in one hand.

Chesley was cautious. He tried interjections to begin with, then isolated phrases; and, growing bolder, a number of remarks in the same strain. Thus he achieved comparative comfort. A nap, of course, was out of the question; but it was much not to be obliged to make verbal comments.

It is true that the phonograph would be a trifle hasty at times, and then again would lag, but that mattered little; his remarks had seldom been exactly placed. He even grew bold—or careless—enough to indulge in surreptitious dozes.

"My dear," remarked his wife one evening, "mamma writes me that her visit is unavoidably postponed."

"Yes?" queried the phonograph.

"I should think that you might show a little more sympathy, John. Dear mamma has not been here since last spring. I'm afraid she didn't enjoy her last visit."

"I hope so."

"Do you mean you hope she did or she didn't? I believe you're more than half asleep!" which was true. Indeed, at the prospect of postponement, John had slipped into tranquil slumber, and the phonograph was having all things its own way.

"I want to take mamma shopping when she does come, and I'd like you to go with us."

"Certainly."

"Why, John! How nice of you! You generally make such a frightful fuss about shopping. Why, it seems as if we were just married, to hear you say it. You used to enjoy it, then."

"Not at all."

"Oh, John! Well, you never made a bother about it, anyhow. That's something to your credit; though I don't think you need have been so f-frank about it—if we have been m-married four months and a-a half!"

"Just so, just so."

"And sometimes I think you don't lo-love me as m-much as you did then——"

"That's right."

"John Chesley! Then that horrid Pilkington woman has been at you again. She's forty if she's a day, and she bleaches her hair."

"Rather tasty, I think, my dear."

"John Chesley, I'm going straight back to mamma to-morrow morning——"

"You couldn't do better."

"And I shall apply at once for a judical separation——"

"Wish you all success, my dear!"

"Don't 'my dear' me, Mr. Chesley! I'm going to my room, and don't you dare come near me! Perhaps some day you'll know what a wife you've l-l-lost——"

"Don't worry about me; I'm all right."

No wonder that Mrs. Chesley slammed the door.

That woke Chesley up. His consciousness came back to him in a flash. The phonograph had betrayed him. He heard it still repeating its senseless chatter. He could stop that, at any rate.

Now, when one has eaten a hearty dinner, the return to consciousness after the ensuing nap does not always imply a return of the power of motion. Therefore the phonograph continued its one-sided conversation, and Chesley lay on the sofa helpless, anxious and perspiring. What had happened? Something very wrong by the way the door had slammed.

What would Kate do next? Would the fiend under the sofa go on or run down? The mischief! She was coming down stairs now. But—yes—hurrah! The terror was running down. If only——" And his wife opened the door.

"John, I didn't know—perhaps you were—talking in your sleep. It wasn't very nice of you"—the phonograph never spoke—"but if you'll only say something—"

A pause—oh, to be able to say one word. Buz-z-z—click! The phonograph takes its innings. "I'm—sorry—" Final gasp! Oh, excellent phonograph!

"That's all I want, John. There, I'll give you a k-kiss. Oh, I've been so m-m-miserable, John."

John takes his oldtime comfort in his nap and the newspaper, so he must have told Kate all about it. As for the phonograph, it went to a writer of realistic stories, who gained great praise for the fidelity of his dialogue.

B. Paget.

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Football Players Competition!

OPEN TO EVERYBODY. **£10 IN PRIZES.** OPEN TO EVERYBODY.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each of which indicates the name of some well-known football player.

For example, "A young goose" signifies, of course, Gosling.

Ten names will appear each week for five weeks, making fifty names in all.

Keep all your lists by you until you are told to send them in.

To the person who succeeds in solving the greatest number we will give

A CRISP £5 NOTE.

TO THE NEXT, £2; TO THE NEXT, £2; AND TO THE NEXT, £1;

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If you are weak in the names of football players, your brother, or cousin, or male friend will give you a helping hand.

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22. Mutilates.	22. .....
23. Corpulent.	23. .....
24. A meadow.	24. .....
25. Places of abode.	25. .....
26. A small dagger.	26. .....
27. Small.	27. .....
28. An underground room.	28. .....
29. A fish and part of a lamp.	29. .....
30. An ancient German tribe.	30. .....

Name .....

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.....

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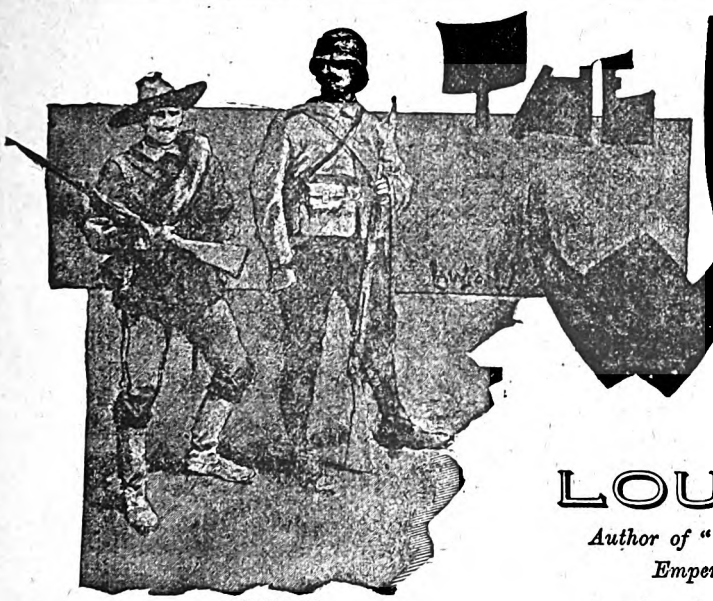
HOW A BRITISH ARMY CORPS LANDED IN GERMANY.



THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

TIME 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

France and Germany declare war against Great Britain.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpedo boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of fermentation owing to the repulse of the Allied fleet.

Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour's fleet gains a decisive victory over the Allies off the Rock of Gibraltar.

A representative of the *New York World* interviews Lord Salisbury on a matter that is not yet made public.

The British organise two expeditious, one to invade France, and one to invade Germany. The first army corps appears off Havre, and after a short bombardment which lasts till nightfall, the fleet withdraws, the troopships move northwards, and the soldiers are landed at a point opposite Bléville.

The French are routed and the British enter the city.

The representative of the *Times* succeeds in getting the news to the office two hours before it was received by the other papers, and an enormous sale of the *Times* is the result. The news of the victory is enthusiastically received in Parliament.

CHAPTER XV.

How Germany was Outwitted.

WHEN Sir Evelyn Wood was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in Germany, he evinced no misgivings as to the enormous task intrusted to his charge.

He reported himself in due course at the Horse Guards, and commenced to discuss the plan of campaign with the utmost coolness.

"You have not been long in making up your mind on your scheme of attack," observed Lord Wolseley.

"It has been thought out for at least five years," was the grave but startling reply.

Lord Wolseley looked at him in astonishment.

"Sir," explained the gallant General, "I have deemed it my duty to make myself acquainted with both the strength and the weakness of the defences of every first-class power in Europe. War bursts out when least expected, and—to speak without arrogance—I have had my plans for the invasion of every country on the Continent complete and pigeon-holed for years."

"Perhaps we had better examine your scheme in conjunction with the suggested operations prepared by the Intelligence Department," was Lord Wolseley's reply. "But your zeal is worthy of you."

Sir Evelyn showed that he appreciated his chief's kindly words.

"I have my plans, it is true," was his courteous answer, "but I have not the genius to foretell precisely how they will fall out."

It was a delicate compliment to the most brilliant quality of the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Wolseley smiled, for compliments are rare things in the mouth of Sir Evelyn Wood, and the two soldiers proceeded to examine minutely the proposed method of attack upon the German coast.

For three hours they were closeted together in private conference, and when Sir Evelyn rose to depart, Lord Wolseley shook him warmly by the hand.

"It is an audacious stroke that you propose," he said; "certainly one that the enemy will not expect."

"That," Sir Evelyn replied, "is the chief claim to consideration."

The Commander-in-Chief nodded in agreement.

"It needs all the skill and daring of a brave and experienced officer," he observed quietly, "and we are fortunate in possessing such a man. The nothern defence of Germany is terribly complete. From Hamburg to Dantzic the coast bristles with the strongest fortresses in Europe. But I have confidence in your plan, despite its danger. God speed you."

"Where are the rest gone to?"

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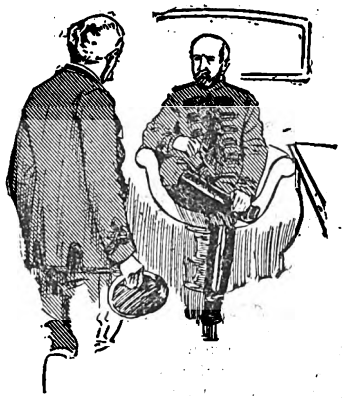

He summoned to him Colonel Sir W. Lockhart.

And Sir Evelyn Wood departed to attend to the preliminary arrangements for one of the most desperate ventures in the history of the war.

He was a soldier eminently fitted for such an enterprise. A skilful tactician and a finished master in the handling of troops or the judgment of a position, he was also singularly untrammelled by traditions. He was quick in invention and suffered no conventional axiom to stand in the way of a novel or daring manœuvre.

His coolness was as striking as his brilliancy. On one occasion, when in command of a body of troops in the Transvaal, he was approaching the lines alone in the early morning, when, not heeding the challenge of the sentry, he was fired at. The ball passed through his helmet.

Stepping up to the horrified soldier, who now recognised him, he observed calmly:

"Young man, next time you challenge, shout louder, and next time you shoot, aim lower."

It was this phlegmatic, yet resourceful soldier, who was intrusted with the attack upon the German Empire. And his scheme was extraordinary in its sheer daring.

About 200,000 men were detailed for service against Germany, together with a powerful fleet under the command of Sir Nowell Salmon, V.C.

The troops were formed of mixed battalions, for both the militia and the volunteers were drawn upon, and were massed at three great centres along the east coast. At Hull, the southern army corps, headed by the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the Coldstream Guards, the 2nd Battalions of the Buffs and the Royal Fusiliers, with the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions of their attached militia and volunteers, formed a splendid brigade under the command of Lieutenant-General Guyon. The Northumberland Fusiliers, the York and Lancaster Regiment, the Yorkshire Regiment, and several northern battalions gathered at Newcastle, whilst the Seaforth Highlanders, together with the Connaught Rangers and their militia, were noticeable among the troops massed at Leith. Few in numbers, indeed, this army was for its purpose; but none could be finer in discipline, in record, or in reputation.

On Thursday morning a small but powerful fleet, under the command of Admiral Sir Nowell Salmon, left the Humber with half-a-dozen troopships and made its way in the direction of Tronning and the Kiel Canal. Scarcely had it reached the noble water-way that joins the Baltic and the North Sea, than, in the dusk of the evening, a strong contingent of warships, conveying an immense number of troopers, was noted by fishermen in the Kattegat steaming rapidly into the Baltic.

The most precise orders had been given to Sir Nowell Salmon. He was to attack the approaches of the Canal with as much fury as possible, and to keep up the fire without ceasing for three days. He was to make a feint of attempting to land troops; but against the actual accomplishment of this he was strictly warned.

"Why, I shall draw upon myself the entire German forces!" exclaimed the Admiral when Sir Evelyn Wood gave him his instructions.

"I trust so!" said the General significantly.

With these strange orders the fleet had steamed across the German Ocean, and in less than a day came in sight of the fortress which commands the entrance to the Canal. The project on which they were embarked seemed to everyone fantastic.

"Where are the rest gone to?" grumbled Captain Rowlett of the *Northumberland*. "Are we to waste ourselves on the impossible?"

"Don't be alarmed," the Admiral reassured him. "You need not flatter yourself there will be no fighting."

"But attacking the canal in this way with a dozen ships—what is our object?"

"What?" repeated Sir Nowell. "Why, to look like two dozen, and fight like two hundred. By George, if it is not a big enough job to persuade our friends the enemy that a few second-class cruisers are the entire British Navy, you must be hard to satisfy!"

"Ah!" said the commander more cheerfully, "if fighting will lead them to that conclusion, I'll guarantee they'll be perfectly convinced by nightfall."

And he went off contentedly to see that his ship was in proper trim.

Within two hours the British ships had opened fire upon the town of Tronning, and the banks of the canal for the first time in its history reverberated with the ceaseless sound of cannon.

As the day closed the authorities at Berlin received word that a strong detachment of the British Navy convoying many troopships, had appeared at the entrance of the Kiel Canal and that Tronning was in imminent danger of capture. The defensive works had not been completed, the strength of the town was slight, and the activity of the British guns had already made terrible havoc with the fortifications. One attempt had been made to land troops on the south side of the water, but it had failed owing to the gallantry of the German defence. But another was expected, and it was feared, might succeed.

Chancellor Caprivi laughed at the news.

"We must be thankful," he exclaimed, "that daring and stupidity are closely knit. The enemy is good enough to deliver herself into our hands. There is no ally more useful than over-confidence in the foe!"

Over-joyed at the ease of the task before them, the authorities at Berlin sent instructions to all their depots along the north coast. Their army in the locality was not great. Most of the troops were on the borders of France and many were still locked in the Mediterranean or on their way to distant colonies.

One or two of the fortresses along the Baltic had been drawn upon for the ill-fated expedition that had been swept under the waters of the English Channel. There was still, however, a strong force at various northern centres, and by rapid entrainment these were gathered together. On the following morning one hundred thousand men were stationed on the South side of the Kiel Canal, waiting to devour the doomed Englishmen as soon as they should venture to seek a footing.

Had the enemy possessed a fleet at this point the English position would have been hopeless. But, as it was, there was security, save in the event of the foolhardy experiment of landing. The fleet kept up a continual and terrible fire, but no attempt was made to come on shore.

Dragging up the guns.

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Meanwhile, with a clear day's start, the rest of the fleet, with its transports carrying 200,000 men, was, as we have seen, slipping along the friendly sea which opened a passage into the Baltic. It was a race against time. Everything depended upon the point they aimed at being reached before the enemy were aware of the ruse and could muster troops to meet them.

Nor was it a difficult task to maintain secrecy. Held alike by interest and ties of blood, Denmark had engaged itself to a neutrality that should by its very strictness favour an English invasion of Germany. The Government had pledged its word to permit no intelligence of British movements around Danish shores to pass the frontier.

Without a fleet in the seas, with only a stray gunboat or two lying in the harbours of Dantzic and Kiel, there could be no resistance by Germany to a strong advance. But with a secretly hostile neighbour, and opposed by skilled manœuvring and the stratagems of accomplished generals, there could not be even intelligence of what was going forward.

Shortly after dusk on the night when a powerful German army was concentrated at the entrance to the Kiel Canal, the British fleet had crossed the western bed of the Baltic, and, but for a haze over the sea, might have descried upon the horizon the lights of the town of Stralsund.

A small, irregular, and ugly place, with narrow, ill-paved streets and all the gloom of squalid decline, sole amongst its virtues Stralsund possessed a spacious harbour, into which vessels of fifteen feet draught might proceed safely, and with ample accommodation in its entrance channel for the biggest ships afloat. Across the straits lay the island of Rugen, and, mid-way, the tiny island of Danholm dotted the water, heavy with fortifications.

Stralsund lay amid marshes which could only be traversed by broad roads built upon reclaimed land, with occasional bridges across water spaces. Thus isolated, it seemed a spot which no man would dream of attacking. And so, indeed, the German generals had considered; for they had not hesitated to weaken its garrison by drafts taken to form the force that attempted to invade England, and still later for the army that menaced the little fleet at Tronning.

Its guns commanded the sea, its morasses and lakes cut off the foe by land. So secured, a handful of men, it was reasoned, should be enough to defy the world.

It was a strange place, Stralsund, with its island, its shallow harbours, its marshes, and its fortress, that Sir Evelyn Wood had decided to make his point of attack. Here he would set foot upon German soil.

The favouring darkness shrouded the fleet as it sped silently upon its way. The General knew that in six hours the fate of his daring swoop upon the German coast would be irrevocably determined.

His scheme was indeed audacious, but one element was in his favour. The depth of water enabled him to creep in close to the shore, and he felt confident that he would be able, before the enemy realised what had happened, to land a strong brigade of cavalry and two batteries of horse gunners upon the coast some five miles from the line of fortifications.

He summoned to him Colonel Sir S. W. Lockhart.

"Colonel Lockhart," he said, "we have reached the crucial point in a desperate adventure. All now depends upon individual courage. I have chosen you to command one of the finest brigades of cavalry that the British army could put under one man's charge. Upon your pluck and that of your men is staked the complete success of my plan of operations."

Colonel Lockhart flushed with pleasure.

"Stralsund," continued the General, "is a very strong place. It might appear impregnable. It has so appeared to the German commander. I will not deny its extraordinary advantages, but, Colonel, these very advantages may be applied to effect her ruin. It is to secure this that I am going to disembark your brigade. I will give you the Scots' Greys, the Carabineers, and the 1st and 2nd Life Guards. With them go D and E Batteries of the Horse Artillery. You will find, shortly after gaining the shore, that a strong, broad military road, built on the treacherous soil, leads to Stralsund. The town at its rear is connected by bridges with the solid country that stretches beyond the morass. These bridges make attack difficult from land.

"But they also make escape impossible if they are taken and a double fire is opened on the town."

"I comprehend your plan," assented the Brigadier.

"Halt!"

"Your duty, sir, is, at all hazards and at all sacrifices, to take possession of those bridges, to hold them, and then storm the town. If you do so, I will guarantee that an English Army Corps shall be on German soil to-morrow.

"Fail, and we are routed, expelled, disgraced. There is no alternative."

"If hard riding and indifference to consequences can effect your purpose, sir," replied the Colonel proudly, "you may rely upon the British cavalry doing so."

"I know it. I believe you," answered Sir Evelyn, a little affected. "Go: I shall open fire on Stralsund and upon the island. Under cover of my guns you will land and carry out your movement. Good-night. We will meet at Stralsund to-morrow."

Thus speaking, he dismissed him.

By this time the night had come, dark and perplexing, for great clouds rolled along the skies and swallowed up the young moon. Little more than five miles off lay the unconscious town with its empty harbour, whilst from the shore the melancholy wastes of humid earth stretched lonely and silent toward the gentle pasture lands of Mecklenburg. Stralsund seemed a town in a wilderness—the one secure spot rescued by adventurous man from surrounding horror.

The larger vessels steamed slowly on. Opposite the landing point the sea was alive with boats laden with a freight of men, horses, and guns. Amid such silence as was possible the sturdy craft bore to shore the gallant heroes who were to stake their lives upon the hazard of a chance.

As the third fleet of boats moved off, there came a deafening roar in front. The *Royal Arthur* had already opened fire upon Stralsund.

Roused so rudely from stagnant security, the town became conscious of an unexpected and deadly foe attacking her from her own waters. In a moment fortress and island were alive with soldiers dazed by consternation and bewilderment. And now answering booms declared the challenge accepted. England and Germany were engaged at last.

Amid the din and the terror and all the fury of this shock of arms, the brigade had landed upon foreign soil, unnoticed, unopposed. As the gunners of Stralsund were firing wildly out to sea, a swift and silent avalanche of gallant men were rushing down to destroy the only hope of succour from the mainland.

CHAPTER XVI.

A Desperate Ride.

It was with difficulty that the troops under the command of Brigadier Lockhart made their way over the stony beach to firm land.

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The darkness of the night and the roar of the guns booming across the sea favoured the landing. The wind was now high, and the clouds that scuttled over the skies rendered the fitful light of the moon uncertain and confusing.

The cavalry made their way slowly over the shingly beach. Fortunately, it shelved but slightly, and the guns were dragged up without much delay; but Colonel Lockhart, when he gained the plateau, could not suppress a feeling of anxiety.

As far as the eye could reach through the gloom stretched the bare plain, without protection or shelter. The troops had been landed near Clausdorf, which lay in their rear.

Along the shore ran a narrow road, threading its slender way over shifting ground and dangerous stretches of marsh land until it reached the village of Prahn.

Here, Lockhart knew, the military road started, a broad, well-paved highway, suited alike for soldiers and artillery. Built with all the precision of a Roman street, without deviation of any sort, it gave a safe passage into Stralsund.

Unluckily, this road lay along the coast, and entered the town at a northern point. It was essential to strike off at some point midway, and proceed in a more southerly direction, in order to gain the Tribseer Damm. This *chaussée* linked Stralsund with the mainland, and was, from its very security, the safest road for the purpose of an unexpected attack upon the town.

It was clear that, to begin with, the movements of the brigade would be tedious and difficult. As the men clambered up to the rough bridle-path, they found that strict discipline would be impossible. The road was uneven, and on both sides lay the treacherous ground that threatened danger to those who were unfortunate enough to get entangled in it. To add to the peril, the horses were fresh and excited, after their long confinement, and could with difficulty be restrained within the inadequate space at command.

Only troops to whom discipline was an instinct could have taken their situation with anything like rapidity along so cramped a road. A good hour was occupied in forming the line and in dragging up the guns, for every step of the way had to be tested, and the deviation of an inch or two would have meant the overturning of a gun and a serious and confusing delay.

In front were the 1st and 2nd Life Guards and the Scots Greys. The artillery was placed in the centre with a Maxim strapped to every gun-carriage, and the Carabineers brought up the rear. They formed a brigade of about two thousand strong.

In the distance glimmered the lights of Stralsund; out to sea was the flare of the cannon; over the great sodden plain the British cavalry carefully threaded its way.

The German struck him violently on the head.

"Bah!" exclaimed Conway, of the 2nd Life Guards, to Riches, of the Greys, as they floundered for the sixth time in the dank ooze at the head of the column, "was ever such a cursed place before as Stralsund? I don't mind fighting, or dying, for that matter, but hang it if I think a cavalry officer should be called upon to get muddy!"

"Stral——," began Riches, but as he spoke his horse slipped over the ledge of the road and the animal's forefeet sank ten inches in the swamp. The lieutenant swore heartily as with some difficulty he got back to firm land again.

"Who ever heard of the beastly place before?" he exclaimed bitterly.

"Never mind!" responded Conway cheerfully. "Stralsund is in luck. After it's captured by us it will become famous. There are half-a-dozen places I know that have become quite prosperous on the strength of a British victory there."

"Do you know the town?"

"Stopped there a day by necessity," answered the other. "A miserable hole, bad hotels, infamous drains, vile cigars, extortionate charges. Fine old Rathhaus, though. Dates from the thirteenth century!"

"Good," grumbled his companion, "the next one will date from the twentieth."

"I don't know it——"

Conway was about to fling his gibe at the unconscious city when suddenly he pulled back his horse with a warning cry.

"Take care, for Heaven's sake!" he shouted.

Riches looked ahead, then pulled back his horse upon its haunches, held his sword over his head, and shouted "Halt!" with all his lung power.

"Great Heavens! What an escape!"

It was Riches who made this exclamation. Before him, stretching for a good half-mile, was a morass quivering as if with cruel desire. The road took a sudden bend to the right, and had not the two officers noted the fact in time they would have ridden into the quagmire to certain death, and the press of the cavalry behind would have driven scores of horsemen to follow them.

Even as it was, to check the movement of the brigade was no easy matter, for it lay far extended, and the rear, impatient of delay and ignorant of the cause, pressed forward and seriously embarrassed the van.

Conway and Riches, standing at the turning, saw the troops on, and remained to prevent disaster to those behind.

And thus slowly and with difficulty the brigade reached Prahn.

It was a small village, ill lit and almost deserted. But the eyes of the soldiers gleamed as they saw the broad high road that ran through it, wide, well-paved, and strong.

There was now no time to lose. Everything depended upon dispatch.

"Captain Lugard," hurriedly directed the Brigadier, "Take forty men and form a cordon round the village, and prevent anyone leaving it to give alarm. Follow us in ten minutes."

So saying, he gave orders for the brigade to form up in fours, and make at full gallop along the highway leading to the railway line, which lay to the south of Stralsund and gave excellent approach to the dam.

There were a few soldiers at Prahn. They had gone out from the barracks earlier in the day, and were drinking at the tavern there. As the English horsemen dashed by the *Bierhaus*, the horses' hoofs clattering on the stony street, and drawing fire as they struck the cobbles, some of the Germans turned sleepily out, half dazed by drink, and gazed in stupid wonderment.

But Captain Lugard seized their arms without further ado, and it was impossible for them, even if they had the sense, to give the alarm.

Across the road, and along by the low line of cottages that stretched to the north, the forty horsemen stood, ready to intercept any villager who might seek to make his way to Stralsund. The distance by road was very short, and the Captain guessed that the brigade would not only meet obstacles when they left the highway, but be delayed by narrow paths until they reached the railway. It was a question of minutes, and a fleet-footed messenger might, without difficulty, make his way to the town along the direct road and give timely warning.

Private Forsyth, of the Carabineers, was thinking this as he gazed out towards Stralsund and saw the marsh land that spread like a fetid desert to the sea. As he did so he started

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at observing a figure making its way rapidly along the insecure ground towards the town.

It was clearly a man who was acquainted with some secret passage through the morass, and had slipped through the line of soldiers with the hope of reaching the town in time to give the alarm. He was picking his path swiftly and with skill, and Forsyth's heart leapt when he realised that at such a rate the villager would be in Stralsund in twenty minutes. It was clear that the brigade would never get round to the southern *chaussée* before the enemy was apprised.

There was no time for deliberation, still less to report the affair and get orders. The carabineer was swift to act.

Leaping from his horse, he threw aside his cloak, unfastened his belt and cast it to the ground. Thus lightened he dashed off in the wake of the fugitive.

The mud sank beneath him as he made his first spring, but his feet were light, and to his joy he found that he could distinguish the footprints of the man he pursued. Keeping strictly in the track of these he sped over the swamp, making few slips, and always recovering his footing when he chanced to alight on treacherous ground. His pace was as rapid as the German's, despite his disadvantages; it was not in vain that he had gained prizes for running in the regimental sports.

Thus silently the two men sped over the morass, the German unconscious of his pursuer.

When he had gone a quarter of a mile the fugitive halted a moment on a jut of solid rock and looked anxiously round. Forsyth guessed that here was his chance, if he were to get one at all. The German had for a second or so missed the track. He was peering closely at the ground round him when suddenly he became aware that he was pursued. He restarted at once; but he plunged a little heavily, having evidently lost his bearings. That moment enabled Forsyth to make a spring upon him. The German turning smartly round, struck him violently on the head with a stick that he carried; but the trooper, half-stunned, yet intent on his purpose, had enough alertness to throw his arms round his opponent and drag him to the earth. A desperate struggle ensued, the German making frantic efforts to disentangle himself from the embrace.

This, indeed, he might have done. Forsyth's grip was losing its intensity, for his head swam and a strange faintness came over him.

In that supreme moment his thoughts turned to his home in Old England, and to the wife who was crying her eyes out, hoping against hope for the safe return of him she would never again see. There was but one alternative left him. He realised that it needed the sacrifice of his own life; and then, with that common heroism that shone as brightly in the British rank and file in that time of struggle and sacrifice, as in their officers, he gathered up all that remained of his strengh, and precipitated his assailant by sheer force into the morass.

With a ringing cheer they dashed over the dam.

The German cried out in his horror, but was helpless. There the two lay, still clinging to each other, sinking slowly into the frightful ooze, whilst the dank mud pressed up and up, and swallowed them in its greed, until there remained nothing but the quivering surface, without so much as a rift to mark the grave of the two brave men.

It was thus that Private Forsyth threw away his life for

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Sir Evelyn Wood was gazing earnestly through his glasses.

his country, without a witness, and with nothing to testify to his gallant deed.

Next day he was missed. His comrades wondered that they found no trace of his body; and then promptly forgot about him. A hero, unhonoured and unknown; he was a true type of that sublime courage which more than generalship or statecraft won for Britain her splendid victories against enormous odds.

Meanwhile Lockhart's brigade swept along the broad road at a furious rate. Riches felt the blood tingle in his veins at the exhilaration of the race through the bleak, chill country. In the hearts of officers and men alike there rose the joy of soldiership, the thrill of excitement and desire for battle.

About a mile and a half from the town they turned away into a lane hedged on both sides by young hawthorn, which shook its trembling dew as the brigade passed along. A belated countryman who was strolling homeward jumped terrified into the hedge as he heard the thundering clatter of the horses' hoofs and saw the cavalry fly past; nor did he venture forth again till daylight gave him courage and his wits returned.

Soon the brigade, dashing up the shelving embankment, gained the railway, and crossed it, rapidly reforming on the southern road that ran parallel with it. They sped along with reckless haste, each horseman with drawn sword, and the column in perfect order.

They could see the lights of the outer town twinkling on either side of them; but although the alarm was raised it was impossible to send the news on ahead, and when the Englishmen reached the station and had swept onwards beyond it, they found that there were no preparations to meet them.

The gates of the inner town were open, and the drawbridge by which entrance is gained to the fortifications had not been raised. The reason was obvious.

Over the *chaussée* there poured a disorderly multitude of men and women, terrified at the sudden descent of the British vessels, and making off as rapidly as possible to the station, whence they sought to fly inland.

There was not a moment's hesitation on the part of the cavalry. With a ringing cheer they dashed over the dam, and almost before the Germans were aware of their presence they had cut down the guard, seized the gate, entered the town, and possessed themselves of the defensive works. The Brigadier dispatched Colonel Olcott along the eastern road with Conway, who knew the town, and a strong detachment of the Greys, and after leaving a guard to keep the gate, flung himself at the head of the main body of his troops into the Neuer Markt.

He was careful also to send up a signal of three white rockets, thereby informing Sir Evelyn Wood that the first part of his mission had succeeded, and that he had gained an entrance into Stralsund.

It was fortunate he had left Captain Lugard behind. When the gallant officer felt himself justified in leaving Prahn—as impatient to share the glory of the attack as his men—he led his troop at a hard gallop along the route the main body had taken.

When he reached the railway he observed that a large signal-box stood beside the line. Happily inspired, he dismounted with a few of his men, forced the door open, and seized the signalman as he was busily engaged at the telegraph instrument, which was forthwith smashed.

A few minutes later he had wrecked the points of the railway, and thus had cut off communication by either medium with Berlin and the outlying country. Then, after an impetuous race, he entered the gates of the town and joined the attacking party.

By this time the Germans had recovered from the shock which this unexpected movement had caused. There was not a large force in Straslund, and most of the men were engaged at the batteries along the seashore. But Commander Schwiftzeit hastily got them together and hurried along the Ossenreyerstrasse in the direction of the Tribseer Damm.

His movement was a fatal one. The position of the British force was superb. As the Germans advanced along the broad street that entered the Neuer Markt, a terrible fire was opened by the British artillery, which was placed at the entrances of the three streets converging at this point. A deadly and resistent torrent of canister and Maxim bullets tore along, mowing down the Germans in horrible carnage.

Deprived of shelter, and open to a ceaseless fire, they had no alternative but to retreat as rapidly as they could.

But a new calamity now awaited them. When they had reached the Rathhaus, a second fire was opened upon them from Badenstrasse, which intersected their path at right angles. This came from Colonel Olcott's men. They had dashed along the eastern line, turned into the Eillerstrasse, and lay in wait for the enemy near the Nikolaikirche.

Thus raked by two converging fires the Germans fell in hundreds. Unable to withstand the fierceness of the attack, their ranks were thrown into pitiful confusion, and they fled in irrecoverable rout. Now was the time for the impatient cavalry.

"Trot! Gallop! Charge!" successively rang out the voice of Colonel Lockhart, and along the street the fine British horse dashed with impetuous force, decimating the flying foe, and driving them before their sabres to right and left in straggling and helpless fragments.

Only a few minutes had elapsed, so rapidly was the British attack concentrated and completed. The whole of the town remained in the hands of the invaders.

Nor did the Brigadier delay to make his victory complete.

Galloping along the Badenstrasse, the artillery took up their position in the right rear of the batteries which were even then firing at the British vessels.

Here the remainder of the Maxims were unstrapped and aligned. In a few seconds a deadly rain of bullets was pouring obliquely along the line of the fortifications, sweeping down the gunners and clearing the embrasures.

Standing on the bridge of the *Royal Arthur*, Sir Evelyn Wood was gazing earnestly through his glasses at the harbour and canal of Stralsund. He knew that the town had been taken. There remained but a little hard fighting before his brilliant and audacious attack would prove completely successful.

Suddenly a rocket darted up from the chief bastion, a rocket of red, which was twice repeated. And as suddenly the guns of the fleet became silent in their attack on the town.

A gleam of satisfaction lit up the commander-in-chief's eye, for what he had anticipated had occurred. A great shell whizzed through the air and fell, not upon a British vessel, but upon the fortifications of Danholm. Stralsund itself was engaged in a deadly attack on the island which defended it.

Poked his head through the ticket-window.

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So far he had kept the fleet out of harm's way firing upon the opposing forts, but not approaching nearer than was absolutely necessary.

But now the ships steamed on ahead to north and westward of the island, and coming in close to shore opened a devastating fire upon its forts.

Meanwhile, under the cover of the battery at Stralsund, through the smoke and confusion, the transports made a rapid dash to the harbour.

Here in the spacious canal they rested in safety, and whilst the guns at Dänholm were contending desperately but in vain with those of the fleet, the British army quietly disembarked.

At dawn on the following morning the forts at Dänholm were crippled and useless. Stralsund was occupied by the British army, and 200,000 Englishmen lay encamped on German soil.

When the *Royal Arthur* steamed majestically into port a ringing cheer was sent up, which was repeated when the Commander-in-Chief met Admiral Fitzroy on the quay and took his hand in a fervent grasp. Soldiers and sailors alike were in a state of elation.

"Say, Bill," observed an A.B. reflectively to a mess-mate, removing a black pipe from his lips, "I've been a-studying these 'ere placards, and, as far as I can make it out, we're only about five hours' steam from Berlin."

Bill discharged a narcotic stream at the poster, and answered:

"Blest if them deluded Germans wouldn't be doing a good thing for themselves if they allowed us to go on comfortably by train. Lord, what trouble it would save us and them!"

The same notion had struck Midshipmen Napier and Chance of the *Royal Arthur*. They had prowled around the town after breakfast in search of diversion, and had made their way to the railway station.

Napier's face lighted with glee as he stepped up to the booking-office, where some terrified officials had ensconced themselves.

Poking his head through the ticket window and looking benevolently on a clerk who was crouching down by the fireside, he said in excellent German:

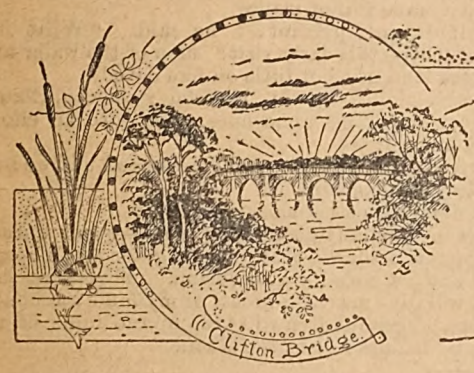
"Two hundred thousand first-class tickets to Berlin, please; *not* returns."

But no one offered to execute this magnificent order, and the middy turned away with a look of disgust.

"And they call themselves a commercial nation!" he exclaimed to Chance. "We offer to give 'em a ten per cent. dividend on the entire stock in five minutes and they refuse the favour!"

"Never mind," replied his brother middy laconically; "they'll probably be glad enough to book the return order in Berlin!"

(To be continued.)



The Champion of the Rhone.

I.

The fields were balmy with perfume.

The ripe hay, laid low by the stroke of the scythe, swooned under the devouring kiss of the sun, and over the warm meadows floated its expiring soul. Between sloping banks a little stream wended its lazy, rippling way, while, beneath, pebbles glistened in its transparent waters.

An interminable row of poplars, motionless in the still air, cast the only shadow over the universal sunshine of the fields.

The hum of insects accentuated with its murmur the silence of the fields, made drowsy by the heavy torpor of noonday.

In the thin, scant shelter of the hedges the mowers and haymakers slept a heavy sleep, their mouths open and their faces covered with perspiration. Greedily they enjoyed the rest before returning to their labour, which would last until sunset.

The summer sun was already at the height of its course and strength.

The fields spread out along the course of the brook until it lost itself in the great river, the Rhone, glittering like steel, made blue by the ardent reflections of the luminous sky.

Green banks bordered the stream, and willows hung low over the water, which, weary with having run so fast, cradled itself amidst their roots. The heavy trunks spread their luxuriant branches over the green grass, affording grateful shade.

In a lonely bay near the confluence of the little river, a boat rocked upon the water, and a clear, sweet voice kept time in song to the dull accompaniment of the sound of wet linen rubbed upon wood. At the end of the field a haymaker arose and gazed at the sun's rays in order to tell the hour, and, satisfied that there was still leisure at his command, he looked furtively towards the singer, who sang on in the sunshine like the locusts. He hastened to the stream, the throbs of his heart keeping time to the sound of the washing. A fresh breeze caressed his face as his mouth opened, and he called softly:

"Perrine."

The girl raised her eyes, and her song ceased, while

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a flush of pleasure coloured her bare arms, her shoulders, and her face.

"Claude," she exclaimed anxiously, yet happily. Quickly her hands retied the loose strings of her gown.

"Oh, go," she implored. "Father landed this morning."

"I know, with Petrus Vallat."

"Yes, he has come for the fête."

Anger flamed in the eyes of the youth; he replied, between clenched teeth:

"And for the betrothal—is it not so? That's why I am in the way."

"Claude, Claude," said the young girl tearfully, "you make me afraid with your cruel words and wicked eyes."

"Do you dare to say that Petrus is not your suitor?"

Perrine shook her head: Claude still insisted.

"Then what is this Vallat doing here? He does not belong to this country."

"He is a friend of my father."

"Nonsense, I see clearly that a newcomer seeks the daughter of his patron, and you, Perrine Marnas, will forget me for this snob."

"My poor Claude, you know well that I love you, but my father holds in contempt all who till the ground and esteems only bargemen. Why must you be a farm hand?"

The haymaker became indignant.

"Why? Do you not know? My mother is infirm. She has only me to depend upon. Who would care for her during my voyages? Your father often remains away for weeks. A tiller of the soil, too, is worth more than a bargeman. What bread would Captain Marnas eat if there were no farmers?"

Perrine approached and laid her hands upon the shoulders of the youth.

"Yes, Claude, you have a good heart; you are a good son, and I would be happy to have you for my husband; but father is master of the house, as he is captain of his boat. Speak to him; try to convince him, and, above all, make haste, for you are right, he is too friendly with his new guest. He may have intentions respecting him, and it will be bad for us if he has decided. He would not yield, and would never reconsider a resolution once taken."

"Oh, if you love me! if you would but—" exclaimed Claude passionately, clasping the young girl in his arms.

She repulsed him rudely, saying:

"Never; understand, never will I oppose the wishes of my father."

"You do not love me," groaned the discouraged suitor. "You will not plead for me to him."

"Are you more courageous than I, you who are a man, and yet dare not confront him?"

"You say what is true," replied the young man, his cheeks flushing. He added, with determination: "I will speak to him to-morrow."

Perrine approved.

"Come at the hour of mass. I will burn a candle, and will pray for us both before the Virgin while you are with my father."

She offered her cheek for the kiss of the young man, and sent him back to his work.

Claude rejoined the haymakers, who had arisen from their nap. Sturdily he seized his scythe, and cut down the grass with great sweeps of the blade. With a furious effort he tried to assert his strength, to encourage the timidity of his soul by the power of his muscles.

II.

Saint-Pierre de Bœuf was awakened by the gay chime of its bells, the merry peals of which celebrated the votive fête of the country, which was held in repute among the population of the borders of the Rhone.

Already, on the threshold of his shop, the barber scraped his razor over the chins of his customers, seated in a row, which had been well lathered in advance by the apprentice.

On the bank two large oriflames, one red and the other blue, representing the two rival camps, flapped belligerently in the breeze and awakened interest in the jousts, the great attraction of the riverside fêtes.

On this day the tilts were eagerly expected. The bargemen of the Bœuf had challenged their celebrated rivals of Condrieu reinforced by famous jousters on the Rhône, from Lyons to Vienne. Amongst the last was the guest of Captain Marnas, Petrus Vallat Givordin.

The final call to mass tinkled from the bell when Claude Rollin, arrayed in his gala dress, crossed the square. He arrived in time to see Perrine enter the church bearing a large wax taper. The young girl smiled at her lover from afar, and the caress of her eyes strengthened his courage. The labourer drew himself up, and with a firm step, crossed the threshold of Captain Marnas' abode.

The boatman stared at the new arrival, and closed his lips with a smile full of malice.

"So it is you, peasant?" he said. "What has procured for me this early visit? Men of the water and men of the land mix but little on fête days."

Although chilled by this mocking reception, Claude Rollin controlled his annoyance, and, with an effort, declared himself.

"Master Marnas, Perrine and I are agreed, and we now lack only your good will."

The Captain whistled mockingly.

"Bless my soul, my good fellow, you are not queamish. The misfortune is that the daughter of Captain Marnas was not born for a landsman. I have no son; the girl will give me a son-in-law of my kind, an honest bargeman, whose children will keep up the fame of the family and maintain it on the Rhone."

"But——"

"That's enough; do not insist, peasant; Perrine is not in need of suitors. I have chosen one for her, a solid fellow, accustomed to the water, and of the sturdy race of Givors. It is Petrus Vallat, whom you will meet to-day at the games. Had you been one of us, you could have disputed the prize with him and become a suitor for my Perrine."

"You know, nevertheless, why I cultivate the ground?" retorted Rollin.

"Yes, you are a good son, I recognise the fact; but the slaves of the soil are not of our free race. One of my blood cannot become the wife and mother of tillers of the ground. I do not say this to insult you, my boy; but of this sort is the blood in my veins. Let us entertain no feeling of rancour, but do not be obstinate, for I will never recall my words."

Claude wished to reply, but Marnas took him by the shoulders and pushed him out of the door, which he closed and bolted.

Overcome by the rudeness of the Captain, with his head bowed and his heart bewildered, the discomfited lover found himself in the street. Unconsciously his footsteps guided him to the door of the church, where

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Perrine vainly implored Heaven with prayers. There he hesitated. Then timidly he pushed open the door, fearing to make a noise. Softly he glided down the nave in the half light, wending his way to where Perrine knelt.

With the fervour of a child she prayed. Alas, alas, he thought, of what use were her prayers? Perrine herself had said, with truth, that Captain Marnas, having once made up his mind, never yielded. What had he come there for? Should he wait for his beloved, to trouble her soul with the avowal of their mutual unhappiness? Certainly it would be sweet to mingle their tears together, but his generosity and his pride forbade. What could he hope for? What could he expect? What should he do? With a last look he enveloped the kneeling girl with all the love of the past; then he retired as softly as he had come, without being seen by her. He walked with a firm step straight to his mother, the only one left him now to love. On his entrance she looked up at him.

"You are in trouble, my boy," she said, with pity and tenderness.

Claude could not reply, as his heart was too full. H tried to shake his head, but grief overcame him, and, falling upon his knees, he buried his face in the old woman's lap and sobbed:

"Mother."

The mother was silent. She had suspected the hope of her son and divined his unhappiness, but her hands caressed the forehead of Claude, seeking to calm his excitement and to heal the open wound by drawing him from his dream.

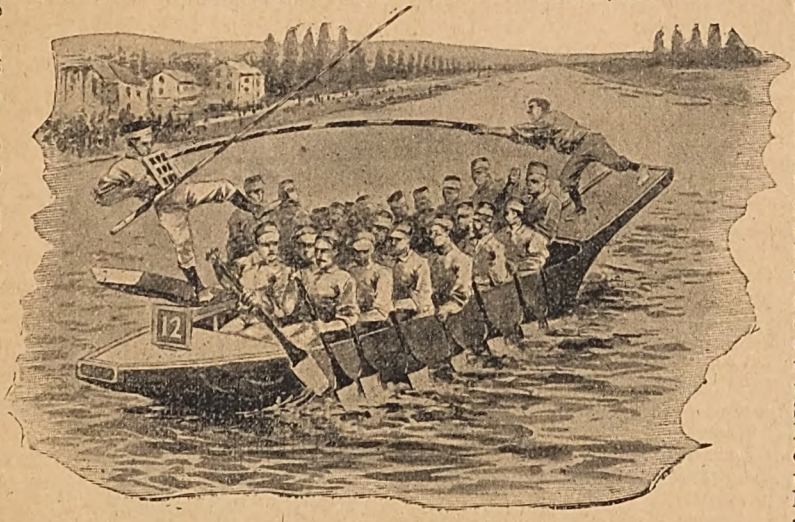
"Come," she said; "we will find another as beautiful but less proud, who will render you happy."

Claude raised his head and dried his tears.

"No, no!" he exclaimed; "it is finished; I will suffer no more. I will love only you."

He enfolded his old mother in his arms, and added, in a despairing embrace:

"You will be for me henceforth the only woman in the world."



Givordin . . . capsized into the water.

III.

A roar arose from the impatient crowd gathered in a mass upon the borders of the river.

"Here they come. Here they come."

Preceded by the local band, the two crews advanced. Through politeness, those of the country yielded precedence to the strangers, and followed in their wake. All were dressed in duck trousers, with caps ornamented by gold cords. They were distinguished only by their jerseys, red stripes being worn by the guests, blue by the local champions. These colours were reproduced in the paddles, a short, broad oar in the form of a spade, which the boatmen held in a firm grasp while marching.

Each crew took possession of its bark, while the first two jousters stood upon the siaupe, a platform erected at the stern of the boats. The champions wore wooden shields, destined to receive the shock from the lances, with which each was armed.

The drums beat.

The two barks reached the course; after having crossed each other, the rivals saluted with their lances. At the extremity of the arena limited by buoys, the boats halted, and then stopped, face to face.

At the command of the captains, with a single stroke, the paddles arose in a double flash of red and blue, and then fell, simultaneously cleaving the water, and the two barks moved, piloted in such fashion that they sailed side by side. The drums beat abruptly a charge, and the rowers increased their efforts. The barges set out to cross each other, and the rowers bent their heads as above them were lowered the lances. A double shock sounded upon the wooden shields, suspending, for an instant, the impetus of the barges. Then suddenly the red champion tottered and fell from his platform into the water with a great splash. The spectators thundered with bravos; the first tilt was to the glory of Saint Pierre de Bœuf. As the red champion swam rapidly to his bark, he was saluted with a mocking chant.

The tilts continued, sometimes in favour of one party, sometimes in favour of the other. The blues, however, had the advantage, and Saint-Pierre de Bœuf triumphed over the other champions of the Rhone.

But now on the siaupe appeared Petrus Vallat, equally strong and skilful, and, with him, fortune changed. Five times in succession his lance overthrew his opponent.

The people of Bœuf ceased their laughter and applause.

Before the skill of the Givordin the blues, discouraged, gave up the struggle.

Their best men having been overthrown and nearly drowned, already the reds began to mock at their vanquished rivals and to cry victory.

All at once a voice from the river bank shouted:

"The blues for ever. Give me the lance and shield."

Stupefied, the boatman saw Claude Rollin throw off his coat and present himself as the champion of Bœuf.

He had suffered too much while watching the success of this stranger, this Vallat, whom Marnas preferred to him, and upon whom Marnas would bestow his

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daughter. He wanted to avenge himself upon the man who was stealing his happiness, and to prove his courage to this disdainful boatman—to be for a day the king of his village.

The bargemen approached the bank and the captain of the blues questioned Claude.

"So you, a landman, want to joust?"

"A labourer's arm is as strong as a bargeman's."

"We know you are strong, but you are not experienced."

"My strength will suffice," and, with a great spring, Claude alighted upon the siaupe, buttoned on the shield and grasped the lance.

The crew looked at him doubtfully, but the youth showed such a fine physique, and the reds provoked the blues so much by their mocking laughter, that the captain decided in Claude's favour.

"Keep your eyes open, man, and hold yourself firmly," he said.

The two barges plied their oars. Upon the banks a profound silence reigned, broken now and then by the rumbling of drums. The rivals advanced towards each other, their eyes keenly watchful, and their lances lowered. Each touched at the same instant the other's shield. The men buttressed themselves and were not moved, although the lances became bent. Then the sound of snapping wood was heard, followed by a splash, as both combatants disappeared in the water.

As both men were overthrown and both lances were broken the tilt was drawn. As soon as the tilters could get out of the water, they again resumed their places for a fresh assault. Confidence returned to the natives, and they encouraged with their exclamations the youth of Bœuf, who, although not of their party, had held his own with the terrible man from Givors.

The bargemen shook their heads, undecided as to the issue of the combat. Claude was the stronger of the two, but Petrus was the more skilful. If, in the first bout, the landsman's lance had struck the middle of the shield, Vallet would have made his somersault; but Rollin did not strike with skill. Would he succeed better this time?

Much interested, Captain Marnas puffed at his pipe, not knowing that it had gone out, an indication, on his part, of grave pre-occupation. At length he uttered the words which conveyed the thought of all present:

"We must see the end."

Again the jousters charged. Claude feared only a ruse on his rival's part; but, while less experienced, he was the stronger, so he determined to rely upon that strength.

The barges touched, the lances pointed menacingly; the end of his staff lowered against his thigh, Petrus prepared, with all the weight of his body thrown forward, to strike an irresistable blow. But, suddenly, after a rapid glance, Claude removed his lance from its rest and thrust it with the full length of his arm, touching Vallat before the latter had met his adversary's shield. Claude's long arm seemed to lengthen, and the Givordin, deprived of his equilibrium by the vigorous thrust, capsized into the water.

A thousand bravos rent the air: "*Vive* Claude Rollin." Bœuf has triumphed.

Petrus swam to the shore, furious at the jests levelled at him by the crowd. When at last he stood face to face with Captain Marnas he growled:

"I shall have my revenge. You will see."

"Don't take the trouble, my young fellow," replied the Captain. "You can go home. My daughter can never marry a boatman that has been vanquished by a peasant."

Marnas turned his back upon the discomfited suitor and went straight to Claude, who was jumping from his boat.

"Give me your hand, man," said Marnas. "I abused you this morning: let us forget it. You are made of good stuff. All you need is to become a good bargeman. Take service on my boat and you shall have Perrine."

Claude, faithful to his trust, replied:

"And my mother?"

"You great gander," exclaimed the Captain, tapping him on the shoulder, "she will not need you. Don't you know that your mother will always be with Perrine when you and I are absent on the water?"

"Oh, Claude," cried Perrine, "how I shall spoil your mother!"

Touched and secretly flattered at the idea of leaving the soil for a life the desire for which he had sacrificed from a feeling of filial duty, Claude turned to his mother, who had just arrived at the spot, and said:

"Mother, I give you to Perrine."

"You see, Claude," said the young girl, "that you were wrong to be so sad in church. I saw you when I was praying to the good Virgin, and I knew that my prayers would be answered."

A. H. T.

"'OLD yer 'orse, sir?"

"He won't run away!"

"Run away? Not 'im. I didn't mean to 'old 'im still—I meant 'old 'im up."

MRS. UPJOHN: "Aren't you uneasy about that child's cough?"

Mrs. Highup: "Indeed I am. If it gets any worse she'll keep me awake the whole night."

"WHAT is the difference between your teas?"

Clerk: "In those of the first quality some bad tea is mixed with the good, and in those of the second quality some good is mixed with the bad."

MISS SPACER: "I suppose when a joke gets into an almanac it is supposed to be old?"

Mr. Scribbler: "Oh, no! a joke cannot really be called old until it gets into a Scotchman."

"I ALWAYS test my poems by reading them to my wife," said the youthful poet.

"I should think that was testing your wife rather than your poems," answered the candid friend.

"I FEEL like a shop with a bargain sale," groaned Tommy, as he approached from the direction of the pantry, the immediate surroundings of his mouth being a suspicious dark red.

"What's the matter, my dear?"

"Jam inside."

"I HAVE but one maxim for you," said a successful and wealthy merchant to a young man who went out of his employ to enter upon the study of a profession, "and that is, never try to save your shoe leather, but always be economical of the cloth that forms the seat of your trousers."

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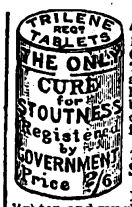

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COUNTESS G. FURSTENBERG, Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone."

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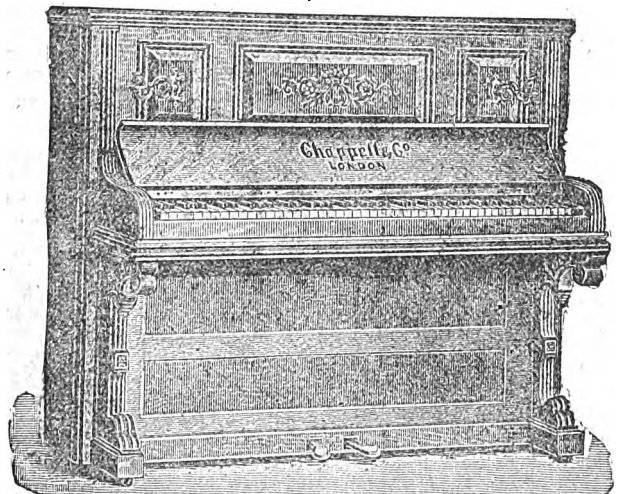

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ON THE BEST AUTHORITY.

T. C. D.—There is no law in Ireland compelling cyclists to light up at all. In Scotland it is half-an-hour later than in England.

J. A.—It is a singular property of all animal bodies that the temperature of the blood remains practically the same, whether the air breathed be that of the Arctic regions or the tropics.

T.—Now that the Congo Railway is completed it is possible to go from Antwerp to Stanley Falls, in the very centre of Africa, in eleven days. The cost of travelling on some part of the new line is rather dear, looking at it from our point of view; the cost is 1s. 8d. per mile.

L. G. B.—The State training of children was in vogue among the ancient Persians, according to Xenophon. Their education was taken out of the parents' hands, and the State looked after the moral training of the children as it now looks after the intellectual training in this country.

MAYOR.—The rock or island on which the Eddystone Lighthouse stands is claimed as the smallest inhabited island in the world. It has a diameter of thirty feet. At high tide the island itself cannot be seen, the waves dashing against the base of the lighthouse. The inhabitants are, of course, the people in charge of the light.

BIRD.—The earliest bird to rise is usually supposed to be the lark, but a French scientist disputed this assertion some few years ago. As a result of long observation, he stated that the greenfinch was the first, and that it commenced business at 1.30 a.m. The blackcap was placed second by this gentleman, its time being one hour later than the greenfinch.

SPOTS.—The white spots on the finger nails are explained thus: Under the nail is a membrane to which the nail is attached. At times this connection is interrupted in places by knots or from other causes, and those parts of the nail accordingly become dry and opaque. The white patch at the base of the nail arises from its being newly formed; it has not yet assumed its proper nature and transparency.

A. G. asks: "Has the amputation of a limb any tendency to shorten life?"——Excluding the probability that the afflicted person may be more liable to accident, the answer must be given in the negative. The experience of the head of an old-established firm dealing in artificial limbs is directly opposed to the notion expressed in the question; he seems to be surprised at the longevity of the firm's customers.

G. K. — Of European powers, Great Britain has been more frequently at war during the last fifty years, the total amounting to no fewer than forty-one times.

CITY.—The oldest European city in the New World is Cumana. It was built by Diego Castellon, in 1521, and was originally named New Toledo. It stands at the mouth of the Manzanares, on the Gulf of Cariaco, an arm of the Carribean Sea. It was almost totally destroyed by an earthquake in 1853.

A CORRESPONDENT tells me of a curious mistake on a tombstone in the Cleeve Prior's Churchyard in Worcestershire. It states that a certain Sara Charlett departed this life in 1693, aged 309 years. Either the 0 or the 9 was cut by mistake. A verse that follows speaks of being taken away "in my flourishing age." Very flourishing, evidently.

H. J. took his annual holiday at Southsea this year, and he writes to ask me if I can tell him how the garrison station forts standing in the sea at Spithead obtain their supply of fresh water.——As a matter of fact, the supply is obtained from wells inside their own walls, which lie under the bed of the sea, and it is said that the water is exceedingly cool and pure.

P. E.—There are two versions of the discovery of the famous Mexican silver mine called Potosi. The Spanish official version is that an Indian named Gualca, having lighted a fire at night on the mountain side, found silver spread all round him in the morning. It had been melted by the heat. He reported it to the Spaniards in the hope of reward. Another account says that he discovered silver by accidentally pulling up a shrub. He kept the discovery a secret for some time, then told another Indian, who betrayed the fact to his Spanish master.

"WHY do people walk so badly?" asks a correspondent. "Even persons who are called 'graceful walkers' do not walk as they ought. Why is it?"——It is a fact that people of all countries walk badly. Their mistake consists in not having a proper regard for the centre of gravity of the body. This centre should be kept as nearly as possible at an even distance from the ground. Most of us waddle or lurch forward, thus alternately raising and lowering the centre of gravity, and throwing it first to one side and then the other. This increases the fatigue of walking. Care should be taken not to walk on the toes, the heels, or the side of the feet. The foot should be placed flat on the ground, and the ankle, knee, and hip joints should be made to move evenly and to do a fair share of the work.

H. H. asks: "Do animals suffer with seasickness?"——Certainly they do. All animals, when taken for a sea voyage, become tamer. Monkeys suffer greatly from *mal-de-mer*. Fowls and geese soon become thin, and cocks generally cease to crow. Song birds, too, are affected by the sea, and never sing during a voyage.

T. S.—There is a supposition that the Wettern Lake in Sweden is connected by an underground channel with the German Lake of Constance. This arises from the fact that exactly the same forms of animal and vegetable life are to be found in the two lakes. The Swedish lake was locally reputed to be of such depth as to deserve the appellation of "bottomless pit," but scientists have upset that idea.

D. S.—From old records we can see that Saturday half-holidays were an institution in England nine hundred years ago. King Edgar made an order that labour should cease at midday on Saturday and not be resumed until daylight on Monday. There is a law of King Canute—which does not appear to have been repealed—that says, "Let every Sunday's feast be held from Saturday's noon till Monday's dawn."

SPORTSMAN.—The drug used by the Chinese in catching fish is called *coculus indicus*, which is powdered and mixed with dough, and scattered broadcast over the water after the manner of sowing seed. The fish seize and devour it with avidity, and instantly become intoxicated, and turn up in hundreds on the top of the water. They are then gathered up and placed in vessels containing clean water.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 509. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 1ST, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 509.

ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending

October 1st, 1898.

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 1.—Trooper of the 21st Lancers.

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A BRAVE COWARD.

A STORY OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR.

THE call to arms had gone forth—Fort Sumter had fallen, the Union was attacked. State after state seceded.

The President called for volunteers, and the loyal North generously responded to the cry.

Among the first to enlist for the war was John Allen.

He was an only child, and his father a prosperous merchant.

Filled with patriotism and enthusiasm, the young fellow soon succeeded in filling with his spirit enough young men of his district to organise a company, of which he was elected captain.

Possessing a slight knowledge of military tactics and drill, he soon had his company in such shape that when the national capital was

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threatened, the company was at once mustered into the service and ordered to meet the enemy.

Thus hurried to the front without rest or proper nourishment, with no knowledge of their arms, it is no wonder that in the general panic that seized their brigade, the company should share in the nameless fear like the rest and hastily retreat.

"Now, not a word, Pettis."

The young commander, filled with mortification and grief at the first engagement of his comrades, and himself possessing a cool head, tried his utmost to make his men stand.

With uplifted sword, with entreaty and command, invocation and pleadings and blows, he manfully tried to lead or beat them back.

But they would not heed, and carried him with them in the crush to the rear.

It was while thus engaged, that the general officer commanding the brigade came up, and seeing a young captain going to the rear, halted for an instant—long enough to inquire the number of the company and regiment and his name.

The day after the retreat, Allen was placed under arrest, and a few days later brought before a summary court-martial, and tried for cowardice in the face of the foe.

It was useless for him to protest; his men would not testify in his behalf, for that would be owning to the fact of their own cowardice, and Allen's explanations were not listened to against the statement of the brigadier-general and his staff officers.

So he fell a victim, as many others did in the early part of the war, to the ambitious ignorance of a general officer as unskilful and unused to war as himself.

He was dismissed the service of the United States and his name struck off the rolls.

The blow was an awful one, but to a man of such noble and honourable instincts as Allen, it was more than terrible. At first the thought of his disgrace so maddened him that he would have taken his life; but there was not a drop of coward's blood in his nature, and when the first transports of grief and despair were over, he resolved not to go home, but to seek some western State and there enlist again, and if he could not rise, he at least could die a brave man's death on the field of battle.

Should he rise, it would be by wiping out the fearful stigma, and until that was done the old folks at home or his many friends there, should not know of his whereabouts.

Of all famous troops in Sheridan's cavalry command in the army of Virginia, there was none that stood higher or had a more brilliant record than the troop of Captain Henry Pettis, of the Third Brigade, of the Fifth Division.

Pettis himself, through the four years of war, had had a wonderful record of service.

Enlisting as a private in an Indiana cavalry regiment, he had successfully risen through the lower grades by brave and heroic acts on the battlefield, as well as by uncomplaining and faithful duty in the camp, on the march, or on picket

When one of the company officers fell on the field, he was promoted second lieutenant.

And later it was Sheridan himself, who, noting the wondrous bravery of the man and his untiring energy, promoted him a captain and assigned him a few days later to his own troop—the one with which he had won so many laurels.

His men worshipped him, for there was no danger too great for him, no hardship or trial of which he did not bear the hardest part, and yet with them he was always the quiet, straightforward, and courteous gentleman, though shy and reserved.

Time after time had he been complimented in general orders.

In the little lull preceding the famous raid round Dinwiddie Court House, Sheridan had a number of recruits sent down to his army, and seven of these were assigned to Pettis' troop.

Among these seven was one man whom the sergeant had occasion to reprove several times the first week for gross carelessness and even worse. Finding this of no use, he reported the man, whose name was Cook, to the captain. Pettis mildly rebuked him and sent him back, thinking that sufficient, but he did not notice the gleam of cunning recognition in Cook's eyes as he slunk away.

The next day the sergeant brought him again before the captain on the charge of maltreating his horse. This was too much, and Captain Pettis ordered him to be confined in the guards' tents and sentenced to do extra patrol work.

After three days' punishment, he was released, and for a time was well behaved, but it was noticed that he was exceedingly curious regarding his captain. He asked many questions as to where he had come from, when he had first joined, his various engagements and victories, and made every now and then slighting allusions to the effect that he might tell something, if he was so disposed, to the captain's discredit. The men paid no attention to this the first time it was remarked, but on his repeating the offence they warned him in tones not to be misunderstood that his life was not worth a pinch of earth if he repeated it.

He then behaved himself well, till the regiment was ordered with the entire corps again in the field. The day before starting, towards evening, the sergeant reported that Cook was missing, and also his horse and accoutrements. The manner in which he had left made it certain that he had deserted.

But the next day he was brought into the lines, having been captured by the guard.

He was taken to Captain Pettis' tent for examination, and on being accused of his great crime, he turned angrily on his captain and said:

"You had better look to yourself, Captain Pettis, as you are called. I know when you went under another name. If I am treated fair, I'll say nothing, but if not, then I'll drive you out of the army."

"What do you mean, Cook? Do not add to your crime by insolence to your superior officer. Had you done your duty, you would not be in this trouble, and your best course now, is to answer the questions put to you, truthfully and quietly."

He then dismissed him; but the man's remark preyed on him, till the next day, when he became busy again, chasing up the Confederates on the last great rounding-up movement.

The series of fighting marches and resulting victories which daily ensued, drove everything else out of his

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mind, and as Cook had been left behind for trial the incident regarding him was forgotten for the time being.

The surrender of Appomattox followed, and brought with it the sure prospect of peace, and officers and soldiers alike were looking forward eagerly to the time when their services would be no longer needed, when one day the colonel commanding the regiment sent for Pettis.

On the latter's reaching the tent, he said to him:

"Captain, did you not have a man in that last batch of recruits named Cook, who deserted just before we started out round Dinwiddie?"

"Yes, sir, but he was recaptured and afterwards left behind for trial," replied Pettis.

"Well, the scoundrel, in order to save his hide, has written a very serious letter against you. In fact, he wrote to me before we started out on this last trip, but I paid no attention to it, knowing it was but a lie. But when he came up before his court for trial, he made charges against you which took the form of a letter written to the Secretary of War. The letter has been referred here, through military channels, and I am ordered to investigate it and report.

"Now you read it, and then, as I know the thing is an outrageous lie, you needn't answer me at all, but leave it here on my desk. No, don't say a word. Good-bye for a few minutes," and the kind-hearted warrior left the tent alone to Pettis.

With a sinking heart the young captain took the letter, and, as he feared, it was there stated by the writer—Cook—that he recognised in Pettis the same Captain John Allen, who nearly four years before had been dismissed the army on the charge of cowardice.

At last the fear that had smouldered so long had broken out. The honours and duties thrust upon him by arduous service had driven it out of his mind for a time, but it now came back with a tenfold strength. All his splendid record, his daring and courage, his endurance and duty performed in the face of dangers and trials that many other brave men shrank from, were as nothing in the face of this old stigma.

He shook his hands.

To be sure, his colonel had told him to leave the letter on the desk, paying no attention to it, and he—the Colonel—would state over his signature that it was a lie.

But would not that be making him share his crime?

The chance was open to him to escape obloquy; and not only the honours now possessed but the much greater ones in store for him would be his.

The temptation was strong upon him. He knew he was no coward—all his comrades during four years knew it. Why then should a mistake, a horrible stigma that was undeserved, cling to him?

While thus pondering, the Colonel entered, and going up to him, looking him square in the eyes, and holding his hand, said:

"Now, not a word, Pettis. We know what that letter contains, and, also, that notwithstanding any facts the writer of it may have, that he is a rascal, and you have the record of being the bravest and best captain in this corps. Any man that dares gainsay that, will have to answer me personally for it. It is all right, old man, and I understand that you are slated for a colonelcy yourself and will get your regiment in a few days."

The Colonel cut the buttons and shoulder straps from the condemned man's uniform.

And shaking Pettis' hand heartily, he half tried to push him out of the tent, that he might endorse the letter as a lie.

But the honour of a man, *sans peur et sans reproche* would not permit Pettis to allow his generous colonel to write a lie.

All the best instincts of his nature rose at once, and turning quickly, he said, with pale face and blazing eyes:

"But, Colonel, the letter is true! I was tried and dismissed for cowardice. I am not a coward, you know, but I was tried as such, and I have no right to my present place."

With eyes blazing as though in the thickest struggle of the battlefield, and with form trembling with anger, the Colonel said, in stern, set tones:

"Harry Pettis, I say again, that any man who says that you are a coward, who says that you are anything but the bravest and best captain in this regiment, lies like a fiend and will have to answer to me personally for it. Don't I know you, boy? Did I not see you go into the hottest angle at Spottsylvania with three hundred men and come back with forty? Don't I know that were you to go from us, half our strength would go? No, sir, I say the thing is an infamous lie, and I will not believe it!"

Excited beyond himself, the Colonel strode up and down his tent, shaking with an anger that only strong men, used to controlling their most violent feelings on the battlefield, ever can give vent to.

Poor Pettis took his colonel's hand, and as the tears silently rolled down his cheeks he told him the entire story.

It was some time ere the colonel could recover his composure sufficiently to listen and judge impassionately, but when he had learnt every particular of Pettis' or Allen's life, he shook his hands and told him to go back to his tent, and rest assured that he would have the stigma removed.

As Pettis went out, he sat down and wrote a long endorsement, stating all the facts connected with the former service, and then the splendid record of Pettis in his present one. He was not content with merely sending this, but himself took it to the brigade commander, and had a long talk with him. The result was, that the endorsement was strengthened by a stronger one from the brigade commander, then another by the division commander, and when it reached the glorious young Custer—a major-general in command of the corps—he endorsed it and took it to Sheridan, who did the same,

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nailing the coward statement as a lie, and recommending Pettis for a colonelcy.

A few weeks more had passed by, and then came the surrender of Appomattox. During the days of extreme toil and danger preceding, Pettis had risen to the command of a battalion, and was a full major. His former daring had been eclipsed by the phenomenal trials and scenes he had passed through.

It did seem as though he possessed a charmed life, and that Death was unable to reach him. Wounded slightly more than once, he was never incapacitated from command. It was well known that he had not only been recommended for a colonelcy, but for the rank of brigadier-general.

It was in these early spring days, when the balmy air and opening buds gave promise of the coming of peace, and when men so lately antagonised now seemed to fraternise with each other, that the dreaded blow came, and with it the most dramatic incident of the war.

One afternoon, a spectator of the Union lines would have seen a long line of men, an entire brigade of cavalry, turned out as though for a review. Soon, general officers appeared, and then from one of the regiments an adjutant stepped forth. A moment afterward an officer, a major—Pettis—appeared, dismounted, with an officer on either side of him. He had no sword with him.

On his appearance, the adjutant read a long communication from the Secretary of War—the stern and merciless Stanton—whose mind once made up, whether right or wrong, was never known to change, and on whom no recommendations for mercy ever made an impression, however worthy the object.

The order stated that Captain John Allen, of the 24th Regiment of New York Volunteer Infantry, having been dismissed the service of the United States for cowardice, and incapacitated from ever holding office again in the United States service, and having enlisted in the Indiana cavalry volunteer regiment, was dismissed the service. His name was to be struck off the rolls, and in the presence of his brigade his buttons and shoulder straps were to be taken off, and he then to be drummed out from the Union lines to the tune of the "Rogue's March."

An awful sentence for a brave and innocent man. The men, on hearing it read, did not quite understand, and they listened and watched in breathless silence. But when the colonel of the regiment, with his own hands, cut the buttons and shoulder straps from the condemned man's uniform, and instead of throwing them on the ground and grinding them in the dirt, carefully gave one to each officer of Pettis' regiment, as a keepsake, took one himself and gave one to the brigade commander; and as each officer received his, and kissed it and rolled it carefully in paper and placed it in his pocket, it was more than human nature could stand, and a series of sobs and mighty groans went up along the entire lines.

Their favourite a coward! What then must they be? Was this the way the country rewarded honourable and dangerous service in its behalf?

They could not understand, and when the next moment the brigade commander rode up, and then came the division commander, and the young and fearless Custer, and, dismounting, they shook Pettis' hand, while tears rolled down many a cheek, the men would no longer be restrained, but with one simultaneous movement broke ranks, and with cries and sobs crowded round the poor major, demanding to go with him. If he was to leave them they would go also.

The drums and fifes struck up the "Rogue's March," but it was not to march time, but to the slow solemn movement of a condemned criminal, the disgraced man left the camp, with Custer holding his right arm, and the Colonel the left, and followed by a train of officers and all the men of the brigade. When the boat was reached on the river's edge, and officers and men could go no further, Custer again told him to be of good cheer, and he would yet be righted.

Pettis, or Allen, left the camp, never to return. Representations of the strongest character, endorsed by Custer, Sheridan, and the mighty Grant himself, were sent forward, but that they were delayed so long in the War Office that they did not reach the executive mansion till after Lincoln's assassination.

And then came the hurry and bustle of reconstruction, and the great War Secretary, who soon afterwards felt the great remorse of heartless actions, was relieved from the office. Officers of volunteers were mustered out of service, and the great leaders of the war went to different spheres.

A disgraced man, with no recommendations from his war service, forgotten by the greater men, and lost sight of by the comrades of the battlefield, Allen went to his home disguised, and stayed there but a few days.

His father had died over his beloved boy, in the middle days of war, and his old mother, although still believing in him, had given him up for dead.

His story was to her a blessed reward for all the days of watching and believing in his honour.

* * * * *

Allen is still living, and is honoured in civic capacities in which he has served.

Under an assumed name, he has won honour and is now winning wealth. He is surrounded by a loving, beautiful wife and happy, healthful children, every one of whom knows his story, and is resolved that his and their name—their rightful name—shall be vindicated, and the blot removed from their father's record. His life is so full of rest and happiness in his work and friends, and especially his beloved family, that he is content to forget the past and to look forward with anticipation to the future, while he enjoys the happiness of the present.

J. Rogersson.

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HIS OLD LOVE.

Years ago I was teaching in a country school, and fell in love with one of my pupils. I was eighteen at that time.

Her name was Mildred Colton, and at first I considered her very uninteresting. She was fifteen, and shy, blushed often and without apparent provocation, and frequently failed in lessons which I was sure she knew. This latter hindrance to her progress was what first interested me in her. Her habit of embarrassment must be removed; to effect the desired result, I must gain her confidence.

As I lived at her father's house, there was no lack of opportunities. And then she used to walk to and from school with me, along a wooded lane. The school was more than a mile distant, and we carried our dinners with us. I sometimes wondered why she remained at school so long.

It did not take me long to discover that Mildred's hair was not red, but pure golden, and in our walks I used to gaze in mute admiration whenever the sun came out and glorified it. I also definitely ascertained that her face was a perfect oval; that her chin was not too pointed or receding; that her eyes were not too light in colour, but just light enough; and I would have sworn that there was not a freckle on her innocent young face.

At the end of a year I went to London to read law under the protecting wing of a rich relative, who was to do wonders for me. I should come back some day, I knew; in fact, I told Mildred so, standing by a great oak tree at the turning of the lane where I bade her good-bye.

We made no pledges, for pledges seemed so superfluous.

The sun came shining down upon her hair, and so transformed it into amber with its rays, that I stood back a pace and watched her with strangely reverent joy, soon banished by the sadness of the parting kiss, when she cried a little, and I gulped down something that seemed rising in my throat, pulled my hat over my eyes, and strolled away with her image photographed on my heart.

Years went by, and still I carried that picture in my heart; a dainty little picture, the cherry lips just parted, the eyes filled with a tender, loving light, the sunlight shedding a halo about the golden hair.

I could see it best in the dark alone, with its background of wood and meadow, of giant oaks and lovely wild flowers, of green grass, and little, winding brooks.

Do you wonder that, when my moustache finally arrived, and I, grown stronger and taller, was said to have a handsome and striking appearance, and society in my London home looked on me kindly and approvingly, nevertheless, my affections remained proof against temptation? Or that when my law practice grew, and I accumulated money, and fond mammas and bewitching daughters beset me, the picture remained the same, and I was true to it.

I did not write; it was part of our understanding that I should not. I was to come back when my fortune was secured—come back to claim her for my own, while all the neighbours would be surprised at our happy little romance.

It was a beautiful June day when I alighted from the train at Worden, five miles distant from the old schoolhouse.

I was not known at Worden—it was not "our" station.

No one should be made aware of my identity until I had divulged it to Mildred.

Oddly enough, for the first time, the possibility of change having taken place during my absence occurred to me.

Of the unalterable condition of the supreme fact which was responsible for my return, however, there could be no shadow of doubt.

At the end of half an hour, I stopped in front of a farmhouse, with the double object of definitely ascertaining my whereabouts and making inquiries concerning the Coltons.

"Well, ye won't find any of the Coltons in the old village now," said the young farmer. "Which one of 'em in particular did you want to see; or did you expect to find all of 'em there?"

"All of them, of course," I answered. "First there's Old Joseph——"

"Well, I should think you had been away somewhere! Why, man, Old Joseph's been dead these seven years!"

Then he told me what had become of each one except Mildred.

I braced myself for the worst.

Was she dead, or dead to me—married? The suspense was horrible.

As if to aggravate it, his wife appeared at the door—a great, stout, unlovely woman, her skirts bedraggled, her fiery hair flying over her face and down her back in unkempt tangles; a dirty, squalling babe in her arms, and two other equally unprepossessing children peering through the doorway.

Then turning to me the man said:

"This is my wife, Millie Colton as used to be. What'd ye say your name was, sir?"

* * * * *

Here I am back among my books again. As I am alone in my office, I take from my private receptacle a lock of hair which I had kept for years, and I see that it is red, violently red, and has been all the time.

That her chin was peaked and receding, and her laugh a very silly giggle, and her eyes were a whitish grey. Strange, but I can even remember freckles now!

J. C. Burrough.

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HOMESPUN YARNS.

By LEVIN CARNAC.

III.—DURING HER MAJESTY'S PLEASURE.

One of the most interesting men I ever met was a gentleman of very manifest culture and education who represented himself to me on our mutual introduction as a retired physician, late of Her Majesty's Criminal Lunatic Asylum at Broadmoor. I got into conversation with him during a slow but very comfortable passage from Antwerp to London in the once popular but now almost forgotten *Baron Osy*.

The course of our talk somehow turned on the then comparatively new theories which in the present day are tending to reduce all phases of crime to mere manifestations of more or less obscure mental disease. My companion held these views somewhat strongly, though in a modified form, and from the grasp of the subject that he displayed he was evidently well qualified to form an opinion on it.

When he told me of his profession, which I had already guessed, he went on to give me a detailed description of a case within his own experience, which he held to bear out his view of the origin of crime in disease.

A few years back from the time he told me the story, a young doctor, who had crowned a brilliant academic career by taking the M.D. degree of London with distinguished honours, bought a prosperous practice in one of the Metropolitan suburbs, and began his professional life under what seemed to be the brightest possible auspices.

After a year of hard work, during which he won golden opinions from his patients, he took a month's holiday on the Continent, and came back with a very pretty, foreign-looking wife, whom he proceeded to introduce to his rapidly widening circle of acquaintances through the usual medium of a series of "at homes."

For the first year or so the young doctor and his wife lived in an unbroken dream of mutual confidence and affection, which seemed to be finally perfected when their baby boy came to draw them closer than ever together with his clinging little hands.

This child was the only one that came to them, and by the time he was a little over twelve months old his idolising father had terribly good reason to be thankful that he remained alone in the nursery.

Early in the third year of their married life the husband began to miss more or less valuable little trifles from the house, and one or two servants were dismissed on the unproved suspicion of dishonesty. To do this went strongly against the strict notions of their puzzled master, who made the manner of their going as easy as he could for them in consideration of lack of actual proof of their supposed guilt. At last, however, a housemaid was accused point-blank by the doctor's wife of stealing a very valuable lace shawl, and on a search being challenged by the girl the shawl was found in her box covered by a false bottom made of pasted newspapers.

It was useless for the housemaid to protest her innocence in the face of such circumstantial proof as this, and she was dismissed on the spot without a character.

After this the thefts ceased for a few weeks, and then a gold watch and chain, worth together over £50, vanished out of the doctor's dressing-room one night while he was away at a case to which he had been called up. It was in its case when he went out. Of that he was quite positive. When he came back he glanced to where it always stood to see how long he had been out, and it was gone.

His wife was still asleep, as he had left her when he went out, and he was forced to the conclusion that the thief must have stolen through the bedroom into the dressing-room where the watch was, and back again without waking her. He said nothing about his loss then, but lay down and passed the balance of the night racking his brain to discover some clue to the mysterious series of thefts of which he was being made the victim. By the morning he had got no farther than a resolution to keep his own counsel on the subject of his latest loss.

Three or four days passed and there was no mention of the stolen watch. On the fourth morning he heard his wife tidying up his dressing-room, as she had been accustomed to do ever since their marriage. She could not possibly fail to notice that the watch was missing from its usual place, and as she came out the doctor felt sure that she would say something that would oblige him to tell her that it had followed the rest of the vanished valuables. To his unutterable astonishment, she made no allusion whatever to the fact that it was gone.

From surprise to suspicion was but a step, and horrible and unheard of as the suspicion seemed, it fastened instantly on his puzzled, agitated mind with a force that made it impossible to shake it off.

That morning he went through his consulting-room work like an automaton. His well-drilled intellect did what was demanded of it with no apparent direction from his will, and all the while his mind was busy with a hundred forgotten little incidents which cropped up now to strengthen the dreadful fear that was driving him mad. Seen with his present mental vision, every one of the robberies appeared to have some trifling detail that connected his wife with it, and then at last came a flash of memory that fused these crowding details into one fatally coherent whole.

He remembered that on the night the watch was stolen the bedroom door was locked on the inside, and that he had sprung the catch of the outer door of his dressing-room, as he had got into the habit of doing since the thefts had commenced. It was thus impossible that anyone but his wife could have been in the room during his absence.

So, in an agony of mind, he passed the first two hours of his working day, and at length the last patient was seen, and the time came for him to go on his rounds.

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She threw herself on the floor at his feet.

He put on his hat and coat and gloves, and, for the first time since his marriage, left the house without saying good-bye to his wife.

As he walked down the drive to his carriage, he met the postman, and asked him if he had any letters for him.

"Yes, sir, here's a registered packet that has come back through the Dead Letter Office owing to the party having gone away. But I believe it's addressed to Mrs. Morton."

"Never mind, I know what it is. Give it to me. It will be all right."

The wretched man took the heavy package, and slipped it into his pocket. Then he signed the receipt, and went on to his carriage. As soon as the door of the brougham was closed he took out the packet and opened it. It contained, as he expected, his watch and chain, and a letter in his wife's handwriting, to which, with almost inconceivable folly or hardihood, she had added her name and address. The letter was written to her mother, who was evidently intended to pass the stolen watch on to some man who appeared to have some influence or claim on his wife.

How he got through that day Dr. Morton never knew, but by the time he got home his course of action was decided upon. He called his wife into his study, showed her the watch and the letter, and asked her to convince him that she was not a thief if she could.

For all answer she threw herself on the floor at his feet, and sobbed out a half-intelligible appeal for mercy and forgiveness.

"Mercy you shall have, but forgiveness for such a mean and despicable sin as this is impossible, so don't waste tears and words in asking it. If you can tell me anything that will make it less in my eyes, for Heaven's sake do so at once!"

Then she raised herself from the floor unaided, for he would not touch her, and standing before him told the story of her guilt. She was the daughter of a convicted gentleman-thief. Her mother had lied when she told him that her father was dead. He was in prison when Morton wooed and won his beautiful, tainted wife, and now he was free, and she had stolen from her husband at his bidding because he had bidden her, and because something evil in her nature had made her find a vile and stealthy pleasure in her sin. She felt it in her blood, and she could sometimes almost do murder that successful theft might come of it.

That was all—at first sobbed out in broken sentences, and at last spoken dry-eyed and hard-voiced with the frozen calmness of despair—but it was enough to spread the rest of Morton's life like a desert before him. He gave the miserable woman who must still bear his name all the money he had in the house—nearly £200—and bade her begone, refusing even to let her see her child again before she went.

As soon as the door had closed behind her, he went up to the nursery and abruptly ordered the nurse to leave the room and locked her out. The next morning he had disappeared, and the baby was found lying dead in its cot. There was an inquest, and the verdict was death in convulsions, owing to lack of proper attendance and care.

Three days later the father gave himself up to the police and told the whole story, saying in conclusion that he had watched the child die in convulsions rather than save it to grow up and enter upon its inevitable heritage of sin and shame. He was tried and found guilty of manslaughter, but as the jury were of opinion that when he let the child die his mind was affected by the discovery of his wife's guilt, he was sent to Broadmoor during Her Majesty's pleasure.

A few weeks ago he was discharged after nearly five years' detention, and he has just been over to Paris to see his father-in-law guillotined for the murder of the woman who was once his wife.

As the story progressed, the manner of the narrator led me first to the suspicion and then to the conviction that the narrator was telling his own life history.

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A Guiltless Accomplice.

"So you don't believe that a man can be an accomplice in a crime, and yet innocent of any criminal intention? Well, I was such an accomplice once, and, if you haven't anything better to do than listen, I'll tell you the story."

We agreed *nem. con.* There were five of us in the smoking-room of the Pullman car of the 3.40 express from St. Pancras to Manchester, and the speaker was a nattily-dressed, clean-shaven old gentleman with whom one would no more have associated anything criminal than one would have accused a bishop of burglary.

The conversation had turned on a recent and very celebrated case, in connection with which those who sympathised with the accused had got up a petition for her release from prison on the plea of hysteria-neurosis and non-responsibility.

We had exhausted the subject, and everyone, of course, retained his own opinion. Thus we had come to a standstill, and were quite ready for a new departure.

This was the story of the old gentleman in the corner seat:

"Twenty-five years ago I was cashier in the head office of one of the oldest banking firms in the Eastern Counties. The bank was owned by two brothers, whom, for the purpose of story-telling, I will call Melville, and their nephew, Reginald Matheson, who was the junior partner in the concern. He had inherited his share in the business from his mother; and, as he had little, if any, turn for commerce or finance, his uncles just let him draw his share of the profits, and treated him more as a sleeping partner than anything else.

"So far as we knew him, he was a quiet, studious, gentlemanly young fellow, with a strong bent towards out-of-the-way, and what were then considered rather uncanny, branches of science. In fact, we in the office always used to say that he was much better fitted for a medical or scientific career, than for business. I can't say that he was popular with any of us. There was something about him which no one could understand—a sort of mental magnetism which impelled to obedience to his most trivial wishes, and yet repelled just as strongly anything like affection or even friendliness.

"He used to spend about eight months of every year in the town where the bank was situated, occupying rooms of his own, and coming every morning to the office for two or three hours; and though he only seemed to play at banking, as it appeared to us, yet he once or twice astonished me by the knowledge he had somehow managed to gain of the details of the business.

"How he spent the other four months of the year no one, not even his uncles, seemed to have much idea. He used to disappear towards the end of August, and come back to spend Christmas at home. The general opinion was that he employed his holidays wandering about the Continent, for the few letters that were received from him nearly always bore a foreign post-mark.

"It was just before he went away for one of these holidays twenty-five years ago next August, that I had occasion to take a rough balance of the books in view of a considerable loan which the bank was about to make to a large firm in Ipswich, and when I came to compare our capital on paper with the cash and securities in the strong-room, I was horrified to find a discrepancy of over £5,000. It was in vain that I pored over ledgers and day-books and cash-books, searching hopelessly for the error which I knew I should never find. Turn which way I would I was faced by the dreadful fact that over £5,000 was missing, and that I had not the slightest idea where it had gone to. Night after night I stayed late at the office, hoping against hope that I might be able to solve the terrible mystery before my duty to my employers compelled me to place the matter before them.

"At eleven o'clock on the fifth night of my vigil I had made up my mind to give up the task and formally acquaint the partners with their loss the next morning, when the door of my little private office opened and Mr. Reginald walked in.

"'Why, what's the matter, Johnson?' he said, coming round and looking over my shoulder, 'Have you got book-keeping on the brain or are you so busy over that affair of the Ipswich people?'

"He was one of my employers, and he would have to know the truth within a few hours. I felt that it was useless to keep the secret any longer, and so I turned in my chair and, looking him straight in the face, said, as steadily as I could:

"'The Ipswich affair is all right, Mr. Reginald, but either I am mad or something else is very wrong. There is over £5,000 difference, on the wrong side, between the books and the assets of the bank, and to-morrow I shall have to tell your uncles that I am utterly unable to account for the loss.'

"As I spoke he fixed his dark eyes on mine, and for several minutes looked steadily into them without saying

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a word. As each moment passed I felt a strange influence creeping over me, paralysing my intellect and numbing my senses as though some strong opiate was working upon my brain. Then, suddenly, my intellect grew clear again, but the will power to direct it was gone. Like one who hears a voice in a dream I heard him say:

"'Five thousand pounds gone and you, the chief cashier, cannot account for it! Nonsense, man! You must be dreaming. Let me see the books.'

"Like an automaton I turned the pages over for him, pointing out the various entries, and comparing them with the memoranda which showed the actual cash and securities in hand.

"He examined them all attentively, and then he said, in a voice that seemed quite strange to me:

"'It's not the cash and securities that are wrong, but your entries. How can you have been so stupid? Look here, and here, and here!'

"As he spoke, he fluttered the leaves over before me and put his finger on item after item, which he declared to be wrong, but which I knew to be right, for I had verified them again and again. Yet so impotent was my will that I could not contradict him in any particular. Then he said decisively:

"'These must be altered, Johnson, or you will get into a very serious scrape. You are responsible for these things, and embezzlement is a nasty charge even for an innocent cashier to meet. You must alter these entries at once.'

"I heard the disgraceful imputation without feeling the slightest impulse to repel it, and said helplessly:

"'I cannot alter them; the alterations would be detected at once. To-morrow I shall be ruined and a felon. Heaven help me!'

"The words were not mine, and yet I uttered them with my own lips, though I could have choked myself for saying them.

"As I bent forward and covered my face with my hands, the fiend in human shape who stood at my side laid his hand on my shoulder, and said in a kind, gentle voice:

"'Come, Johnson, don't despair over a little matter like this. Granted that you have made a few clerical mistakes which you don't think you can rectify. As it happens, I can help you out of the difficulty, and as I should be very sorry to see any harm come to an old and faithful servant of the bank like you, I'll do it and we'll say no more about it. Give me the books.'

"I got up and gave him my chair. As he sat down he took a key out of his waistcoat pocket, and said: 'Go and get the sherry out of the cupboard in my room. I should like a glass, and I don't think a drop would do you any harm.'

"I took the key and got the wine, much as an obedient dog might have fetched a stick for his master. When I got back, Mr. Reginald poured out a couple of glasses and gave me one. As I drank it he fixed his eyes on me again, and said: 'Sleep!' and there and then I slept as quietly as a child might have done.

"I woke feeling his hand on my brow, and hearing him say:

"'Now come and correct the books; you will find it easy enough.'

"Following the motion of his hand, I sat down in my chair again, and once more scanned the long columns. To my astonishment I found that several large items had disappeared as utterly as though they had never been written in.

"'I don't think you will find any difficulty in putting the balances all right now, Johnson. You see you have only to write in these amounts as they really ought to be; run the alterations carefully through all the books, and the matter is at an end. It's a most fortunate thing that I happened to look in to-night. There would have been a most awful row in the morning, and goodness only knows what might have come of it if my uncles had taken a hard view of the matter. However, it's all right now, and when you have made the corrections you can go home and sleep with a quiet mind.'

"As a machine obeys the directing hand of man, so did I obey the master-mind that had taken possession of my will. Without question or remonstrance, I, whose very religion had, till then, been commercial rectitude, deliberately falsified the books in my charge to conceal a crime that I had not committed. With the skill born of long practice, I wrote in the false entries, so that the keenest eye could not have detected the huge fraud that lay concealed beneath their orderly coherence.

"When the dreadful task was at length completed, and I rose from my chair, Mr. Reginald laid his hands on my shoulders, and, looking hard into my eyes, said:

"'Now, Johnson, listen to me. Henceforth, you and I have only one will between us, and that is mine. Take my advice, and obey the impulses which will affect you in future without hesitation. They will come from me, no matter whether I am near or far, and to resist or disobey them would involve you in confusion that would infallibly be disastrous to you, while they would not affect me. Follow them, and all will be well with you; disobey them, and you be hopelessly ruined. Now be off to bed, and bear in mind what I have told you.'

"I said 'Good-night,' mechanically, and went home like one who walks in a dream. I was unmarried, and so there was no one to notice any peculiarity in my manner, and when I got to bed I fell at once into a deep sleep which lasted until my usual hour of waking.

"The next day the partners went through the books and decided to grant the Ipswich loan. Everything appeared perfectly regular, even to me, and such was my state of mind that the doings of the past night were as something that belonged to another life and had no connection with the affairs of this.

"A couple of days later, Mr. Reginald drew a handsome cheque and departed on his usual holiday.

"From the night of his departure until his return I led an existence of which no novelist ever depicted the equal. As I would not believe the story myself if the terrible experience were not my own, of course I cannot find fault with any of you gentlemen if you find yourselves unable to take it as fact. It was a double life, made up of the most hideously contrasting opposites that could well be conceived. During the day I was a sober, steady-going man of business, doing my allotted work with the regularity of a machine, and having no thought outside my office and my books. But as soon as I laid my head on my pillow I drifted into a land of dreams, where I seemed to lead the life of a lost spirit wandering without rest over the earth.

"I travelled night after night through splendid cities which I had never seen with my waking eyes, but which nevertheless seemed strangely familiar to me, and in each one I repeated the delirium of unholy dissipation that I had gone through in the one I had just left. I spent hours in gambling-halls, gorgeous with lights and decorations, and thronged with pale men in evening-dress and hectic women splendidly attired and glittering

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with jewellery. I saw great sums of money won and lost with a laugh that had no pleasure in it.

"Every now and then would come intervals of delicious languor and rest, passed in paradises of flowers fanned by cool sea-breezes and warmed by everlasting sunshine. Then the scene would change again, and I would see men and women selling their souls for money and pleasure, and tempting each other to destruction for a few hours of fierce enjoyment.

"After a while I became aware of another presence mingling constantly in the fast succeeding scenes, and this took the shape of a young and beautiful woman, who seemed to be constantly seeking to draw my master-spirit from the revels to the rest, and more often than not succeeded. Then at last came the awakening.

"The last night of my dream-purgatory was spent in a gambling-den in a city that I had come to know as Paris. The scene stands as vividly before me now as it did the morning I woke from the dream in which I saw it. For the ten hours that I slept, Reginald Matheson the quiet, studious youth of his English life, sat over a long, green-covered table marked into divisions with chalk lines, and staked handful after handful of notes and gold on the cards as they were turned up by the dealer. The luck seemed dead against him, and at last everything was gone. Then the banker gave him a piece of blue paper, and he signed that, and staked again, and lost.

"As I woke I could hear ringing in my ears the words: 'I will discharge my debt in a week from now.'

"The next night was a blank, and the next I stayed late at the office, partly because I had some work to do, and partly because I dreaded to go back to my terrible dreamland.

"A little before twelve o'clock I was putting my books away when I heard the private door of the bank open, and a moment later I saw Mr. Reginald walk into my office where the safe was, and take a bunch of keys out of his pocket. He looked at me for an instant, and said:

"'Mind! you have not seen me here. Not a word about this!'

"As he spoke he put his key into the safe-lock, and pulled the door open. The next moment I heard a heavy tread in the outer office, and a policeman ran into the room.

"The next thing that I remember was hearing a shot fired, a groan, and a heavy fall, and feeling a pistol forced into my hand. Then I must have fainted, for I remember nothing until I woke the next morning in a cell in the police-station.

"The next day I was brought up before the magistrates at Chelmsford with Reginald Matheson charged with complicity in the murder of the policeman, who had been found shot through the heart the night before in my office.

Not to make my story too long, I may say that we were both committed for trial to the sessions, and there found guilty of murder.

"The day before the one fixed for our execution at Chelmsford, the door of my cell opened, and the woman of my dreams came in, and said without any word of introduction: 'You are guiltless and shall be free. Reggie and I are guilty, and we shall pay the penalty, but not as these people think. Good-bye; you will be free to-morrow.'

"The words of my strange visitor proved true, for the next morning, instead of being summoned to execution, I was told that my fellow-prisoner had committed suicide in the night, leaving a confession in writing that detailed the whole story of his crimes, and explained how he had made me his innocent accomplice in them from the first fraud on the bank to the murder of the policeman who had followed him on his last clandestine visit.

"Twenty-four hours later came, from the Home Office, the formal order for my release, and then I learnt that my mysterious visitor had been found dead in bed the same morning that Reginald Matheson baulked the hangman in his cell.

"How was it done? Well, the post-mortems showed that they both died of morphia poisoning, and the warder in attendance said at the inquest that, as the woman kissed Matheson for the last time before leaving him, she said:

"'We have lived and loved, whatever the price, and this kiss shall be sweeter death than the law would give.'

"The warder took this for romance, but found it to be deadly reality when he opened the cell in the morning."

EDWARD MOORE.

GENTLEMAN (indignantly): "You praised your kitchen coal up to the skies, and said it was most economical. Why, it won't burn at all!"

Coal Dealer (coolly): "Well, what could you have more economical than that?"

"REGINALD," she said, to a wealthy young dandy who had been paying his attentions to her. "I would like to ask you one very serious question."

"What is it, my dear?" he replied.

"Would you object to marry mamma if I refused you? You see, we really don't want to lose you."

THE reporter had just come in from a murder case. It was a rainy day, and he had to cross a ploughed field on foot.

"I see," observed the chief editor, looking with much displeasure at his large and muddy boots, "you have brought the scene of the murder with you."

"Yes," answered the reporter apologetically, "I've got to have some ground for my story, you know."

The Rose of Judah.

THIS is the title of a new serial story by Mr. George Griffith, which starts in *Pearson's Weekly* published on Saturday, October 1st.

It will be an excursion into a field which so far he has not yet trodden, notwithstanding the wide range of subjects covered by his novels.

The scene will be laid in Babylon just at the crisis of the Assyrian Empire's fate, and, talking broadly, deals with the love of Belshazzar, the Prince Regent, for Miriam, the daughter of Mishael, who herself is already in love with Belzan, Captain of the King's Guard.

There is plenty of fighting and exciting incident in the story, and no reader of *Short Stories* should fail to get a copy of *Pearson's Weekly* dated October 8th (published on Saturday, October 1st).

If the first instalment does not appeal to you, then you need not continue, and no harm will be done. But I'm sure you will like it!

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READY OCTOBER 14th.

ONE MILLION COPIES

OF

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THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

ORDER IT TO-DAY.

THE Readers of *Short Stories* will have observed the above announcement in our recent issues, and will, no doubt, have formed the very proper conclusion that THE ROYAL MAGAZINE would be issued from these offices. In that they are right, and the time has come when we can talk to them about it.

Some of our Readers may know that an attempt has recently been made to start a Threepenny Magazine and has failed. There is at present no Magazine in this country to be obtained at Threepence. On October 14th there will be a Threepenny Magazine in the shape of THE ROYAL—a Magazine that can, and will, be sold by every bookstall clerk and newsvendor in the country at one price only, and that price Threepence.

There will not be a bookstall clerk or newsagent in the whole of the Kingdom who is not selling THE ROYAL MAGAZINE on October 14th.

A Threepenny Magazine can be made to pay if it is intelligently managed, and provided it obtains a colossal circulation. We can undertake this management, but to our readers we must appeal for the colossal circulation.

We are printing One Million Copies of No. 1, knowing we shall sell them. We want to print and sell two millions. There is only one way in which we can do that. If every reader of our papers will order a copy at once, sending in the order form to his newsman to-day, and will see that he obtains his copy or copies on the 14th, it means there will not be a copy obtainable throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom on the 15th. Then we can start re-printing right away to get the other million ready.

But if you keep your order back for days and weeks you won't give us time to reprint before No. 2 is upon us.

One million is a big order, a very big order, for No. 1 of a magazine. Yet we who have made and seen this Magazine know we shall sell every single copy.

We want to sell them in one day.

Please give this Order Form to your regular newsman at once.

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A STUPID HERO.

THIS hot afternoon, two young men had secured the coveted table in the balconied alcove off the dining-room of the Hotel Centra in Rio de Janeiro.

The month was March, when the sun is fierce and the yellow fever is in its deadliest activity, but the Rua do Ouvidor beneath the balcony was crowded with an excited multitude.

Rio is Brazil, and the Ouvidor is Rio, though to foreign eyes it is only an alley that runs through the heart of the city. The principal hotels, shops, and newspaper offices wall it with low, plastered buildings. Before every door an upward slanting staff supports the green flag of Brazil. From even a short perspective the flags on either side seem to intermingle, and the little balconies become hardly a handshake apart.

Usually, the tide of Brazilian life oozes gently up and down this narrow channel, but the multitude these two young men looked down upon swept by furiously. News had just arrived that the Bahian rebel general, Consulheiro, had again driven back the government troops, and Rio had immediately lighted one of its customary after-dinner revolutions.

But neither of the young men in the balcony was paying much attention to the feverish scene beneath them. Both had their watches on the table and both were looking earnestly at pictures in the backs of them.

"Sure, and my wife is the sweetest girl in the world, bar none," broke forth little Captain Bryan, who commanded a British tramp steamer anchored in the harbour and loaded with coal, which the gas company refused to land just yet, preferring to pay demurrage to the certainty of having the excited government seize it as soon as it was taken from the protection of the English flag. Yet the young captain smiled brightly, looking down at the picture in his watch. Even his blue eyes smiled.

"She would be crazy if she knew the old *Fairfax* was likely to be cooped up a month longer in this hornet's nest, with yellow fever as a steady business, and a revolution as a relaxation. Molly's my sweetheart yet, Bob, old boy, though we have been spliced three years. It's the first cruise she has missed, but, of course, I couldn't bring her to Rio in the month of March. She loves me and I love her, and it isn't right for her to be longing in Liverpool and me roasting in Rio, making a bargain for you to write her all about it if I join the other captains in the cemetery."

Glancing down at the table, he caught sight of the laughing, girlish face in his watch. His indignant mood vanished, and he smiled back at her once more.

Robert Morris, big and muscular, the pride of the British athletic world, nodded gravely when Captain Bryan ceased. But he did not raise his eyes from the picture in the back of his own watch. It was that of a young woman, not a girl, whose marvellous beauty spoke of regal strength, of self-command, and inherent force. The pose of the shapely head, the wide-open eyes, the delicately firm chin all told the same proud story. But there was an indescribable something about the mouth that was pathetic, as if she had a heartache and would not own up to it. Bob Morris' steady eye showed only tenderness, however, as he looked down at this beauty framed in gold.

"My wife is my sweetheart, too," said he, "but I am not hers. I love her with all my might, but she does not love me. I do not blame her, you know. She has been very good to me and will always be as true as steel, but she is a brilliant, strong-natured woman, and must be true to herself first of all. How could it be expected, captain, that she would love a stupid fellow like me? Though I am in Rio and she is in London, the separation is not wrong, as is yours from your wife. Yellow Jack might scoop me in and not do a bad day's work. Still, if I go first, you must write to her about it. As for this revolution, it promises sport. Viva Monarchy!"

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"Shut up roaring 'Viva Monarchy,'" said Bryan, pointing significantly at the crowd below, now howling towards the plaster building where the monarchic newspaper had its office. "What can an honest man fight for in a country where they combine orange and green in one flag? You are already mixed up too much in this revolution as it is. Now let's take down the addresses."

So the little Irishman wrote in his note-book the address of Mrs. Robert Morris, of London, while the big Englishman wrote in his that of Mrs. Jerry Bryan, of Liverpool. Both men were silent for a few moments. Then Bryan said solemnly:

"It's a bargain: if I go, you will write to my wife, and if you go, I write to yours."

"It's a bargain," repeated Morris. The young men shook hands hard across the table. They smoked in thoughtful silence for a while.

"Bob," said the Captain impulsively, "if you should happen to write to Molly, tell her how much I loved her; promise me that."

"If I should, which I think very improbable," answered Morris gently, "I will surely tell her."

"And—and, Bob, me boy," Bryan stammered with a delicate sympathy which made him fear to hurt the big heart of his comrade, "if I should chance to write to your wife, shall I tell her how much you loved her?"

"Yes," answered Morris quietly, "I should like to have her know it."

"Didn't you ever tell her yourself?" Bryan demanded in open-eyed astonishment.

"No, I never did. She must have seen it, of course, but I have tried to do the real thing, and keep from annoying her as much as possible," replied Morris, his face flushing. "It's been hard sometimes."

The warm-hearted little Irishman stared into the quiet, strong face of his big companion.

"Robert Morris," he said, his brogue coming out strongly, "Ye are a fool."

"Let me tell you about it, and then you will understand," pleaded Morris. He shut the hand which lay listlessly on the table, until the knuckles grew white.

"Grace Lawrence and I were brought up together. Her father was my guardian. I am rich, you know. She ruled me imperiously, though she was the younger by several years. I went to college and floundered about in my usual clumsy way until I got my eyes opened.

"Grace grew to be the proud, beautiful woman of this portrait. Many men were ruled by her, strong talented men to whom I could not hold a candle. I soon saw the absurdity of thinking that such a woman could ever love Bob Morris. I made up my mind that if I really loved her, I would show it by thinking first and always of her happiness; so I never annoyed her by telling of a love she could not return, but took the place of a 'big brother' she so generously made for me. I could not help having a heartache once in a while, for I wanted to take her in my arms and hold her close, if only for a moment. But I didn't."

Bryan's lips moved as if repeating his former observation, but he said nothing.

"Everything went wrong when old Mr. Lawrence died, though I tried to make it go right. I must have been stupid in some way. Mr. Lawrence's estate was in such a bad way that Grace, heart-broken over the loss of her father, was left with almost nothing. I was arranging with the lawyers to have a lot of my money transferred to her as if her father had left it, when she found it out.

"One night she came into the library where I was looking over the legal papers. She was all in black, very slender and girlish. Her face was pale and her eyes were misty, as if she had been crying. She came quietly up behind me and put her hands on my shoulder.

"'Bob,' she said softly, 'dear old Bob, I know all about it. It must not be.'

"I had planned a story to tell her, but it all went out of my stupid head. I just thought of how frail and sad she looked, and how horrible it would be if she had to face harsh things.

"'Oh, Grace,' I cried out in consternation, 'it must be. You wouldn't be as hard on me as that. Remember, I am your big brother, and it would drive me wild to think of your giving up things. What are those lawyers thinking of to let you know?'

"She smiled at me, and settled down on the arm of the big leather chair. 'No, Bob, you are the noblest man I know, but you are not really my brother in the eyes of the world.' She took up one of the legal papers and began to tear it into small pieces. I marched about the study thinking hard, but bewildered. I knew how determined Grace was, and how proudly she faced the world. What with blind fright for her, and the strength of my love and her sitting there resolutely tearing up a fortune I quite lost my head.

"'Grace, dear,' I said, still marching up and down, 'you don't love me, of course, but I am your big brother, you know, and I am going to ask if you love anybody else.'

"'No, Bob,' she said quietly, 'I don't love anybody else.' The torn paper was falling from her hands in little white showers.

"'You won't let me take care of you as your brother,' I plunged on, 'could you let me watch over you as your husband? You don't love anyone else, and you trust me. I would care for you very tenderly, and would try not to bore or bother you. It would make me very happy, dear, to feel that I should always have the right to protect you.'

"She never looked up, and the white bits of paper still fluttered down.

"'Would it really make you happy?' she asked me.

"Her head hung down, and her voice sounded as if she were crying.

"'Of course, it would,' I said indignantly.

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"'Then you shall be my big husband,' she answered softly, and almost ran out of the study."

"Didn't you kiss her?" demanded Bryan.

"Why, no," Bob answered.

Bryan actually snorted with disgust.

"Of course," went on Bob, "I saw she was marrying me out of the goodness of her generous heart. During the two months that intervened between then and our marriage, I mapped out a set of rules for myself. I vowed to watch over her as tenderly and unobtrusively as I could, but I would not force my love upon her, as if looking for a reward.

"We were married very quietly, it being so soon after her father's death. Although I tried to give Grace everything she wanted and kept a tight rein on my longings, I soon felt that she was miserable with me. It was no use, Captain, I could not help seeing that she found even the light ties that bound her to me irksome. So I fixed it with my lawyers that they should attend carefully to all her wishes, and I am here. It seemed the only way to make her happier. I am a mistake, and a mistake should be rubbed out."

The young man stopped abruptly.

"That's all," he said, nervously lighting a fresh cigar, but not looking at Bryan.

"Bob Morris," repeated Bryan gently, "ye are a double-dyed fool, and I am going out to Tijuca to write some letters. You had better come out, too, and get a whiff of mountain air. It is positively suicidal for you to stay down here in the heart of the city. I don't see how you have escaped Yellow Jack so long."

"I'll walk up as far as the Bonde with you, but I have arranged for that old rebel, Theopolo and some of his friends to meet me at my little house to-night," answered Morris, summoning the waiter by a violent hiss.

It was not a long walk to the square, where the mule cars for Tijuca had their station, but Captain Bryan complained of being tired before they reached the place.

"This infernal sun gives me a headache and pains in my back," he said fretfully, as he climbed on the car. But when the mules galloped away, he turned and waved his hand gaily to Morris.

After an hour's ride in the shaky tramcar, the mountains which girt Rio so closely tower straight up. The captain hissed at the driver and stopped the tram at the gateway to a tropical garden. The air was filled with music of fountains. Slender palms rose high. Bamboo hedges arched the walks. Orange trees bent under their burden of fruit. Ferns grew rank and tall.

Somewhat back from the road, surrounded by palms, the low square structure of a fine old Brazilian mansion, now "Hotel Tijuca," shone white against the verdure of the mountains. Bryan walked slowly up the avenue under the palms and entered a great hall open on three sides. He flung himself down in a chair amid a group of sea captains who made this hotel their headquarters.

They were sitting silent and moody. Yellow fever was their sole topic of conversation. Dread of it showed itself on their anxious faces. Usually, Bryan was full of scornful raillery of this timid colony, but this evening he sat silent, too, wondering what made his head ache so terribly.

"I think I'll go to my room and write some letters. My head feels bad. It's this great heat," said Bryan at last. Several captains hastily moved away from him as he rose. Bryan's merry scorn returned for an instant.

"Lumsley, my boy," he said in mock solicitude, "I see the whites of your eyes are of a yellow tinge."

Lumsley gasped in sudden terror, and rushed away for his favourite medicine, while Bryan went to his letters.

Several times the blinding headache forced him to stop writing, but at last he had finished. Ringing his bell, he gave the servant two letters, telling him to post them at once. One letter was directed to Mrs. Jerry Bryan, Liverpool. The other was to Mrs. Robert Morris, London.

"Dear little Molly! Stupid old Bob!" he murmured, his bright smile coming back for an instant. Then he put his hand over his eyes and groped his way to the bed. "I am so tired, so tired," he cried wearily.

Towards the evening of the next day, Bob Morris, cool and careless in his snowy duck suit, sauntered down the Ouvidor, passed into Rua Primo do Março, had a glance into the Globo, and finally arrived at Charlie Hues', the ship chandler's where the English and American captains congregated each day.

"Hasn't Captain Bryan come down?" Morris asked of Captain Lumsley, who sat by himself in a corner, rinsing his mouth out from time to time with vinegar.

"Down," repeated Lumsley dismally, "I should say he was down. Down with the worst kind of Yellow Jack at our hotel. He ought to have known better than to bring it there."

Without a reply, Morris wrenched open the door to the little room where Dr. King, the physician, had his office.

"Come with me at once, doctor," Morris cried. "Poor Jerry Bryan is down with the fever at Tijuca."

They found him delirious, rolling his head about on the pillow, and muttering incoherently. Bob knelt beside the bed, almost crying in the tenderness of his big heart. The moaning stopped, and Bryan groped about till he got his arms round Bob's neck. The hand was cold and moist. The handsome face was cadaverous and leaden. It wore the look of dread that comes to those that are stricken by the most fatal kind of yellow fever.

"Oh, doctor," cried Bob, looking up and asking no questions. He knew he must soon write to Mrs. Bryan of Liverpool.

All that night Bob sat by the edge of the bed and cared for Bryan with the tenderness of a woman. In his delirium he talked always of "Molly, dear little Molly." He was on the bridge of the *Fairfax*, bringing the steamer into Liverpool.

"Sure, and the mate can take her now, Mr. Pilot. I must run below and get a shave before I go ashore. Molly will be waiting at the dock, and will want to rub her cheek against mine when she kisses me," he cried out, with a faint return of his old buoyancy.

Towards morning he grew fretful. He moaned over and over again: "I want my sweetheart, I want my sweetheart." But when the day was dawning, grey and misty, Bryan came to himself and knew that his head was on Bob's shoulder.

"Thank you—old chap," he said very faintly, "when the time comes to write to Molly go to England yourself. Don't be a fool any longer. I've done the best I could for you. My—my watch, Bob."

The watch lay on the table close by, and Bob reached it without changing his position. Bryan fumbled at the

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case, then looked appealingly at Bob. Divining what he wanted, Bob opened the back to the picture of the laughing girl.

"My sweetheart," Bryan whispered lovingly. He raised the case to his lips with faltering hands. He made as if he would kiss it, but the blood suddenly gushed from his nose and mouth, dimming the lustre of the gold, blotting out the laughing face of the girl.

So they buried him in the English cemetery, and Robert Morris, having ordered a handsome stone to mark the grave, sat down with a heavy heart to write to Mrs. Jerry Bryan of Liverpool.

Two months passed by, and Bob, fortified against a fresh remonstrance from the consul, marched up the narrow stairs to the consulate for his letters, a mail steamer having arrived that day. He found Mr. Lance, the consul, pacing up and down the outer office, evidently much disturbed.

When Morris came in, he rushed up to him and shook hands excitedly. "Just sent my man to look you up," he cried. "Most important communication! Most extraordinary, by Jove!"

"Look here," said Bob suspiciously, "what's up? Got a new argument why I should leave this charming spot?"

"I have that," replied Lance, beaming all over. "Bet you ten to one it fetches you this time. Most extraordinary, 'pon my honour! Wonderful! Marvellous! Here, come into my private office."

He pushed Morris into the doorway, but instead of following, he shut the door with a bang and began to stamp up and down the outer office, whistling "Home, Sweet Home."

Morris drew in his breath sharply, and stood motionless, staring at his wife, who stretched out her arms to him. All the old hauteur was gone. Her eyes were soft and shining. The light of a great love transfigured her face with indescribable tenderness.

"Oh, Bob," she cried with a dry sob, "oh, my husband! I love you so!"

Morris was too much amazed to move, but the beautiful woman came to him. She crept into his strong arms, pressing close to him, lifting her lips to his. Morris put his arms about her, crushing her fiercely, and began to tremble.

"Dearest, dearest," he said in glad amazement, "I never knew, I never guessed. Why didn't you tell me you loved me?"

"How could I, stupid, when you never asked me?" she returned, burrowing her face into his coat. "Oh, Bob, my heart has been so sore. I thought you married me just because you pitied me. When you went away, I was sure that you were tired of me and too generous to tell me. I've had a heartache for years and years, hungering for your love. I never would have known the dear truth if Captain Bryan had not written to me, telling how great was your love, and how you had come to this dreadful place because you thought I wanted freedom, and that you were surely going to die of yellow fever or be shot, if I was too proud to tell you I wanted you above all things.

"I was the happiest woman in the world over that letter, even though he said you were a big-hearted fool. But I was filled with dread, too, lest I should lose you just when I could let myself love you.

"So I came all alone on the first steamer that left for Rio, not even bringing my maid.

"The voyage seemed an age, but now I have found you, I don't care for anything else, and I am never going to leave you again, never. But you haven't said you love me, Bob. Say it. I want to hear you say it!"

"I love you with all my might. I have always loved you," Bob said, with such tender solemnity that Grace looked up in his face a little awe-struck.

Two days later, they stood on the deck of the mail packet, watching the grim fort Santa Cruiz sink low on the horizon.

"I have only one regret," she said, moving closer to him, "I wish I had seen Captain Bryan to thank him. Is he in Rio, or has he sailed away to some other port?"

"He has sailed away to some other port," he answered gently. ARTHUR DENHAM.

THERE was a rule in an old Debating Society which might be advantageously recommended to the House of Commons.

"That any gentleman wishing to speak the whole evening should have a room to himself."

IT is stated by "One who has been there," that at the telegraph offices of various Californian towns and cities they have forms on which is printed, "Please send me return ticket and six dollars. I'm busted." All the sender has to do is to fill in the address and signature. The receiving clerk stamps in the name of the place and date.

YOUNG Mrs. Codling (to her papa): "Oh, papa, what does the word 'contract' mean?"

Papa: "It means to make smaller, my dear. For instance heat expands and cold contracts."

Mrs. Codling: "Then it's all right. Harry told me he was contracting some heavy debts, and I was so nervous till you explained it."

A WOMAN called at a book-shop the other day, and said she would like to take a look at some "chromos," as she wanted to find something to please her son, who had worked on the farm all the summer and should be rewarded.

"Anything religious?" asked the clerk, as he ran over a lot of chromos and engravings.

"Well, no; not exactly religious," she answered. "Some of it might be solemn like, but down in the corner there ought to be a dog fight, or a man falling off a barn, or somethin' to interest the young mind."

A PRIZE FOR ARTISTS.

THE Editor of *Short Stories* offers a prize of £2 2s for the best set of six decorative head-pieces, corner-pieces, or tail-pieces suitable for reproduction in the paper. Competitors may send all head-pieces, or all tail-pieces, or all corner-pieces, or some of each. The head-pieces should contain a space for the title of the story.

The winner will not only receive a cheque for £2 2s., but will possibly have the opportunity of securing a considerable amount of further work in connection with the various publications issued from this office.

Style, shape, and size, are left entirely to the competitors.

Attempts should reach the Editor, marked "Decorative," by Monday, October 3rd.

Should the quality of the competition justify it, a number of consolation prizes will be awarded.

All attempts become the property of the Editor.

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MARGARET DANVERS stepped into the train at Edinburgh one stormy March evening, and the eyes of every person were riveted upon her. She looked the model of a fashionable beauty. She was the only woman in the carriage, and before she had fairly settled herself comfortably, all the men had mentally pronounced their opinion of her looks and style.

Her attendant, a florid man of middle age, received the slight degree of attention justified by his seeming an adjunct of the moment. As he left her he put into her hands a bunch of costly roses, which she received with a smile, and laid upon the rack the instant he was gone.

She was, in a way, a public character; but, as it happened, no one was really acquainted with her, and before long even those most deeply interested in her appearance yielded to the apathy peculiar to sleeping cars, and subsided into their newspapers or rugs.

Margaret amused herself in dreamily watching the flying snow. Too used to travelling to even look about her, she yielded to the prevailing somnambulistic influence just enough to dream without sleeping.

At first there was in her mind a confusion of events —past, present, and to come. Incidents of no importance mingled with greater ones, and her reflections became mixed with little fanciful suggestions of things long since forgotten, or rather, voluntarily put out of mind. She tried to think of her career, to recall her triumphs, and to dwell upon the possibilities of her future. She told herself that music was her life, all that she had to do with was the beautiful and the divine in art, and that the everyday existence she had struggled to rise above was henceforth nothing more than an unpleasant memory.

At twenty-eight she was her own mistress, earning an independent income through the use of her beautiful voice. The teaching days and the drudgery of the class-room had passed, and as a concert singer she was favourably known in more than one city noted for its critical taste. After a successful winter in Scotland, she was now upon her way to fulfil an engagement in London, which promised more than anything in which she had been engaged. She was in the heyday of her powers, admired, in radiant health, conscious of her beauty and talent, and entirely satisfied with life.

What did it mean that, as she looked from the window with a proud smile upon her lips, some tantalising thoughts should obtrude themselves, and the mind so entirely self-poised should feel, for the first time for years, the weakening influence of some emotional fancies? It was her boast that she was never lonely, never sad, that her whole heart was in her work.

"Never saw a promise of a worse storm," said a man near her to his companion. "Shouldn't wonder if the line is blocked a little ahead."

"Comes from the north-east," suggested the other. "If necessary, they'll put on another locomotive. We're bound to get through at any rate in this train; that's one comfort."

By nine o'clock Margaret, enveloped in a downy wrapper of dark red, lay courting sleep in her berth. Over her was spread the fur ulster, none too warm above the blankets, even for her warm blood, for the whiffs of icy air found their way every now and then into the compartment. Everything was quiet, save her thoughts, which began to utter themselves with loud, importunate voices, as if answering some call from without, independent of her control.

"I have, happily, been able to say all my life that I didn't know what nerves were," said Margaret to herself, "but I begin to think that from some inexplicable cause I am nervous."

"Richard Allen!"

She started as if the words had been spoken in her ear. Swiftly memory flew back ten years, and she saw herself standing bare-headed at the gate of her father's house in the Highlands, where her childhood had been

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passed; and beside her, bending tenderly to catch her lightest word, the form of her first lover, then a poor, obscure young lieutenant in the army.

With an indifference scarce tinged with pity, since it hardly occurred to her in those days that men could really feel, she had met his pleading affection with an enthusiastic outburst of her ambition to lead the artist's life, to spend her energies in self-development, and show what a woman wholly devoted to an intellectual and artistic career might become. She had no feeling for him above regard; no feeling for anyone, for anything but art.

"You must not think that I am deficient in womanly sensibility," she had said to him, with one of those soft glances, of the meaning and effect of which she was entirely unconscious. "But some women must remain spinsters, you know, and I think I am meant to be one of the sisterhood."

"You do not know yourself. The day will come when ambition will seem nothing to you; when the homely things, the real things, will assume their true value in your eyes, and a 'career' will seem a mere artificiality that has nothing to do with what is best and sweetest in life."

The words had passed her by as an idle phrase, evoked by disappointment. And she and Richard Allen had parted.

She had lived for ambition, and the world had been kind to her, after she had proved her mettle. She had not lacked lovers, but she had never loved. Her strong will, which had determinedly mapped out an existence entirely free from sentiment, had carried her through every affair triumphantly and untouched.

The woman turned restlessly in her berth, wondering why such thoughts should come to her now to interfere with her peace. She was good: she was ashamed of nothing in her past; she was living a high, free, independent life, the life for a woman of intellect and energy to lead. Thank Heaven, she was not an emotional creature! Sentiment had been trained out of her. After midnight she lost consciousness, and passed a few hours in fitful slumber. It was cruel that she should have to dream of Richard Allen; dream that they were together in an open boat, drifting out to sea, and that his arms were about her, his eyes looking into hers. And she cared for nothing, thought of nothing but that he held her close—how strangely sweet it was!

A jar, a shock, a sudden stop, as if the train had run against a wall of rock, and Margaret tried to rise, but fell back with a cry. A fall through space—what was it? Oh! where was she? Had the train fallen down an embankment?

After a minute she realised that she had been thrown from her berth across the car; there was a sharp pain in her left arm, and a weight upon her side. A falling lamp had struck her, and for some cause she could not rise; her leg must be broken. There was a terrible confusion, much talking, and half-a-dozen people bending over her pityingly and asking questions.

"What has happened? Is anybody killed?" she asked.

Several persons answered at once. They had run into a goods train. The driver of their own was killed; no one else. Many were hurt. Could she bear to be moved?

"I must," she returned, setting her lips, for agonising pains began to shoot through her foot, and the mere thought of being touched was suffering.

"Fortunately, we are near a village; there are houses near."

It was the conductor who spoke now, and he at once took charge. She was lifted carefully, wrapped in blankets and carried out. Their car had sustained less damage than any other, being in the rear, and there was no difficulty in getting out.

"If she could stand to be taken over there," said someone, pointing to a house some distance away, "she'd be more comfortable."

"If she could bear being taken over to the doctor's house," said the persistent first speaker.

"I can stand it," she interposed; "take me there quickly."

They improvised a sort of litter of mattresses, and carried her across a field in the open country. The dawn was just breaking, and the pale moon was slowly fading out of view before the great coming light. The air was clear, cold, crisp; and though there had evidently been a heavy storm during the night, it had cleared completely, and the first ray of sunlight glittered upon the banks of frozen snow.

The house before which they stopped was a plain, two-storied structure, which seemed, at first sight, peculiarly barren-looking. Clean white curtains hung in straight, scant folds at the windows. The door had been drab in colour, but the paint had been so assiduously scrubbed that one now took its presence on trust. There was a brass knocker and a rush door-mat, on which lay a large black cat with bristling white whiskers.

The door was opened by a severe-looking servant girl, whose starched cap and apron suggested careful housekeeping, as her suspicious countenance suggested inhospitality. She made no objections to admitting them, however, and Margaret was carefully deposited upon a couch in the sitting-room, to wait the coming of the doctor, who, the maid said, had just left the house to go to the scene of the accident.

"We'll send him back to you, ma'am, right off," one of the men assured her. "You ought to be 'tended to first."

"Not if others are suffering and need him more," said Margaret faintly.

The ungenial-looking servant proved herself to be not deficient in skill, even though sympathy was in a measure lacking. She made her guest as comfortable as she could. The shoe was cut from the swollen ankle, which was bathed and bandaged, and the hurts upon her shoulder and side were pronounced to be only bruises which "the doctor would make right." And then

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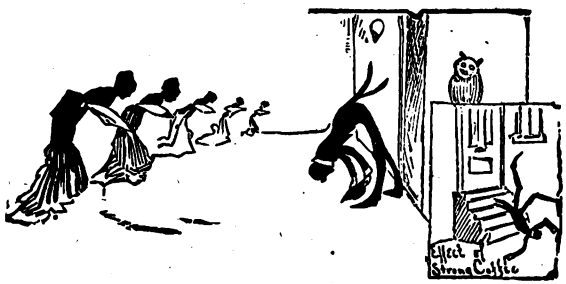

Margaret was left to herself, while the girl went to make the inevitable "cup of tea," which was to set everything straight.

At first she lay perfectly still, seeing nothing, and caring for nothing, her mind full of vexation and impatience over an accident which must delay the fulfilment of her engagement. It did not occur to her that it might have been worse; anything was bad enough.

After awhile her eyes began to wander idly around the room. It seemed half parlour, half study. There was a book-case well filled; some good engravings on the walls; a few easy-chairs covered with raw silk of a dull hue, much worn; and a writing-table between the windows, half covered with books and magazines.

There was something agreeable to her taste in the air of the room. She could imagine it the abode of a man whose very poverty could never become squalid. The great open stove shone brightly, and the hearth was scrupulously clean. Upon the mantle-piece were a bronze clock and a pair of fine vases, dainty in tone and finish; they were the sole womanly touches about the place. Noting these details half indifferently, she lay back again and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, they happened to glance directly over to a corner of the room which had before been dim, but was now illuminated by a shaft of sunlight. A carved bracket hung there, and on the shelf lay a singular-looking little instrument, shaped like a dagger, of Moorish device, the handle inlaid with gold, left rough and unpolished.

When Margaret saw this small object, she gave a little cry and tried to rise; but finding that impossible, she dropped back upon her pillows as though she had been shot, her eyes fixed upon the little instrument with a look of recognition that was half pleasure, half alarm. What strange trick was fate about to play her? How could this thing be possible?

There was a noise, the front door opened, and someone came along the hall with a firm, measured step. Margaret's heart, that well-regulated organ, beat to suffocation. She hardly dared listen or look. She threw her arm up over her forehead, nearly concealing her face. Someone entered the room and paused beside her. A well-remembered voice, graver, deeper than of yore, yet with a cheery ring in it, said:

"Let me see what I can do to help you, madam."

A chair was drawn up to the side of the couch, a gentle hand took her own. Her pulse was beating furiously; the hand was held rather long, as if something perplexed him. She felt searching eyes bent upon her face and suddenly threw down her arm. The doctor drew back, his face paling, and the two looked at each other for a minute in silence. She spoke first, putting out her hand timidly.

"Richard, don't you remember me?"

"Remember you? As if I were likely ever to forget you, Margaret."

She softly touched his empty left sleeve, pinned over his breast, two tears standing in her eyes.

"At Tel-el-Kebir," he said. "I have got over minding it. Don't grieve."

"You left the army?"

"Yes, years ago. I studied medicine, was invited here by an old friend to become his assistant, and shortly afterwards he died. That is all."

"You never—never——"

"Yes, I married."

The words were an unexpected stab. Margaret gasped, amazed that she should care. Her face suddenly became suffused with colour, and she turned it away.

"She only lived a year, Margaret," said the doctor, bending down to study the fair flushed face, suddenly pain-smitten.

"My arm!" said Margaret, drawing his attention to the lesser hurt.

He was the doctor again at once, and for the next half-hour all professional gravity, and as impersonal as the sphinx; yet the woman felt through every nerve, like a musical vibration, the thrill of his firm, warm fingers, the scrutiny of his eyes. He was changed, worn through suffering rather than years; his face lined, his hair grown grey, with nothing young about him but his eyes, which sparkled with a cheeriness and brightness no grief could dim, for they mirrored a mind above all personal considerations, concerned with those large, loving interests belonging to humanity.

The woman felt the presence of this spirit, as if something beautiful and good had settled down softly beside her, and mutely besought her attention from herself and her narrow world. She struggled against it, yet it was like a shaft of genial sun heat entering suddenly some frozen glen. She felt, in a heart purposely hardened against such influences, a stir, a thaw; ice was breaking, and the long-stilled waters of human affection began to flow in gentle currents, inspiring a sensation of delight that astonished and abashed her.

The doctor came and went quietly, her eyes following him. When he intercepted the look she blushed like a school girl. Too busy all the day to give her more than necessary attention, he yet lost nothing that passed, and she had a sense which was oddly pleasant that he understood something of what was passing in her mind.

The coals burnt red in the open stove; a little tea-table was set in the middle of the room, and in the easiest chair in the house, piled with all the available cushions, the doctor placed Margaret, taking his position opposite her. The girl brought in supper, which was well cooked and served with a scrupulous cleanliness that almost atoned for the absence of a more dainty service.

The doctor's face shone with satisfaction; but his manner, although genial, was ceremonious. Margaret felt that, in the few feet intervening between them, there lay years of care and grief and disappointment. She felt a yearning to bridge the chasm, to draw nearer to him, even though she herself had to take the hard steps towards understanding.

Thought the woman: "Does he love me still?" And thought the man: "Is she tired of the world, and could she learn to love me now?"

But they spoke of music; of the routine of a soldier's

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life; of what they had seen, what they had read. Not a word of what they felt.

A few hours later the doctor stood in his bare little soldier's bedroom, and looked in his glass. For five minutes he studied himself, and then he turned away, resolved to let no new hope spring up in his heart.

But Margaret slept to dream of him; woke through the night thinking of him, as she could not have thought in the olden days, when he wooed her in the confidence of his fresh, hopeful youth.

There was no hotel in the village, and the few scattered houses were crowded with the wounded passengers, lying there till well enough to proceed with their journey.

Margaret was not sorry that there was no other place for her than the refuge she had been taken to.

In time her shy looks wrought upon the doctor, and his stern resolution wavered. He found himself sounding her preferences and attachments, with the unconfessed design of extracting some unguarded word that might indicate a change in her old convictions. This caused him to betray to the eager girl all he wished to conceal, and she wished to know. She had telegraphed to London that she would be there in a few days. She was now free from pain, and able to put her foot to the ground. The doctor persisted in helping her from her couch to the chair, and back again.

"But I can walk alone now," she objected.

"We must be careful. Not until to-morrow." She protested with greater earnestness. "True, I have but one arm," he said, with the first accent of bitterness she had heard from him.

Her lips parted to give utterance to a sudden rush of words, but she only looked at him with eyes so eloquent that he answered the look.

"Margaret, do you care? Dear, I have always loved you; I love you now. Can you care?"

She drooped her head on his shoulder, but said nothing. The doctor held her close for a minute, and then, leaving her, began to walk up and down the room.

"It is impossible!"

"It may be impossible," murmured Margaret, with a little blush, "but—it is true."

"It is cruel in me to ask it, dear. You are young, beautiful, brilliant—with success at your feet, and I——"

She put up her hand imploringly. It was caught and held.

"And I am poor, obscure, and—and old," he finished, his eyes upon her face.

"I have come to you, Richard. It seems strange to me. I cannot explain it, but it seems as if everything the world has to offer me is nothing beside——"

"Beside my love?" He bent on one knee beside her chair and put her hand to his lips.

"I want to share your life," she said; and a new expression grew upon her face—a high, devoted look, which was half-heroic, all womanly. "I want to learn something of the great things, the true things."

"You have had greater things than I can give you. Think of all you are leaving."

She made a gesture of renunciation. "It does not seem much to leave—for you."

"Ah, my darling, I am afraid you will regret it! The work-a-day world will be a trial to you. And mine is a veritable work-a-day world."

He kept his eyes on her face, half-dreading to see her shrink away. But what woman is not won by an appearance of self-renunciation? Richard could not have let her go now; at the last instant he would have snatched her to his breast had she drawn away. But the misgiving that rushed over him so fiercely was a real one, a sensible one: he felt it profoundly, and tried to read in her eyes a shadow of this coming regret. But her eyes were clear, loving, radiant. She pressed herself against his breast, and gave him the great gift of her life and her future. Would the shadow ever come?

The moon looked softly into the room an hour later, and finding the lovers in that delicious dream which once in a lifetime comes to most men and women, drew over her face a grey cloud-veil and let them to dream on.

MARY COOMBE.

HER FATHER: "Is he a man of any means?"
She: "Certainly; he means to marry me."

THE armless artist was married recently, and signed the wedding contract with her feet. That was an au-toe-graph with a vengeance.

"YOU are fined 10s.," said the magistrate to Jaysmith, arrested for drunkenness.

"Why, your honour," protested Jaysmith, "you only fined me 5s. last time. I understood the necessities of life were going to be cheaper under this Government."

PHYSICIAN: "You cannot possibly follow your profession more than five or six years longer. I have known it a long time."

Star Actor (wrathfully): "Then you ought to have told me before this. You have cheated me out of several farewell seasons."

IT has been satisfactorily demonstrated, that when a man steps on a bar of soap which has been left on the top step, it will start down stairs with him, and though having much the best start will yet be overtaken and passed by him before it gets half-way down. This sounds like an Eastern allegory; but every married man knows it is true.

A FORLORN Irishman, reduced to the last stage of poverty and destitution, as the last resource made inquiry at a marine store as follows:

"D'ye buy rags and bones here?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then, be jabers," says Pat, "ye may put me on the scales."

ARCHIE: "My children manifest too early in life a tendency to put away money, and I am exceedingly worried over it."

Sandiman: "Why, that is an excellent trait, and I don't see any reason why you should be worried."

Archie: "But I am. The baby swallowed a threepenny bit this morning."

THE advertisement manager of a newly-started journal wrote to a large firm in the following terms:

"We notice your advertisement in the *Quicksilver*, which we will insert for twenty-five per cent. less than they charge."

The reply was:

"The *Quicksilver* inserts our advertisement for nothing. We will trouble you for a cheque for the difference."

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Football Players Competition!

OPEN TO EVERYBODY. **£10 IN PRIZES.** OPEN TO EVERYBODY.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each of which indicates the name of some well-known football player.

For example, "A young goose" signifies, of course, Gosling.

Ten names will appear each week for five weeks, making fifty names in all.

Keep all your lists by you until you are told to send them in.

To the person who succeeds in solving the greatest number we will give

A CRISP £5 NOTE.

TO THE NEXT, £2; TO THE NEXT, £2; AND TO THE NEXT, £1;

while consolation prizes will be awarded to the extent of twenty handsome volumes which competitors may select for themselves from the catalogue of books issued by this firm.

If you are weak in the names of football players, your brother, or cousin, or male friend will give you a helping hand.

SHORT STORIES "FOOTBALL PLAYERS" COUPON No. 4.

31.	Daubs with mud.	31. .....
32.	An overseer.	32. .....
33.	A big collection of trees.	33. .....
34.	A flour factory and part of a key.	34. .....
35.	A workman.	35. .....
36.	Red sandal wood.	36. .....
37.	Trees.	37. .....
38.	A game at cards.	38. .....
39.	Flags.	39. .....
40.	"Enlarge, Mac!"	40. .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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"LITTLE BROTHER."

Miss Stanley was a pink and white English girl, tall and shapely.

The Mexican girls, who ordered out their carriages if they had merely a few yards to go, used to look upon her with amazement as she tramped down their steep streets with a fine, swinging, heel-and-toe gait.

She was picking her way one day among the vendors in the *plaza*, stopping once in a while to give some whining beggar or tattered monstrosity a *centavo*, when she felt her skirt pulled.

Looking, she saw a tiny hand held out, and a childish voice piped the usual formula for alms.

The little creature was no taller than a child of four.

But the face! It was old and withered. The eyes were sunken and so old!

Miss Stanley pulled back the bonnet—the hair was grey.

"A dwarf," she thought, with a little feeling of repulsion. "How old are you?"

"Fifty-four," piped up the wee thing.

She said her name was Rosita.

Rosita, it appeared, did nearly anything for a living, begging preferably, although that is a somewhat overcrowded profession in Mexico.

Sometimes she sold chickens or vegetables on commission.

She had another source of income, being a pensioner on the bounty of a young man—a *centavo* a week—but she confessed sadly he made her jump for the coin, and if he held his arm out straight she might jump in vain, she could not reach it.

"The brute!" said Miss Stanley.

Rosita did not know the meaning, but she looked up, pleased.

That was good, the English lady was taking an interest in her, for the expletive sounded profane, and profanity from a feminine source indicated strong emotion, which she construed favourably.

The poor in Mexico are always hungry, and Miss Stanley, knowing this failing, took Rosita to a little one-room restaurant. The menu was confined strictly to Mexican dishes.

Miss Stanley noticed that Rosita put half her dinner on one side. When she came to a dulce of some tropic fruit, boiled in syrup of cane sugar, her little wrinkled eyes looked wistful.

"How can I take some to my little brother?" she asked.

Miss Stanley asked another question:

"Is this food you have put away, for your brother?"

"Yes," answered Rosita, in her squeaky voice, "I take care of him. We are alone, and I work for him. He is locked in the room, now see," and she held up the massive key peculiar to the Mexican doors.

"Why is he locked in?" asked Miss Stanley, as she directed the waiter to put the dinner in a couple of jars for Rosita to take to her brother.

"He has fights with the children in the street, and I am afraid some one will get hurt," she answered.

Miss Stanley watched her trot away, laden with the dinner for her brother—so little and so old and pitifully thin. It was not until she reached home that Miss Stanley remembered she had not asked how old the "little brother" was.

She often met Rosita after that, sometimes in the Jardin, where the roses nodded overhead and violets bloomed under foot, and the band played softly and sweetly as Mexican bands do. Rosita would dart into the inner circle, where the quality walked under the trees or sat on the iron benches. Miss Stanley could seldom resist the little, dirty, badly-worked square of drawn work held out by the tiny hand.

Sometimes in the *plaza*, where the vendors called their various fruits and vegetables with long-drawn, wailing

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cries, Miss Stanley would suddenly hear at her elbow the shrill squeak of Rosita as she praised the virtues of an attenuated hen.

"Very plump!—take it—weigh it in your hand—it is heavy," she would insist, holding up the unattractive bundle of feathers.

Constance Stanley had no father or mother, and living with a brother who was endeavouring to effect the drainage of the richest silver-mine in the world, wandered unchecked through the crowded, narrow streets of the old town, with a young servant girl for her only safeguard.

She had often longed to explore a dark street that plunged downwards from the paved and civilised one.

It was damp and murky.

A staircase of stone, with crumbling adobe walls, two and three stories high.

Across the street's narrow width fluttered strings of washing.

The women with their red petticoats and blue hooded cloaks, made bright patches of colour.

The men loafed about lean and ragged.

It reminded her of Naples.

The doorways swarmed with babies and dogs—poverty always marching side by side with those innocents.

Down she went.

The street made an abrupt turn.

At the corner she was startled by seeing protruding from a hole cut in a squalid doorway, several long black fingers.

They were withdrawn, and she saw as she passed the door two bloodshot eyes peering out like beast's eyes.

"Nina! Heaven has sent you, and see what gain will be yours!"

Turning, Miss Stanley beheld Rosita at her heel. She had a plate to sell—a coarse, ironstone china plate, chipped and cracked.

There was a look of intense anxiety on her old face, and her wee hands shook as she drew her treasure forth from under her cloak.

The plate was worthless, and Constance, breaking the fact gently to the dwarf, was astonished to see the tears gather and fall over her shrivelled cheeks.

"For two days, *senorita*, I have not dared unlock that door," and she nodded toward the mean portal where the eyes had shone and the fingers protruded restlessly. "'Little brother' has had nothing to eat, except the few biscuits which the poor round here could give, and many of these go hungry from the sun's coming up until the sun's going down."

Constance sent her servant and Rosita to the *Plaza* for some cooked food, and, while she waited, she talked in the doorways with Pepita and Lola and Juana.

They told her how Rosita worked and starved for her brother.

"How old is he?" asked Constance.

"No one knows," they said.

"Is he a child or is he big enough to work for her?" she asked impatiently.

"Ah! he is big, but also he is mad. See, that is José now who glares from a hole in the door."

Miss Stanley listened to them with that rapt attention we all give the tales of the insane.

He dug deep holes in the earthen floor, burrowing like an animal; sometimes he escaped in that way and then there was fear in that narrow street, and the police, after a desperate fight, would drag him shrieking back to the one poor room Rosita called home.

She had always put food through the door to him before venturing to open it.

Once, for a long time, he had not menaced the peace of the street.

That was when he killed the watchman.

Constance looked very lovely at the dance.

A policeman had teased him as he peered from the hole in the door, much as people tease a hyena snarling in a cage.

The mad have memories, for José, one night when the moon was big, crept softly about the dark room, and, finding the key Rosita's small cunning had hidden, opened the door, crept again softly up to the street to a doorway, where was sleeping a *sereno*, his head on his knees.

The police have a day and a night duty, but one cannot expect a madman to know everything. So it was an innocent man who had his neck wrung as the cook does a chicken's.

They found him asleep by the dead *sereno*, and although too polite in the "Land of the Noonday Sun" to manacle or chain, they took the precaution to tie with stout rope José's slumbering bulk before six of the largest policemen would venture to carry him to the prison. José's kind of people are treated with deference in Mexico. So, after some time, the man was sent back for the dwarf to feed and care for, and Rosita's face took on more wrinkles each day.

By the time Rosita returned with the food, Constance, who understood Spanish very well, had heard much of the "little brother."

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She declined to look through the peep hole at him ravening over his dinner like a wild beast. Followed by Rosita's wordy gratitude, she climbed to the top of the street and there met Mr. Dysart, whom she had met at the Governor's ball.

Constance looked very lovely at the dance, in a simple gown of white silk. Mr. Dysart completely lost his head over her; as he had a lot of possessions in Ireland, among them a rich father and an ancient and honorable ancestry, he could afford to do so.

He was thinking of her as she had looked the night before, when suddenly she appeared, with her servant, coming up from a street dark and deep, like a well, for already it was getting dusk.

On the strength of having been at college with her brother, he began with true manly irascibility to take her to task for her imprudence. But Miss Constance tightened up her soft, haughty mouth, and giving him the rear curve of a tweed shoulder to study, led him a chase home.

When they reached the house, Dick, in a smoking-jacket, lounged out from the sala to insist that "Tony, old boy," should take tea with them.

Which he did.

That was the first difference between the brother and sister.

Dick and Tony were great chums, and every night they conversed about pumping out the mine or riding to hounds. But Constance detested Tony, and, contrary to her usual reticence, said so.

She tramped round the disreputable and filthy streets twice as much as before, for she knew it annoyed him. Sometimes she would see him following, and she resented his espionage.

"Why don't you like Tony?" Dick would ask. "You know my theory, Connie, that a man like Dysart makes the best husband."

"Oh, Dick! who is talking about husbands? I think that a man who is utterly doggy or horsey and takes Browning to be an authority on pink eye or glanders is a very poor companion. To quote your 'dear Tony,' 'We don't run in the same class!'"

Dick gave a contemptuous snort. This was one day at luncheon, and Constance, instead of the good cry she pined for, took a walk. She had not seen Rosita for some time, and she turned her steps towards what Mr. Dysart called "those cutthroat dens."

She had never seen the street so deserted. All were taking a *siesta*, even the dogs. As she reached the sharp corner she heard a thin little shriek full of appeal. She recognised Rosita's voice, and ran with her maid at her side into the low, open doorway she had before so shudderingly avoided.

There, snapping his teeth and rolling his bloodshot eyes, was Rosita's "little brother," tied with strong ropes to an iron pin in the wall; but his arms were free, and he stood naked to the waist, a giant in size.

He had secured the key and had almost pulled the staple from the wall, but Rosita was clinging to his arm and calling for help. To and fro he swung her as a wolf might a rabbit.

He had the key in his black, cruel hands, and he brought it down on her upturned face. Then again, as Constance rushed forward with a scream, the key fell with a crunch on the little, old, grey head.

At that moment the pin gave way, for adobe walls are not strong. Constance turned with her hands thrown out wildly.

Over Rosita's body the madman tripped with a crash to the earth floor; just as he fell, he caught Constance's gown in his grasp.

She fell with him, and, falling, knew the room had filled with a clatter-crowd, and that Tony Dysart loomed above all.

Constance, with the help of her maid, got out in the street, where she listened, with beating heart, to the cries, oaths and scuffling going inside.

There was one predominating, awful groan—then a sinister silence.

A moment of sickening uncertainty for that unemotional young Englishwoman, and Tony Dysart appeared, panting, his clothes torn, and bloodstains on his face and hands.

He walked firmly enough to give Constance a helping arm up the stairs.

He said Rosita was dead, and he thought the "little brother" would die also, for, while he was struggling with him a policeman had crept up and struck him over the head with a heavy, iron bar.

"Here we are at home," she said, as they stopped before the carved doors. "Come in. Dick will want to see you. He can thank you better than I."

"No one can thank me like you can," Tony replied. "And I must go to the hotel. This arm of mine pains a little. No, not broken," he answered, trying to smile, "but 'little brother' wrenched it a trifle."

Constance, however, would not accept his easy assurance that it was all right. "You must come in, Dick will want you."

"Do you want me, though?"

She did not answer that; but, as she let the knocker fall, turned with tears in her eyes.

"Will you come, Tony?"

"I will come," he insisted, "if you want me."

The big doors swung open.

"I want you," she said slowly.

And the doors clanged behind them.

JESSICA PALMERSTON.

A RAILWAY Washing Company has been talked of. The clothes are to be boiled under the copper of the engine, and mangled under the wheels of the luggage train.

SHE (disappointedly): "The ring is—is pretty, but the pearls are so very, very small."

He (airily): "Yes, I told them it was for the smallest hand in the city."

WIFE (who wants him to buy it): "I saw such a duck of a bonnet to-day."

Husband (not to be caught): "Yes, and like other ducks, it has got a pretty big bill to it, I suppose."

DOLLY: "Flowter, you are something of a sailor I believe?"

Flowter: "Something."

"Then tell me what is the usual binding for a ship's log book."

"Well, it is often homeward bound."

MRS. NOOLYWED: "Oh, ma, George is upstairs in a fearful temper, and all because I asked him to lend me his new razor a moment."

Mother: "The wretch! What did you want it for, dear?"

Mrs. Noolywed: "Just to open a sardine tin with."

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WHAT AMERICA THINKS OF THE WAR.

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

Time 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

France and Germany declare war against Great Britain.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpedo boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of fermentation owing to the repulse of the Allied fleet.

Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour's fleet gains a decisive victory over the Allies off the Rock of Gibraltar.

A representative of the *New York World* interviews Lord Salisbury on a matter that is not yet made public.

The British organise two expeditions, one to invade France, and one to invade Germany. The first army corps appears off Havre, and after a short bombardment which lasts till nightfall, the fleet withdraws, the troopships move northwards, and the soldiers are landed at a point opposite Bleville.

The French are routed and the British enter the city.

On receiving news of Lord Roberts's successes in France, Sir Evelyn Wood sets sail with his expedition for Germany. A small but powerful fleet under Sir Nowell Salmon engages the attention of the enemy at the mouth of the Kiel Canal. Meanwhile, the main body of troops arrive with a large escort in sight of Stralsund. A brigade of cavalry under Colonel Lockhart attacks and captures the town from the rear. The next morning 200,000 English troops lay encamped on German soil.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Divided States.

France was the honoured ally of the States. No treaty held them to a common union, but from the remote time when America had claimed from Britain her independence, France had given aid to the sister republic and had fought for the establishment of a new and powerful nation.

True, Americans were of English blood. Our history and our literature were theirs. They spoke a common tongue. The ties of kinship held the mother country and her giant colony in a bond that could not lightly be broken. But were these elements sufficient in themselves to keep alive the flame of mutual sympathy? Time would doubtless show.

When the American schoolmaster sought to inflame his pupil with pride in his country's greatness, or with the fervour of patriotic feeling, it was to this one great national effort that he turned for example. The Englishman was the enemy—England's unjust laws the offence. It was the red coat who figured in the history books, in the drama, in fable and in story, as the representative of what was hostile, proud, and arrogant; he it was who was invader and destroyer. It was in victory over him that national virtue first became manifest and the nation itself first founded. And through all these troublous times the American schoolboy learnt that whilst England was the foe, it was France who was the friend.

And when, triumphant and secure, the American Republic had shown what marvellous resources there lay in its sturdy strength, and had become, in an incredibly short space of time, one of the chief Powers of the world, it was France who sent congratulations and a gift. The colossal statute of Liberty, which dominated the harbour of New York, seemed to be an everlasting memorial of the deadly struggle with Britain, and of the generous aid which an equally young republic had sent across the waters.

One of them approached Mr. Rockefeller.

Every reason that history could give tended to attach the sympathy of America to France. And that country expected it, awaited it, was certain of it.

Early in May a full meeting of the American House of Representatives mustered at the Capitol. A strange rumour had spread in the morning that an important announcement was to be made, and there was little difficulty in guessing its subject.

No wonder, therefore, that of the 356 delegates, 330 were present at the opening of the House.

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Prayer was solemnly pronounced amid the ill-concealed and impatient movement of the expectant throng. The Speaker then rose and informed the profoundly silent House that he had received that day from the President of the Republic a Message, which it was his duty to read to the assembled delegates of the United States.

In clear tones and measured utterance he proceeded to read it out.

After rehearsing the principles laid down by previous American statesmen as those which should govern the international policy of the States, the President declared that there was no consideration which could draw America into European complications except the instinct of self-defence.

It was her plain duty to remain neutral.

"I have carefully considered with the Secretary for State," he went on, "the circumstances which have led to the war between Great Britain and her neighbours, and we can see no reason why the United States should be expected to interfere and compel the three nations to submit to her arbitration."

Cheers greeted this announcement. But it was noticed that the French and German ambassadors, who were both present, turned angrily to each other and exchanged a glance of mutual disdain.

But the chief point in the Message lay in its final words:

"When, however, the war is concluded and terms of peace are being arranged, it will become the duty of the United States, as protector of the western continent, to insist upon a hearing. The fate of Canada cannot be without concern to us. It will be imperatively necessary to warn off any encroaching power who may hold before itself the hope of securing a foothold in America. No European government can be permitted to take possession of Canada.

"What then is to become of the Dominion? Stretching as she does between the two great territories that form the United States, it is clear that geographical fitness must decide the question. America has a logical claim to Canada. The pacific policy we have pursued of grouping under one great banner all the scattered territories of this continent will here once more be justified.

"In a word, the United States will take Canada unto herself, and inaugurate within it a new era of peace and prosperity which that unfortunate and misled province so sadly needs."

There was much cheering as the Message came to a close, and eager voices claimed a hearing. It was true that there were some protests, some remonstrances, from moderate men. But the war spirit aflame in the youthful nation, that had scarce learnt the bitter lessons of statecraft, was too strong, and the President was acclaimed as the "iron hero of American progress."

Additional point was given to the discussion by the declaration of a prominent member that "when the United States had given the blessings of her protection and her government to all the territory of North and South America, it would become her glorious mission to establish the principles of arbitration amongst the nations of Europe, and force them to voluntarily accept impartial tribunals in all disputes arising between them."

There was much excitement in the American Press on the following morning, and cartoons of a character insulting to Great Britain were not lacking. Only one important journal assumed a calm and temperate tone.

The *New York World*, in a somewhat caustic article, warned the American people that if they were "too eager to secure more stars, they should not forget that they might have to take the stripes also."

But in Canada public indignation knew no bounds. Never was the loyalty of the Dominion so much needed, never so vigorously shown.

During the next few days—maddened by the contemptuous allusions of the President to the fate of the great English colony, a large number of volunteers assembled on the frontiers, and declared their intention of stamping out any overt acts of violence which American freebooters might make.

Everywhere young and active men came forward keen and ready to enlist their services for war either at home or abroad.

A large number of volunteers assembled on the frontiers.

One of the Quebec papers called loudly to the Canadian people to prepare themselves for invasion.

"Let the United States," it said, "come with its thirty ships and its 30,000 men. We shall flick them off like flies. Canada is strong in her defences—but in her loyalty and courage invincible."

And it was quite obvious that for the purposes of the war, Canada could prove of the greatest service to England. Her active militia alone numbered 40,000 men; of reserves she had no less than 1,100,000. Through active drill, and a preparation that, for the last two years—in view of a possible enemy by no means European—had been unremitting and exacting, this splendid army was in magnificent condition, trained in all the necessary evolutions of war, accustomed to rapid marching, excellent marksmen, and habituated to discipline.

It is not, therefore, without a genuine and well-founded feeling of self-assurance that Canada flung back the menaces of the United States, and clamoured to be permitted to pour her sons into the trenches in France and Germany.

But excited as American politicians were, madness of quite a different kind reigned in Wall Street.

The Message of the President had come as a thunderclap to the rich speculators and stockholders of New York. European war was bad enough; and already the commercial world was shaken to its foundations. But his open menace to England convulsed the market, and a terrible panic set in.

Men hurried to and fro in wild tumult, and violent words clashed in angry debates. The great leaders of finance were gathered in their strength, and, though silent, showed by flushed cheek and nervous movement their anxious concern in the news continually flashed along the cable.

On 'Change a small knot of Germans—disregarded and shunned—scowled upon the scene, looking half threatening, half amazed.

One of them, a rich broker named Dumpfstadt, approached Mr. Rockefeller, who, pale and erect, stood near the rostrum.

"Zis is von great hullaboo," he forcibly exclaimed. "Is not ze Vaterland goot frents to your beeb'e? Vy you ze Englischen thus so vid unfairness sympathise vid? Are de Deutsch here not also citizens of ze starred stripes?"

Rockefeller turned on him a quick look of disgust.

"Go away and learn English, you German blackguard," he said, "if you want to talk with me, and come back in a year."

"You lofe nicht fair play," stammered the German.

"Fair-play!" exclaimed Rockefeller. "Look here, you fool. I am not a man of sentiment; I have little time to feel for my own country, let alone for others. But do you German thieves know what it is you are trying to do? I am a business man, and I speak in a business way. The fortunes of America are bound up with those of England.

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If England is beaten in this war, there will be universal ruin throughout the States. She is our best customer, she carries our goods, our money is invested in her stock. What do we care if France or Germany are buried in your petty ocean? We, the business men of New York, cannot afford that England should be beaten."

"What the French army wants is a man able to command it."

"You are von brafe man," sneered the German. "And vot will you do?"

"Do?" Here Rockefeller moved forward as though he intended to reduce the German nation by one person at least. "I will show you what we will do. Gentlemen," he exclaimed to the interested group that had gathered round, "listen to me. Our fortunes are at stake. We cannot let the English nation suffer defeat. Do not let us be led away by sentiment. We must save our possessions. I for one am not going to be beggared for jingo patriotism. This rascal asks us, the merchants of New York, what we can do. My reply is this: I will purchase ten million dollars' worth of the New British stock."

At his words a cheer was raised, and the excitement grew. Then Mr. Morgan, after shaking Rockefeller by the hand, mounted the rostrum and made an earnest speech, calling on them all to support the finances of England.

"I add my own ten millions," he declared. "Let us send England our money. It will be the best investment we have ever made. Our gold will keep her armies in the field and give them victory, and we shall save our falling interests throughout the world. Timid and blind is he who will not give a little to save much." There was a tumult of applause, and in a moment the two financiers had headed a list with forty millions of dollars. In half an hour two hundred millions had been subscribed. And that night a cablegram informed the English Chancellor that no less than forty millions sterling was on its way to take up a corresponding amount of the newly-created stock.

Indeed, the position of England from the mercantile point of view was exceedingly happy.

War depends on conditions that seem remote, and lie far below the surface. It is a question of money, food, and a thousand other things, and many a battle is won in the kitchen or in the counting-house. Everything conspired to make England strong where her enemies were weak. Her Consols were taken up with avidity by thousands of people whose stake in her security was too great to be left to fate. Rothschild, and the principal bankers, had thrown their money into the war chest. These men had to make up their minds from very self-interest—in a struggle that must be so terrible in its consequences—on which side they were prepared to throw in their lot, and the independence of England was realised to be a matter of first consequence, a primary condition to the security of investments.

But it was at this moment more clearly than ever that England realised the wisdom of her free-trade policy and reaped its benefits. Into her ports, corn, meal, farm produce, and all the necessities of life were poured. Germany and France paid heavily for their taxed goods; and, even then, being in a state of blockade, got little by them. The previous year had been a very prosperous one, and, denied her markets on the Continent, American produce fell in price and was bought at low terms by Great Britain.

Whilst England was getting her supplies with regularity and cheapness, France and Germany got theirs with difficulty and at a preposterous charge. Already those countries felt the pinch of need which the sudden stoppage of their import trade created.

They had not prepared for such an unexpected turn of events. Confident in their success they had sought no unusual loan and made no preparation to receive an unimpeded flow of food. But now, their navies beaten, their coasts blockaded, their merchantmen caught in a snare, America unable to reach them, or reaching them with scant supplies at a high rate, they reeled beneath a blow that already was telling hard upon them.

To protect her commerce the United States was determined. And if the best and safest market was England there was need of a strong fleet in the Atlantic to maintain the security of her merchantmen which plied across laden with the stores of a rich and bounteous harvest.

Admiral Mahan was selected to command the American fleet. A skilled strategian, a brave officer, a man of resource, he was an ideal choice for a mission so delicate.

There was in him also the yearning for active service which is inevitable in a true sailor, and he accepted his office with eagerness. But the President of the United States, in the course of an interview with him, damped his ardour, as the chief citizen had given some thought to the effect of his Message.

"We are strictly neutral, Admiral Mahan," he said. "Your duty is a difficult one; it is open to temptations. America has need of a man of cool judgment and strict restraint."

"It may be that there will also be need of a little gunpowder," replied the Admiral. "I shall be bound to reply to any hostile overture."

The President smiled.

"Let me clearly understand," said the Admiral; "am I right in reading your Message that I must avoid any complications with Great Britain?"

President McKinley paused for a moment before he answered: "It is your duty to protect the commerce of the United States. You must act as your judgment directs in the performance of your mission."

Admiral Mahan retired with a very clear view of the Presidential sympathies. And they in no way agreed with his own.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Les Rois D'Yvetot.

The tide of battle had hardly surged back from Havre leaving bare, in ghastly detail, the ruin and misery of the fight, ere there came to Paris realistic accounts of the bombardment of Tronning, followed by the wholly unexpected capture of Stralsund.

The representatives of France and Germany now knew that the "war of extermination" was not to be a triumphal march through the ruins of the British empire. It was rather to partake of the character ascribed to it by their determined and resolute foe—a struggle for life between England and her assailants.

So far the game lay with England.

It was clearly their policy not to play longer into her hands by allowing their troops and ships to be encountered by practically equal forces, when the admittedly superior fighting qualities of British soldiers and sailors never left the issue in doubt for a moment.

France had lost a very large number of men, and her navy had been placed *hors de combat*, save the proportion of French vessels among the fleet of cruisers which had escaped through the Straits of Gibraltar. True, she still had many ships scattered about the globe in various stations, but the cable-cutting tactics adopted at the outbreak of hostilities were reacting with singular effect upon the allies.

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It was now their turn to be isolated so far as submarine telegraphy was concerned, whilst Great Britain was actively engaged in restoring her communications throughout the world.

Such news as reached the allies concerning the progress of external events was not reassuring.

A small expedition sent off to capture Cape Town had been annihilated *en route* by a rapid concentration of the British ships on the South and West African stations, whilst the arms and munitions of war on board had gone far towards equipping a strong force of colonial volunteers hastening to the assistance of the Old Country.

start of me, I hope to catch them before they have succeeded in doing much damage.

"If, on my return, I find that you have permitted the slightest wrong to the lives or property of any of Her Majesty's subjects in Japan, I will knock your newly-built kingdom into ruins about your ears."

Little as the Japanese liked this form of address they had the good sense to [illegible] nds until they saw how the cat jumped, and [illegible] Mikado made amends to England by affo[illegible]g her very material assistance in the concluding operations of the war.

Paris was still confident.

Cavalry swept to the front in superb style.

The British Admiral in the Far East, too, had encountered and beaten the French squadron in those waters.

This was known to the allies, but they did not know that Vice-Admiral Sir E. F. Fremantle had discovered, on the dead body of the French commander, letters which made clear to him the scope of the Russian enterprise resulting in the dispatch of the Japanese fleet to Australia.

This fleet was nominally a portion of the allied forces, but Sir Edward Fremantle swept aside diplomatic formalities, and roundly accused the Mikado of being a party to a base and treacherous action.

"Take notice," he wrote to him "that I am fully cognisant of your designs. Although your ships, with their German and French commanders, have got nearly a week's

Orders were sent to the fleet of cruisers at Brest not to attempt an engagement with the English ships off Havre, but to steal off quietly to harass British commerce on the Atlantic, finally delivering an attack on Newfoundland and Canada.

"At sea England is supreme," said M. Hanotaux; "on land she is at our mercy."

Bolder spirits urged a series of assaults on Havre, but it was felt that France might thus meet England's wishes and spend her strength upon a single point, even then doubtful of attainment.

Rouen, therefore, was selected as the place where France would concentrate her forces. Here she would assemble an army of 600,000 men, and would make no move until she felt that the British army could be hopelessly and finally crushed.

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The Fourth Army Corps, commanded by General Mercier, was posted at Yvetot as a Corps d'Observation, and behind this formidable barrier France quietly gathered her tremendous resources in men and war material.

It was no part of Lord Robert's plan to quietly allow the French to consolidate themselves under the conditions they found most advantageous.

Without delay he gave orders for 100,000 men to be ready to march on the following morning, each regiment carrying three days' field rations, and the Commissariat to keep up the supply thereafter. The remainder of his force was charged with the maintenance of the line of communication, whilst the 200,000 men then arriving in strong detachments from England, were to be forwarded to Beuzeville, Bolbec, and Lillebonne, small towns lying in the rear of Yvetot, as quickly as possible.

"Voila les rois d'Yvetot."

In every case the territorial classification of regiments was strictly followed in the distribution of troops. Consequently, brigades were not only exceptionally strong, but worked wonderfully well together, considering that experienced battalions were mixed up with raw levies.

For the purpose of illustration, it will suffice if the composition of one brigade, the 10th, be analysed.

It took its number from that of its regimental district, and the nucleus was the 2nd Battalion of the Lincolnshire Regiment, commanded by Lieut-Colonel H. C. Huntley, who now held the field rank of Brigadier-General. The other battalions in the brigade were the 3rd and 4th Militia Battalions and the 1st and 2nd Volunteer Battalions of the Lincolns. Major F. R. Lowth took local command of the line Battalion, and the C.O.'s of the other battalions were respectively Viscount Oxenbridge, Earl Brownlow, Colonel J. G. Williams, and Colonel R. G. Ellison. As additional levies began to put in an appearance from the Auxiliary Army they were added to the militia and volunteer battalions, and as soon as the strength of a battalion assumed unwieldy proportions it was split up into two and renumbered.

In some cases, such as the Royal Fusiliers or the 60th Rifles, where the recruiting ground was exceptionally populous, a single regiment grew from its army strength of 850 into a brigade of 5,000, and finally into a division of 20,000.

Yet its efficiency as a tactical unit never became seriously impaired, and it was simply astonishing to see the manner in which men hitherto unused to arms quietly took their places in the ranks.

To send forth untrained men in a mass to take part in field operations would have been to court immediate and wholesale disaster, but to fit them into the component parts of an already complete and excellent organisation was a very different matter.

In actual military experience the raw levies of England soon equalled the reserves of both France and Germany; in every other soldierly quality they were vastly superior.

* * * * *

Yvetot stands nearly midway between Havre and Rouen, being about thirty miles distant from either, though perchance the balance of a mile or so would be in favour of the former.

It is a quaint little place, and would never have been heard of if Béranger had not dealt with its magnates much as Alphonse Daudet has immortalised the leaders of society in Tarascon.

On the west of the town the road leading to Motteville runs for nearly a mile by the side of a series of limestone quarries. Many generations of lime burners have cut deeply into the face of the curious ridge which terminates the elevated plateau at this point, and the extreme boundary of the quarries is marked by a mill, the Moulin des Rochers, whose whirling arms are visible for many miles round.

Early in the week, the main body of the British army being then distant some six miles from Yvetot (it must be remembered that thus far a double line of railway, with several branch lines, was in their hands), the Commander-in-Chief ordered a strong cavalry reconnaissance, supported by two batteries of Horse Artillery, to be pushed to the farthest possible limit in order to ascertain the disposition of the enemy.

General Massy, to whom this duty was intrusted, found that the French commander was strongly posted in Yvetot itself, whilst the bulk of his command lay behind the town on the road to Rouen, and also towards the south so as to command the line of the Seine.

Lord Roberts received this intelligence with a smile.

"What the French army wants is a man able to command it," was his comment, and Harington, who had accompanied General Massy during the reconnaissance, thought that he understood the Chief's remark.

A general advance was at once ordered, with the result that by midday the skirmishers thrown out by the French were being steadily driven back to the support of their guns.

Although sixty batteries of horse and field artillery accompanied the attacking force, only six of them came into action at first. For some unaccountable reason the rest had vanished.

Thirty-six guns against two hundred are but poor odds, and General Mercier, who early became aware of his vast predominance in artillery, resolved to turn the circumstance to account, and forthwith brought his entire force into action.

His orders from Paris were to remain strictly upon the defensive, but here was a chance of sweeping the English straight into the sea. It was too good to be refused.

This time there was none of the overcrowding and impetuous haste of the French advance at Blèville.

Cavalry swept to the front in superb style, and by half-past twelve the British forces were more hotly engaged than they had been at any time during the battle in the environs of Havre.

Curiously enough Lord Roberts paid little heed to the details of the French advance.

"They are doing exactly what I want them to do," he exclaimed rather sharply to a member of his staff who earnestly called his attention to the dense columns of troops which made up the enemy's centre and right.

Ever and anon did his glasses sweep the ridge culminating at the Moulin des Rochers at the head of the quarries, a line of country which completely flanked the French position and dominated it in a remarkable manner. The quarries themselves were fifty feet in height, and the land sloped away gently towards the Seine from the road along their base.

Matters momentarily became more serious, and the Duke of York had it in his mind to tell the Commander-in-Chief that his staff were of opinion that something should be done, and done quickly, if a disaster were to be averted, when Lord Roberts cried, with a keen note of relief in his voice:

"At last!" Then turning to his aides he said: "Lose no time in telling divisional commanders to press the attack home on Yvetot. The right of the line is to extend slightly and endeavour to force the enemy into the main road to Rouen."

The troops had complete confidence in their general, and

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were delighted when the order came to continue the advance, which had now been delayed some time.

Almost at the same moment the French became aware that they were subjected to the most murderous artillery fire that an army of any considerable size had ever been called upon to encounter.

Over 300 British guns were in position on the ridge behind the quarries, whence, perfectly secure themselves from attack, or even effective reply from the French artillery, they poured a tornado of shrapnel upon the dense masses of the enemy.

A large number of Maxim guns which were strapped to the limbers were also brought into action, and played a deluge of bullets, like spray from some gigantic garden hose, upon the French line, sweeping pitilessly over an area of a mile and a half in length by a mile in depth.

The French loss was heavy enough in all conscience, but even worse than this was the knowledge that their commander had been completely hoodwinked into bringing about an engagement under conditions thoroughly suited to the convenience of the enemy.

"*Voilà les rois d'Yvetot,*" said a lieutenant of chasseurs, pointing to the British gunners after he had picked up his heavy brass helmet, which a spent Maxim bullet had knocked off his head.

"The situation is quite ludicrous," replied the *sous-officier* to whom the remark was addressed. "These English evidently regard our generals as half their army. Ah! I expected as much," he continued, as orders came along the line for a rapid retreat on the Rouen Road.

Meanwhile General Mercier, after taking the best possible arrangements for quitting an untenable position, called for Commandant Bertholde, the head of the Intelligence Department of his staff, and said, with the quiet anger of despair in his voice: "I thought you told me that a flank approach by the Moulin des Rochers was impossible for either cavalry or artillery."

The officer he addressed flushed deeply as he replied: "I stake my life that no French guns could have got there under similar conditions. What has happened is simply miraculous."

"Next time, Commandant Bertholde," said the general, "I pray you remember that where a man can lodge his foot the English can lodge a cannon. You had better save yourself and use the knowledge," and he pointed contemptuously towards Rouen.

The officer addressed was too regretful to resent his superior's insulting tone.

"And you, *mon général?*" he inquired.

"My place is with the rear guard," replied General Mercier. In other words, he was resolved to sacrifice his life.

But circumstances were too much for him. During a charge by the 17th Lancers his sword arm was rendered useless. A trooper of the 6th Dragoons seized his horse's bridle, and, notwithstanding the general's protestations, galloped his charger off the field.

A trooper of the 6th Dragoons seized his horse's bridle.

The "miracle" which the French staff officer had announced, was the crossing by the English artillery division of a deep and rocky ravine which ran across the plateau behind the ridge, carrying a small stream from the heights some miles away right into the town of Yvetot.

Fortunately, Lord Roberts had allowed Major-General Nairne an extra hour to execute the movement with the guns, and when the leading batteries were brought to a halt by this formidable obstacle, the resourceful soldier in charge of the division did for a moment experience a very unpleasant tingle of cold perspiration.

He knew that the entire army would be in very serious straits if he were materially delayed in getting into action, and for a few seconds he thought to retrieve the disaster by hurrying back to the left wing, and doing the best he could in that direction.

Crossing difficult nullahs was no new thing for him, but with 300 guns it was a very different matter to manipulating a single battery.

Whilst he was thus tortured with doubt, his eye lighted upon a large hay-mew, with strong uprights and corrugated iron roof, standing on the opposite hill, and he at once resolved upon a desperate expedient.

"That is the high road to Paris."

In two places the ravine was practicable up to the verge of the rocky stream itself, and he forthwith gave orders that the hay-mew was to be demolished and two bridges constructed with its material, some gun carriages being also utilised if necessary.

Hundreds of gunners were set to this work, whilst an equally large number of men laboured with pick and shovel to secure reasonably safe tracks for the guns up and down the rugged sides of the ravine. In three-quarters of an hour the bridges were pronounced effective, and in the same space of time the whole of the guns were ranged up on the further side.

By galloping furiously the remaining half-mile they were able to unlimber just fifteen minutes after their appointed time, but Lord Roberts afterwards confessed that those fifteen minutes took more out of him than the whole march from Kabul to Kandahar.

"*Quo Fas et Gloria ducunt,*" is the second motto of the Royal Regiment of Artillery, and surely duty and glory never led them through a more difficult place than they encountered during the battle of Yvetot.

"A' thocht tae see a fecht the day," observed the sergeant in the 42nd, whom we met at Blèville, mopping his head as the Black Watch halted on the western outskirts of Yvetot, and a third cavalry brigade swept past in hot pursuit of the enemy.

"D'ye no ca' this a fecht?" said a stalwart youngster, who was carefully wiping his bayonet with a handful of grass.

"Fecht!" was the scornful reply. "A've seen warse todo in the Trongate mony a Saturday nicht. They're puir bodies the French."

Calming down to a more reasonable state of mind, the sergeant subsequently admitted that few troops outside the Black Watch could have withstood the fire of the guns under similar circumstances.

"The Seaforths," he added, "wad hae tried, but A've aye had me doots o' the McKenzies."

It was well for him that the Seaforth Highlanders were not within earshot, or he would have had a first-rate Trongate row on hand at the earliest opportunity, and the invincible 42nd might have met its match.

After the terrible rout that followed, the 4th Army Corps was of no further value. It was cut into shreds. The

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British cavalry and artillery did not cease the pursuit for many miles, driving the disorderly rabble of men before them along the roads and bye-ways towards Motteville and Pavilly.

Just beyond Yvetot the main road to Rouen turns sharply to the right and then continues in undeviating line until it is lost amidst the distant foliage of the fertile table-land of the Pays de Caux.

Two minor thoroughfares spring from the same point, where Harington stood awhile to watch the pursuit about a quarter to two o'clock.

"I never thought I should be here again under such conditions," he said to a brother-officer who, like himself was engaged on staff duty.

"So I should suppose," said the other. "But why do you say it?"

"Do you know what you are looking at?"

"No. Not particularly."

"That is the high road to Paris."

CHAPTER XIX.

Russia to the Rescue.

On the day following the battle of Yvetot volatile Paris strove hard to maintain her new reputation for steadfast purpose, and made pretence to smile at this fresh misfortune.

But in the theatres the comedy seemed to have lost its abandonment and the tragic stage was neglected. There was a tremor in the mirth of this gay people. Already the dread thought—as yet unspoken—came to their minds and leaped frantically in their hearts that the sound of cannon was once more almost at their gates, and that the City of Pleasure—that gay and lovely haunt of all the nations—was threatened.

There had been hurried meetings at the Elysée, and pale crowds of stricken citizens waited from hour to hour at its doors to glean intelligence of what new and final effort the Government would make to rid French soil of the invaders.

Now the menace sounded loudly in their ears, there was no longer idle exultation or the wild caprice of sterile enthusiasm. The heart of the brave nation was stirred and there burned the fire of martial ardour, the patriot eagerness for action. This all-pervading flame consumed in a moment the frail superficial egotism that disguised the real courage of the French people.

And what were those wild rumours that flew through the city and brought crowds to the Champs Elysées—crowds at once indignant and desperate? What means those frequent hurryings of messengers between the President's house and the German Embassy? Was it true, this strange story, that there had flashed along the railway wires the imperative order that traffic should stand aside and the lines be cleared for an express train that was to hurry over Europe, bound—who knew where?

Loud clamouring thundered the impatience of the people. News—news—any news was better than none at all.

"Are we to do nothing?" shouted one. "Are we to sit here and welcome the English pig to our city?"

"An ill thing it will be," muttered another, "if we are kept in the dark."

"Cheer up, neighbours," exclaimed a horsedealer who stood by. "Our generals have genius and——"

"A genius for getting shot, that's about all," was the retort. "I hope you have a good stock in your stables, Mercier. We shall need horse *ragout* before long, I'm thinking, if there are many more delays."

And thus the crowd continued, in muffled remonstrance or more strident anger, to call upon their Ministers of State to be up and doing.

It was imperative that the restlessness of the city should be alleviated, and by nightfall an official notice in *Le Journal* gave the welcome intelligence that a decisive step had been taken by the governments of France and Germany.

"It has been arranged," ran this announcement, "that the old and tried ally of France, the great nation of Russia, shall be asked to take her proper part in the humiliation of the insolent foe. The three great empires of Europe are together in this supreme struggle, and before the armies of Russia, Germany, and France the haughty domain of England will fall shattered at the first blow."

There was much rejoicing in Paris.

What could be more magnificent than this, which would practically unite all Europe against Great Britain? And Russia. The friend and ally of France, the nation which had done her the honour to borrow her money and accept her hospitality; was not Russia, with her foot upon India, with her armies uncountable, and her fleets, which might sweep unquestioned through the Baltic and break into the charmed waters of the North Sea, a power irresistible and invincible?

As the train steamed out of the railway station, bearing the emissaries of France and Germany, the popular excitement and enthusiasm were extraordinary. M. Hanotaux was bodily lifted from his carriage and carried into the saloon that lay waiting for him and his brother diplomats. The air rang with the shouts and plaudits of an intoxicated people.

But the journey to Russia was not one of unmixed pleasure. M. Hanotaux and M. de Visne, who represented the Republic, and Count Caprivi and General Dumpf, who acted on behalf of Germany, were ill at ease.

Their first bold strokes at England had failed disastrously. Two armies and two fleets had been destroyed. But, worse than this in the eye of honour, the English soldier had set his foot upon both dominions. Paris itself was threatened, Stralsund had been seized. Nearly half a million men—bold, confident, desperate—with no one knew how many more preparing to follow them, menaced the existence of the two empires.

"I am not sure that we are right," said Caprivi gloomily, "in calling in Russia. She is acting now as ever the part of the fox. We do the fighting, but it is she who will carry off the booty."

"Nothing easier than to retract," replied Hanotaux with a sneer. "You have an army of four millions, I believe. It is twenty to one."

Caprivi ground his teeth.

"There's no need of cheap satire," he declared. "You know as well as I do that the German reserves are strong enough to conquer the world France and Germany together have an army of over seven millions of men. What foe can possibly be an object of dread?"

"Well?"

"You know perfectly well the danger. Germany is united, of course, but——"

"But," Hanotaux took up the sentence, "you are not a free people. There is no need for concealment," he continued, seeing Caprivi eager to retort. "Let us face the facts steadily. Your Emperor has been engaged in killing individual freedom. He has established a tyranny worse than that of the Tsar of Russia. If you had to call upon your shopkeepers and citizens you would stand in hourly danger of a social rising that would depose your Emperor and destroy your capital. You dare not, in a war unprovoked as this, call on your reserves."

"And you?" hotly interposed General Dumpf.

"We are, I admit, in much the same predicament. We have, gentlemen, been labouring under a terrible mistake. Let us admit it frankly. Our huge armies and magnificent reserves, forced into service, are not available, as the mere statist would tell us, for purposes of war. Let the French Government call upon the French people—after a blunder so ghastly as to make the step necessary—and there will be a third revolution. No Cabinet could stand the shock. As for Germany, a collection of states with their jealousies and vanities and selfish interests, you cannot expect that your conscripts will rush to arms when you have trodden upon them, denied them free speech and free religion and public rights. It is in a moment of national agony like this that national defects are most apparent."

(To be continued.)

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PYN-KA

THE WONDERFUL METAL POLISHER

The Lustre Lasts!

Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.

Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price **10/6**, sent free for stamps.

ALEX. ROSS,
62, Theobald's Road, London.
Opposite Bedford Row. (Est. 1850.)
Parcel free from observation

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

£60

TO BE GIVEN AWAY,

Among those taking part in the following

Free Cash Prize Competition

NO ENTRANCE FEE WHATEVER.

1st Prize £25. 2nd Prize £20.
3rd Prize £10. 4th Prize £5.

The above money prizes will be given away as an advertisement amongst the competitors who can rearrange the following twenty-four letters to represent the names of four well-known trades, selected by us.

TUBREHCKAREBROCEGRPARDER.

Send in your solution at once, and we will inform you if correct, and give you full details of the Competition with conditions and date of closing. If you cannot solve all four do as many as you can, as there are four prizes to compete for. No Solution can be received after October 17th, 1898.—Address: "COMPETITION" MANAGER, 117A SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, LONDON, N.

THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

When you can get a real safe remedy like KAPUTINE?

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vesicle tissues generally."

NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.

All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.

The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

DEER RECTORY, MINTLAW, ABERDEEN,
NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.

From Rev. J. H. BURN.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.

Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.

Nothing Similar. Nothing as Good. **KAPUTINE CURES HEADACHE IN 10 MINUTES.**

If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

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YOU AND I.

L. T.—Taking a holiday does not necessarily mean lazying about. It depends upon what you have been doing, and your temperament. Some persons are as incapable of remaining idle as others are of prolonged work. Lord Macaulay once took a six weeks' holiday, during which time he learnt the Dutch language. You must not regard your friend as a duffer because he went botanising nearly all day while you lay on your back in a field.

M.—Although the mushroom's life is measured by hours, it flourishes long enough for an insect to hang its egg on the edge of the "umbrella," and for that egg to become an insect ready to colonise another mushroom.

F. W.—So far as I know, Russia is the only country in which applause in theatres is strictly forbidden.

Scorcher anxiously inquires whether fast or slow riding is most injurious to pneumatic tyres.——Undoubtedly fast riding will wear out your bicycle tyres more quickly than slow riding; the reason being that the impact with which it comes into contact with small, sharp obstacles on the road will be much greater. These small obstacles — chips of stones, thorns, etc.—are to be found scattered over every road, and, when travelling fast, the cover of a tyre, and often the inner tube, will be pierced by a number of them, which, were it travelling slowly, it would pass over, the force with which it strikes them not being sufficient to make them perforate the tyres.

Scotty.—No part of a tree can be removed from the grounds of Holyrood Palace without the permission of the Queen. One, dating from the reign of Queen Mary, was recently blown down, and before the gardeners could touch it, a photograph had to be forwarded to the Queen, who formally ordered its removal.

Amicus Veritatas has failed to convince a sceptical friend of his that there are fishes of the perch species that climb trees. He appeals to us to bear him out in this statement, feeling sure that what we have to say will bear weight with his friend.——We are indeed flattered by the confidence you put in our opinion. On consulting our books of reference, we find that there are indeed a species of the perch called the "climbing perch," which voluntarily leaves the failing streams, ascends the banks, and proceeds over dry land towards some spot where its unerring instinct warns it that water is yet to be found. No record is made, however, of these tree-climbing fish. Probably, hearing of the climbing perch, you took it for granted that trees were meant.

Q. D. asks: "What sort of a knot is the 'Staffordshire knot?'"——Queen Elizabeth is said to have promised his life to a prisoner lying under sentence of death in the old Castle of Stafford if he could devise a knot that would hang three men at once. The reward sharpened his wits, and he accomplished the invention of a triple knot, simple enough, yet into which three men's necks could be inserted separately.

T. N. D. wants to know why both heat and cold make one sleepy.——If the temperature be lowered beyond a certain point, the small vessels underlying the skin contract, and the general circulation of the body is impeded. The respiratory organs are especially affected, and move so slowly that the blood is not properly aërated, and the circulation of blood to the brain becomes slow and meagre. This necessarily produces sleep. Heat tends to cause sleep by inducing a feeling of comfort, which is a condition favourable to somnolence. If the heat is excessive, the system becomes languid; slight exertion wearies the body, and sleep naturally follows.

Salamander asks: "Which two nations of importance have been friendly for the greatest length of time?"——England and Germany. There may have been differences of opinion and sometimes strained relationships, which, however, have been smoothed over by diplomatic intercourse, but throughout the long and warlike history of these two great nations, there has never yet been any open warfare.

W. H.—The main, or high sea, begins at low water mark, and our Courts of Admiralty have jurisdiction there. Between the high and the low water marks those Courts divide jurisdiction with the common law courts; that is, when the sea is out the exposed ground is under common law, but the other Courts have power when the tide is in. The limit of territorial waters has been fixed at three miles, which was the utmost distance to which a cannon-ball could reach when the law was made. Within that limit international law recognises national or local law.

Artist.—Prussian blue paint is made from the ashes of the burnt hoofs of horses.

P. N.—About five years ago an engineer of Hamburg proposed to convey passengers by pneumatic tube, in the same way as letters are sent. I haven't heard anything of the scheme since. Only three persons were to be conveyed at one time. The "carriage" was a tube 42in. in diameter and 6ft. long, lighted by electricity and supplied with air in a patent reservoir. The speed was to be ninety miles an hour.

Portrait.—The representations of our monarchs on the coins of their time cannot be relied upon as likenesses. We read that the portrait of George III. on the first half-crown of his reign represented him with a neck like that of a gladiator; that did not please the King, so an alteration was made, but "still there was no likeness." Yet it was adopted.

M. C., like the majority of us, has some superstition remaining in his composition. His weakness in that direction is that Friday is a bad day in his family; but the recent battle in the Soudan has upset his pet idea. "I have a brother in the Sirdar's army," he writes, "and I have been dreading that the battle might take place on Friday, for I felt sure that he would be killed if engaged on that day. But he wasn't. I shall begin to think that there is something wrong in my idea."——I should think so. Sir Herbert Kitchener is evidently not affected in that way; he has twice met and defeated the Dervishes during the past few months, and each time on Friday. The battle at Atbara was won in the early hours of Good Friday. The head of a City firm once told me that the best appointment he ever held was obtained on Friday.

Sleep.—Yes, there are animals which sleep through the summer, for the same reason as others sleep all through the winter. Æstivation, as it is called, is not so well-known to us as its opposite. In the tropical regions, when the sun dries up the pools and makes it difficult for slow-moving animals to find sustenance, they compromise with Nature and go to sleep till the troublous time is over.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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Back blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Oct. **4th**, if intended for the Issue on sale Oct. **18th**, and dated Oct. **22nd**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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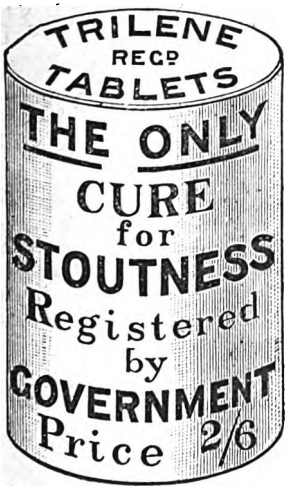
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be CURED by taking

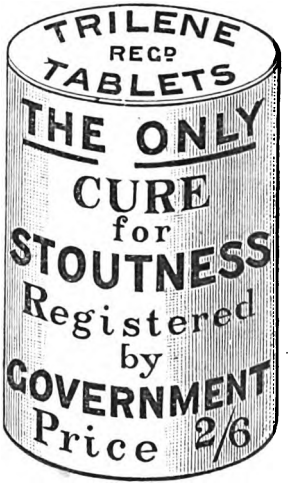
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send 2s. 6d. to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

A. BROWN, of 25 Edwin Street, High Pallion, Sunderland, says: "You have no idea what a most wonderful effect the Tablets had. I am a great deal thinner, and better in health."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

L. LUDDRINGTON, "Sunnyside," Station Road, Sidcup, says: "I have benefited greatly, and have lost a stone."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Miss A. ATKINS, 329 Southdown Road, Liverpool, writes: "I lost nearly a stone from taking one box."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

Mrs. WOODS, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets deserve every success."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Miss J. GUISE, 3 North End, Croydon, says: "I cannot speak too highly of the Tablets; I was stout all my life until a few weeks ago, when I first began your treatment. I was surprised to find they acted so admirably. I am now getting quite a slender figure, besides being better in health."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

ALL PRIZES IN FORMER COMPETITIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN UP; EIGHT MACHINES NOT BEING CLAIMED IN TIME WERE PASSED ON.

"We have examined the A.B. Cycles, and find them well-made, high-class machines. The firm are thoroughly straightforward."—*Cycling*, August 6th, 1893.

"Knowing the method on which the A.B. Cycle Company's business is done, we can honestly recommend the firm."—*Athletic Record*, September 3rd, 1898.

100 BICYCLE PRIZES.

SEND ANSWERS EARLY.

Make up the best sentence you can out of twelve words, the first letter of each word commencing with a letter of "LAST TEN YEARS" in proper order. Thus: "*L*ike *A*ll *S*ubstantial *T*hings *T*hey *E*ndure *N*umberless *Y*ears, *E*arning *A* *R*oyal *S*tatus." If you like you can make two or more sentences, provided you comply with the above conditions, so that no more than twelve words are used in all.

AN ABSOLUTELY FREE COMPETITION.

We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. Neither after you have won a prize (if you are fortunate enough to do so) do we compel you to purchase any accessories. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office gets the benefit of. Thus we can truthfully assert of this thoroughly genuine Competition that it is

ABSOLUTELY FREE TO ALL.

ALL MACHINES GUARANTEED FOR TWELVE MONTHS.

REMEMBER, IT ONLY COSTS A POSTAGE STAMP TO TRY.

First Prize, £23 A.B. Safety, fitted with A.B. tyres.

The following ladies and gentlemen are amongst the number of persons who have recently received free bicycles, each of whom have signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected either directly or indirectly with this firm. We will forfeit £1,000 if this statement is incorrect. A few Free Cycle Winners: Mr. Geo. A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. Arthur J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. Maria Fraser, Haglefort, Shinrone, Ireland; Mr. Robert Hughes, Llanidan, Anglesey, North Wales; Mr. L. Horne, 101 London Road, Oldham; etc.

Second Class (9 prizes) £23 Cycle for £9
Third Class (12 prizes) £23 Cycle for £10
Fourth Class (15 prizes) £23 Cycle for £11
Fifth Class (18 prizes) £23 Cycle for £12
Sixth Class (20 prizes) £23 Cycle for £13
Consolation (25 prizes) £23 Cycle for £14

TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN and **closes Monday, October 17th, 1898.** Results will be declared as soon as possible, although it may be a fortnight afterwards before all replies are posted.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Prizes may be considerably increased in all or any one class. Unless stamp (not a stamped envelope, as our catalogue is a large [outward] size) is enclosed for postage of Catalogue and Result of Competition, the Company will not guarantee to inform competitors of their success. Prize-winners need not purchase any accessories with their machines, unless they so desire. As the majority of the competitors may not be able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for one of our Consolation Prizes **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any prize liable to forfeiture.

£100

We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to any ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. We do not allow a shilling extra discount beyond the 34 per cent. off the catalogue price to anyone, and even if we had an order for one hundred of our lowest priced machines we should refuse to supply them unless we were paid £1,500.

Mark letters "SHORT STORIES" on top corner of envelope, and address to the Managing Director,

A.B. CYCLE CO. LTD., 59 & 60 CHANCERY LANE, HOLBORN, W.C.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 510. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 8TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

DR. TIBBLES' Vi-Cocoa

CAN BE TESTED FREE.

All Men and Women

who have to be exposed to the bleak uncertainty of our trying climate should fortify themselves before they face their daily toil with Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and they can then brave cold in winter and heat in summer with equanimity. The writer speaks from personal experience and from observation of beneficial effects on others. *Tea* opens the pores and temporarily excites, *coffee* stimulates the action of the heart, while Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa gives strength, stamina, and builds up and strengthens the lung tissues. It is indeed a wonderful food beverage. Nothing has ever been discovered that can approach it in giving lightness of heart, joy of life, fleetness of foot, and that general feeling of comfort which only comes from a full capacity to enjoy every pleasure — moral, intellectual and physical.

Address (a postcard will do), but mention this paper,
60, 61 & 62, Bunhill Row, London, E.C.

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THEY CANNOT BE BOUGHT IN A SHOP!

THE John Noble HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Promptly SENT BY PARCELS POST, carefully packed direct from the **LARGEST FIRM** of COSTUMIERS in the WORLD, and Originators of **HALF-GUINEA COSTUME**.

THREE GOLD MEDALS AWARDED.

These Costumes are supplied in the following two good durable Cloths: I. JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE, wealthy and weather-resisting; II. JOHN NOBLE COSTUME COATING, smooth surfaced, and of lighter weight.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE, together with the new 84-pp. Illustrated Dress and Drapery Catalogue. Please mention *Short Stories* when writing.

A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloths (6yd. 52in. wide) for 7/6. Carriage, 8d. **7/6**

Colours of all Costumes are Black, Navy, Electric, Brown, Ruby, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, Moss, Sage Green, and Purple.

The Three Sizes in Stock are 34, 36, 38 in. round bust (under arm-). Skirts being 38, 40, 42 in. long in front. Any other size can be specially made to measure 1/6 extra.

MODEL 904.

An excellent new design, consisting of well-made and carefully finished Chesterfield full-width **10/6** Coat and Tailor Skirt, in the latest style. Price complete Costume, 10/6; carriage, 6d. Or Skirt alone for 5/6; carriage, 6d. Supplied also in Covert Coating for **13/6**, or in New Mixture Suiting for **18/-**.

THE NEW SACQUE COSTUME.

MODEL 976. ☛

A very smart Tailor-made and carefully finished Sacque Coat and full wide Tailor Skirt in the latest mode. **15/-** Price complete, 15/-. Safely packed in box, and sent carriage paid for 1/- extra.

IT SPEAKS VOLUMES

for the excellence of the Brook Street Mills' productions that although during the past quarter-century many firms have tried to imitate them, none have succeeded in producing a garment at anything near the same price in any way worthy to rank in the same class as THE FAMOUS JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUME.

THE FAMOUS JOHN NOBLE KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS.

Made in strong Serge with saddle top, full sleeves, and pocket.

21	24	27	30 in.
1/6	2/-	2/6	3/- ea.
33	36	39	42 in.
3/6	4/-	4/6	5/- ea.

Lengths are from top of Neckband to edge of Skirt in front. Carriage, 4d. extra.

WOOLLEN KNITTED CAPS.

(as sketch), 1s. All shades.

MODEL 978.

Well-made and prettily trimmed bodice and Full Wide Tailor Skirt. **10/6** Price Complete, 10/6; carriage, 6d. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d. Supplied also in Covert Coating for 13/6, and in New Mixture Suiting for 18/-.

Mourning Orders sent off in 12 hours.

NEW AUTUMN & WINTER DRESS FABRICS.

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SHORT STORIES

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 2.—The Seaforth Highlanders.

No. 510.

ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending October 8th, 1898.

How He Missed His Chance.

"You are working too hard, old man," said Jack Bingham's friends, one after another, as they saw his ruddy cheeks turn pale, his springy, elastic tread become dull and dragging, and heard less and less often his cheery if not exactly tuneful whistle.

But to all their good advice and earnest protests Jack turned a deaf ear, and kept steadily at work.

None of his friends properly appreciated Jack's unusual devotion to work, for none of them knew its incentive—that he was in love.

She was a dainty little thing, always admired by men, and rather looked down upon and at the same time envied by her own sex, at home the pet of her parents, and in society an imperious and exacting young belle.

Jack worked early and late, steadily and hopefully, to secure that competence which he knew would be necessary to support her in the comfort to which she was accustomed. The copy he turned out was good in spite of its volume; his regular salary from his paper was increased, together with his duties; and his income from outside work reached a respectable figure.

Still, the money did not come fast enough to suit the impatient lover, who thereupon began to worry and fret. Now the man who works with his brain sixteen hours a day, and worries and frets in addition, has not a long career of usefulness before him, be his motives what they may.

Jack's eyes gave way first. Specks and blurs floated in them, and through them jumped pains that drew his head down on his folded arms in spite of himself. His feet and hands grew heavy, as if his blood had turned to lead. Presently the pain that gnawed at the back of his eyeballs refused to yield even to sleep. Then Jack grew afraid, but did not let his fear keep him from his work.

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He was not sure of himself in those days, and adopted the precaution of reading over aloud whatever of importance he had written. One day it came about that as he read his tongue seemed suddenly swollen and useless, and he could not utter the words his mind framed. He turned to his typewriter and placed, as he thought, the heading he desired on the article he had written but could not read.

When the foreman in the composing room saw "The Love of Ethel" introducing a column on the Far East, he laughed at first, and then, remembering Jack's looks of late, grew grave.

Soon the managing editor came, and Jack was led away to a cab, babbling thickly about Ethel, his work and the money he had saved—money that proved of great value in the long months that followed. For Jack was an orphan, his friends were careless, happy-go-lucky Bohemians, and brain fever is an illness that demands the most skilful of physicians and the most careful of nurses.

So when Jack came to himself again, very pale and thin and quiet, he knew that his precious store must be drained low.

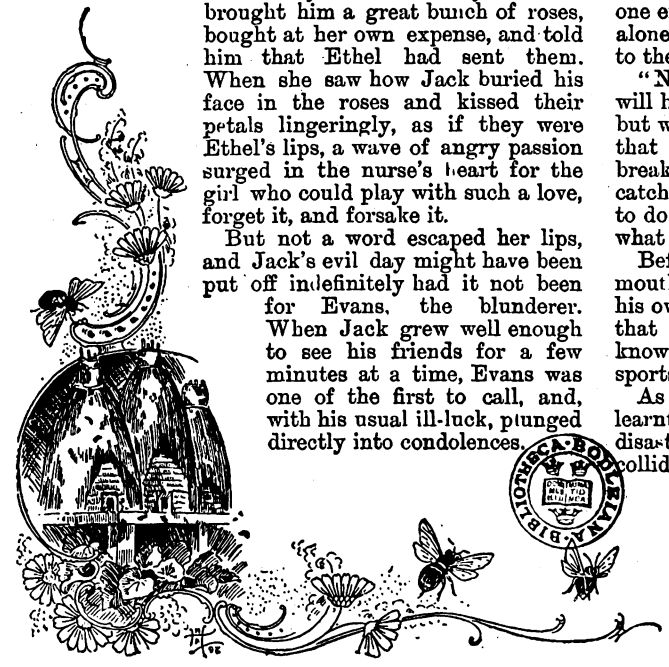
That troubled him little, however, compared with his torturing doubt of Ethel. Why did he not hear from her? Why did not she come to him now that he was so much better? The kindly doctor had noticed Jack's trouble; by a quiet inquiry had discovered what probably lay at the bottom of it, and so had an answer ready for Jack when the latter screwed up his courage to ask for Ethel.

She had been as ill as he, they told him, and like him was now slowly but surely recovering. And Jack must not worry about her in the least, for the doctor would bring him news from her every day.

So Jack kept obediently quiet among his pillows, listening intently for the doctor's footsteps, and flushing like a girl when the news was good, as, somehow, it always was.

One day the brown-eyed nurse brought him a great bunch of roses, bought at her own expense, and told him that Ethel had sent them. When she saw how Jack buried his face in the roses and kissed their petals lingeringly, as if they were Ethel's lips, a wave of angry passion surged in the nurse's heart for the girl who could play with such a love, forget it, and forsake it.

But not a word escaped her lips, and Jack's evil day might have been put off indefinitely had it not been for Evans, the blunderer. When Jack grew well enough to see his friends for a few minutes at a time, Evans was one of the first to call, and, with his usual ill-luck, plunged directly into condolences.



Jack did not quite understand at first, but Evans, floundering ahead, soon made it clear to the invalid that Ethel had not been ill; but that, on the contrary, while the issue of his illness had been still doubtful, she had thrown him over and had announced her engagement to another.

After that Jack went back into the valley of the shadow and knocked at the very gates of death. But the doctor and the nurse, working desperately together, pulled him away and led him back to life. Whereat he was not so grateful as he ought to have been.

And when he found he must get well, whether he would or no, he announced that he was going back to work at once. The doctor remonstrated, commanded, begged, in vain, and the pleadings of the nurse had no effect.

Back he crept to his old haunts, a thin, pale ghost of his former self. The young fellows who were doing his work looked at him with pity.

His old desk had long since been in the possession of another, but the proprietor, when Jack asked for a place, gave orders at once that he should be employed at whatever he was able to do.

But banquets and balls, receptions and races, lectures, sermons and interviews, quickly cloyed the appetite of the newspaper man who had been used to the strong meat of journalism for his daily diet.

"Give me something with blood in it," Jack said to the chief one day. "I'm tired of this woman's work. When I was on earth before they were not afraid to send me out after big stories once in a while."

"It's for you we're afraid and not for the story, Jack, and you know it," expostulated the chief. "Everyone believes that no man on the paper can work up a sensation with you. But you are not strong yet for a rough job, Jack. Look in the glass and see for yourself. Just take it easy for a while longer, old man, and trust us to work you hard enough by-and-by to make up."

The "story with blood in it" came sooner than anyone expected. The very next day Jack chanced to be alone in the reporters' room when the sub-editor came to the door and cast a worried glance round.

"No one else here, Jack?" he asked. "Then you will have to go. I hate to send you, for it's a hard trip, but we'll help you all we can. They have just wired that there's a big smash at Ketterton Junction. A breakdown train will go out in ten minutes. You must catch it, wire in a first story for an extra, and then plan to do the introduction for the later editions. You know what to do better than I can tell you."

Before the last words were out of the sub-editor's mouth Jack was half way down the stairs, pulling on his overcoat as he went. His nerves were tingling with that subtle elation of conflict which newspaper men know as well as do soldiers on the verge of battle and sportsmen in sight of big game.

As the train rushed along through the night Jack learnt all that the railway men could tell him of the disaster. An extra goods and a through express had collided on a curved embankment which skirted the banks of a river.

The scene Jack looked upon that winter's night was as fascinating in its weird horror as was that of summer in its vivid colouring. Out of a clouded sky the moon struggled in vain to pierce the heavy, snow-laden darkness.

Upon the line, and tumbled on either side, engines and cars were piled in huge, formless

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

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heaps. Stifled shrieks and screams sounded from the depths of the black masses. Here and there the gleaming lanterns darted like will-o'-the-wisps, frequently converging upon one point, where lay a torch-guarded row of the dead.

Suddenly, while Jack strained his eyes to pierce the gloom, a little tongue of flame leapt into the darkness.

"The wreckage is on fire!" cried the railway man at his side, and there came as if in answer from the chaos a shrill cry of torture.

The fire, leaping from point to point, licked greedily at the dry wood of the splintered coaches, and again the piercing shriek made Jack shiver in spite of himself.

Clambering over the *débris* in the direction from which the screams seemed to come, he found, almost at the bottom of the great pile, a woman, saved from instant death by a freak of fate, but pinned down and cramped until movement was impossible. She had swooned at the crash of the collision, apparently, and had been brought back to consciousness by the heat of the advancing flames.

One glance and Jack knew the face.

"Ethel!"

He started as he uttered the name, and the woman shrank back even towards death at the sound of his voice. In a moment the weakness passed, and he attacked the imprisoning pile. Help came from all directions, and slowly a way of escape was opened.

But the flames swept swiftly on, scorching the girl's delicate flesh, charring her golden hair, and dragging from her shrieks of pain that tore the hearts of those who heard them. Jack's feverish strength increased with each recurring cry, and he pulled and lifted with a power that amazed his helpers and himself.

At last he reached her, held her in his arms for a single moment, then passed her back to willing hands. On the instant a piece of iron, its supports burnt away, dropped from the over-hanging pile and struck him on the shoulder.

They thought he was dead when, senseless, he was rescued. But presently, in an improvised farmhouse hospital, he came back to consciousness to find a flood of pale gold hair covering his face, to feel the warm kisses of full lips on his bloodless ones, and to hear a sweet voice says:

"Jack! My Jack! It is Ethel. Don't you know me?"

If Jack had been physically stronger, perhaps, the barriers, which long months of bitter contempt had raised, would not have been so easily swept away. But as it was he whispered: "My darling," and raised one arm weakly to fold about her neck.

Afterwards he was very glad that he did, for the truth came out little by little; he learnt that the fault was not Ethel's but her matchmaking mamma's, and that in the girl's own heart he had never been supplanted.

It was some months later when Jack returned, hale and hearty, with new hope in his soul, to his work, that the sub-editor said:

"Too bad you had to miss your chance at the Ketterton accident, old man."

"Chance? What chance?" asked Jack, bewildered.

"Why, don't you remember that you were the only newspaper man on the spot? If you hadn't got knocked out we should have had the scoop of the year."

"By Jove! That's so," said Jack regretfully. "And I had quite forgotten it."

H. T. P.

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NOTE.—A similar competition in which 50 sovereigns are given away is appearing weekly in HOME NOTES.

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A Perfect Revelation.

Out of Pessimism, by Rejection; that was the moral pedigree of Mr. Magdalen, cynic.

The pessimism began in his stomach, and ended by settling in his mind; a one-time badly digested dinner eventually turned the channel of his thoughts into a misanthropic course.

As for the rejection, that was of the kind that consists of a pretty girl carefully leading a man into a trap, and then just as carefully turning her back upon him.

It is only fair, in the case of Mr. Magdalen, to mention that the number of his rejections had been quite formidable—due, most probably, to the film that his vanity was for ever drawing over his clearer judgment. A wounded vanity is not infrequently the beginning of cynicism.

But however all that may be, the fact remained that Mr. Magdalen, at the time that concerns this narrative, was very much at variance with the world, and tired of all that therein was.

Perhaps his dinner had again done him the impoliteness to disagree with him; perhaps another pretty girl had just opened her eyes in delightfully feigned astonishment, murmured:

"Oh, Mr. Magdalen, I am so sorry!" and left him once more disconsolate; certain it is that he went to his rooms, on this particular evening, and, confidently addressing the pictures on the walls, spoke aloud concerning many things that oppressed him.

"Bah! I'm sick of it all. Oh, the hideous hollowness of the whole fabric of civilisation! Lies, sham, and hypocrisy everywhere; everyone must be believed a scoundrel until the opposite is proved; circle lies within circle of conventions, of rules and regulations, making a man a mere machine. This is not living; there is no freedom of action in all this. At every opening one is hampered; social usage, good form and fetishes of that sort are guarding every portal that leads to free will and naturalness. And what good does it all do? H'm! it's done me a sweet lot of good, I must say! No, the thing for me to do is to cut the whole shooting-match, to pull up sticks and depart for wilds—somewhere out of the world."

Mr. Magdalen was really very much in earnest. The very next morning he walked to the house of his friend, Major Fewsleer, and said to that gentleman:

"Old man, do me a favour. I'm heartily sick of this part of the world and I want air. You've got lots of it out on the Texas prairies. I want some of it. In other words, give me a letter to your foreman on the T-Square ranch, telling him I'm coming down for my health, or any other stuff like that you can think of. As a matter of fact, I'm going because I'm sick of this. What do you think?"

"I think," said the Major sententiously, "that you're more kinds of an italicised fool than there are in the dictionary. What the Tom, Dick, and Harry do you want to go and frizzle in that beastly sun for, with no one to speak to but cowboys whose talk is all cattle?"

"Major," said Mr. Magdalen a trifle wearily, "you mean well, I know; but everything you say only makes me long to get down there. Why, man, nobody to speak to is just what I'm yearning for, and nothing to look at will make eyes as good as new again. Come now, will you do me this favour, or won't you? Because——"

"Oh, well, if you put it that way," said the Major deprecatingly, and promptly sat down and wrote the letter needed.

Thus it came about that in due course of time, there appeared at the T-Square ranch a young man with a tired expression on his face and a letter in his hand. Presently he was rid of both, and was a cowboy like the rest. The freedom that the prairies seemed to promise filled him with a buoyancy of spirit that he had not known for many a long day, and the absence of all that had been galling him in the world he had left was also soothing to his soul.

Among the other cowboys he was accounted, when that happened at all, as a somewhat morose character, which opinion was due to the caustic remarks he occasionally let fall concerning the world of manners and customs. Whenever he spoke of Texas, it was with unbounded enthusiasm.

The one thing that somewhat annoyed him about the T-Square was the presence of the foreman's daughter. He had come down here especially to get away from all that sort of thing; and now one of the first things that he found was a gipsy-like little beauty who spoke Spanish and English in charming alternation, and rode like an Amazon.

However, she was practically a savage, he thought to himself in consolation, and didn't really count. Her father, Mr. Eslington, had grown old on the T-Square; he had married, so Magdalen seemed to have heard, a Mexican or Spaniard, and Miss Mamie had presumably never seen anything but the prairies, and was just about as wild as the cactus growing thereabouts. On consideration of which, Mr. Magdalen smoothed away his first displeasure by the assurance that she didn't count at all.

He rarely saw the girl; and when he did, she was galloping along with her hair streaming out behind her like some wild thing, or else was humming some

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Mexican song or other that he didn't understand and didn't want to.

Magdalen had contracted the habit, after work, of taking solitary rides; it was in the course of one of these that a curious thing happened to him.

He was galloping at full speed across the open prairie, his hat far back on his head, and his eyes fixed on the horizon.

That was what brought him to grief—that gazing out into the wide world, and riding meanwhile into a prairie-dog's dug-out. The pony stumbled, fell on his knees, and Mr. Magdalen went whirling off over the animal's ears.

When he tried to move, he found there was something the matter with his ankle. The pony had got up again, and was standing still, grazing; but Mr. Magdalen was lying on the ground groaning and muttering unpleasant things.

As the moments went by, it became more and more evident to him that he certainly was in a fix. He couldn't move without hideous pain, and the boys of the ranch wouldn't miss him for hours to come. He wondered what had happened.

And while he was yet wondering, his pony pricked up its ears, whinnied, and turned to greet Miss Mamie's pony, which just then galloped up, its fair rider in the saddle. In an instant she had dismounted and was by Magdalen's side.

"My ankle's twisted, I believe," he said apologetically. He was glad someone had come, but he would have preferred anyone else.

"Yes," said Miss Mamie, after a hasty examination, ', and it's a tollably bad twist too. Yo' cain't walk at all, what? I'll have to——"

Then, before he could even have time for astonishment, Magdalen found himself being carried in this girl's arms, and presently being placed in his saddle. "And now," said Miss Mamie, breathing a trifle hard, "if we rides home moderate, 'spect you can stand it till we get to th' house."

"How shall I ever thank you?" began Magdalen; but she interrupted him with a "Don't!" And he could do nothing but continue to wonder and to gaze furtively at this magnificent young creature riding by his side.

It seemed to him now that he had hitherto been curiously blind in the matter of this girl's evident beauty; and it occurred to him, in a swift flash, that here was a girl so different from those away in England, so untrammelled and free, so unsullied by the knowledge of conventions, as to be a perfect revelation, an unsuspected delight.

In the days after his accident, when he lay on a couch in the ranch-house, he turned this new idea over and over in his mind, fed it with frequent glimpses of Miss Mamie, as she flitted to and fro through the house, and finally came to the conclusion that it was a pretty good idea.

Miss Mamie's eyes as he looked at them when she brought him some of those mysterious compounds especially intended for convalescents, seemed to him to become daily more fair, and daily he increased in wonderment at his former blindness. Why, she was a very prairie-flower, a rara avis, an unspoiled child of nature, a beauty blushing unseen in the desert. Why should she not be the one in all the world to prove the oruth of his firm belief, that good was to be found only tutside civilisation?

And so it came about that Mr. Magdalen, cynic, fell in love with Miss Mamie Eslington completely, unreservedly. Everything about her was a delight to him, from her hair, free to the breezes, to her queer Western speech.

As for her, she allowed him to make love to her without doing much herself beyond appearing to like it. There was a mysterious twinkle in her eyes all the while, that to the disinterested observer would have been named humour, though to Magdalen it was love-light.

Mr. Magdalen at length came to the conclusion that he wanted Mamie to be his wife. The many rides they had taken together, the long talks they had had, consisting chiefly of language on the part of Magdalen, and smiling silence on Mamie's side, had made him more and more aware of the many beauties of her nature. Occasionally he had been startled by sudden lapses from her prairie dialect into perfectly pure English; but she had always reverted just as suddenly, and he had forgotten the thing.

So it happened that, as they rode together one beautiful salmon-tinted even, Magdalen leant over and said swiftly, passionately, to the girl beside him:

"Miss Mamie, I can't keep on seeing you this way, day after day, without telling you—telling you that I—I love you. Perhaps you've seen it; girls usually do, I believe. But I must tell you. And I want you to be my wife, Mamie. Won't you?"

"Well!" said Mamie, "but I'm—I'm skeered! I 'spose I'd better ask—" Then she broke into a musical burst of merriment. "There," she said, relapsing suddenly into wonderfully pure English and holding out her pretty hand to Magdalen, "take it, you silly boy. Yes, of course I've known it all along, and I'll confess I tried to trap you; only," and she hung her head and blushed so prettily that Magdalen, through all his astonishment, wanted to kiss her, "only—I got caught myself. You see, papa got a private letter from Major Fewsleer, advising him of your real reason for coming out here, and of course papa couldn't keep it from me. And so I——"

Magdalen was kissing her hand rapturously. Then he caught his breath sharply and gasped: "But you—you talk so—so differently!"

"Yes, you blind cynic; of course I do. What do you suppose I was educated and lived in England for, if I can't speak English?"

"Oh!" gasped Magdalen, "and I thought——"

"Yes; pity, isn't it? But you've no chance to escape now. You thought you were finding a flower untouched by the contamination of civilisation, and now you see you weren't, you dear boy. Isn't civilisation a little good, after all?"

She was leaning towards him; the enchantment of her voice and her eyes came to him like a flood; her beautiful hair was lifted by a passing zephyr until it curled before him like a promise of Heaven; and then, as he pressed his lips upon hers, he murmured:

"Civilisation is beautiful—if you say so, you little witch!"

Before they reached the ranch again, many more things had occurred which proved that a woman's little finger can twist resolutions that have been years in building. Magdalen had agreed to take her back to civilisation and become once more a sociable animal. Finally, the little witch said very roguishly:

"And as I am to take your heart back to civilisation, don't you think you had better leave your cynicism out here on the prairies?"

And from the fervour of his assent it is reasonable to believe that he did. WALTER WALTERS.

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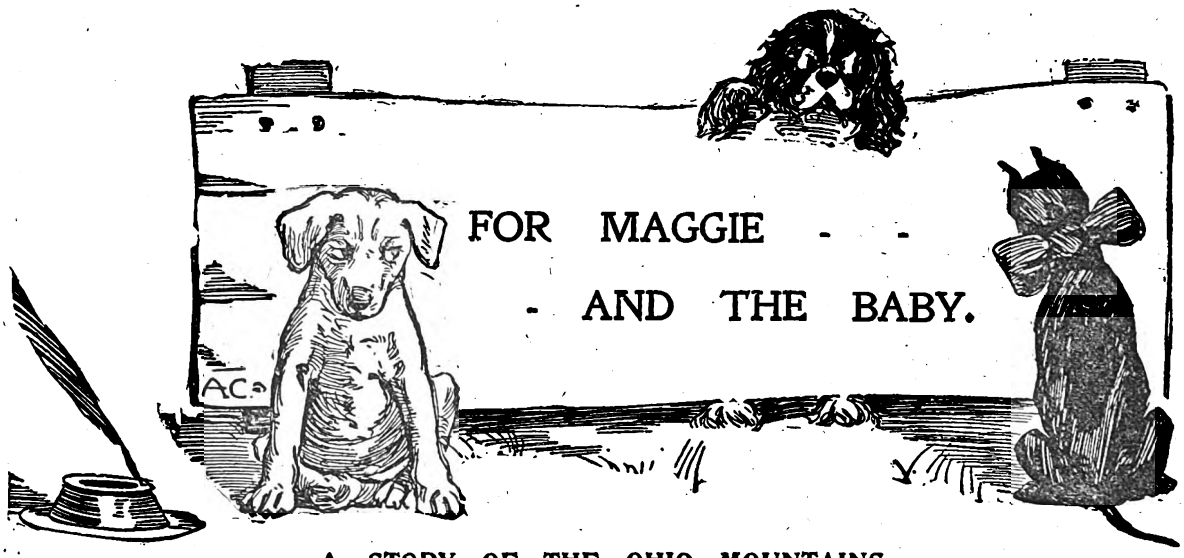

A STORY OF THE OHIO MOUNTAINS.

He came up the mountain road at nightfall trudging forward wearily, and coughing now and then a heavy, hollow cough that told its own story.

There were only two houses on the mesa, stretching shaggy and sombre from the base of the mountains to the valley below.

Two unpainted, red-wood dwellings, with their clumps of trailing pepper trees and tattered bananas, mere specks of civilisation against a stern background and mountain sides.

The traveller stopped before one of them, bowing awkwardly as the master of the house came out.

"Mr. Brand, I believe?"

Brand looked keenly into the stranger's face.

Not a bad face, certainly; sallow and drawn with suffering, one of those hopelessly pathetic faces, barely saved from the grotesque by a pair of dull, wistful eyes.

Not that James Brand saw anything either grotesque or pathetic about the man.

"Another sickly-looking stranger outside, Barbara, wants to try the air up here. Can you keep him? Or perhaps Mrs. Fox will give him a berth."

Mrs. Brand shook her head in wifely meditation.

"No, Mrs. Fox can't, that's certain. She has an asthma and two bronchitises there now. What's the matter with him, Jim?"

The stranger's hoarse, resonant cough answered.

"Keep him? To be sure. You might know I'd keep him, Jim; the night air's no place for a man with a cough like that. Bring him into the kitchen."

The new-comer spread his bony hands over Mrs. Brand's cheery fire, and the soft, dull eyes followed her movements wistfully.

His name was Brice. He had been in a mill explosion and had had a narrow escape. He had been ordered to try a change of air, and later he would look out for a job.

In answer to the question whether he was married, he pulled out a small black case.

Brand took the little rusty affair in his hands reverently. A woman's face—not grand nor fair even—some bits of tawdry finery making its plainness plainer, and beside it a round-eyed boy plumped into a high chair, with two little feet sticking out sturdily. Mrs. Brand looked over her husband's shoulder with kindly curiosity.

"Yes, that's Maggie and the boy," fighting the conscious pride in his voice like one who tries to wear his honours meekly. He took the well-worn case again, gazing into the two faces an instant with helpless yearning, and returned it to its place. The way he handled it was a caress, fastening the little brass hook with scrupulous care.

"I'll be sendin' for 'em when I git a little better o' this cough."

A very quiet, unobtrusive guest Mrs Brand found the man Brice; talking little save in a sudden gush of confidence, and always of his wife and child; choosing a quiet corner of the kitchen in the chilly nights, where he watched his hostess' quick movements with wistful admiration.

"Try hunting, Brice. The doctor says it's healthy."

And Brice tried hunting as Brand advised. Taking the gun from its crotch over the door after breakfast, and wandering for hours in the yellow, wine-like air of the mesa, he came in at noon and nightfall always empty-handed, yet no one derided his failure. There was something about the man that smothered derision.

Mrs. Brand had always an encouraging word for the weary-looking hunter. "Greasewood's bad for huntin'. Jim says it don't pay to look for quail in the brush when he does fetch 'em down."

"Like enough, ma'am. I've had a good many shots at the little wild things, but they turn their heads so innocent like. A man as has been blowed up once ain't much at separatin' families. I s'pose it ain't the shootin' by itself that's healthy, but the air——"

Whether the doctors were right or whether it was the mingled resin and honey of the sage and chaparral, no one cared to ask. Certain it is that the bothering cough yielded a little and the bent form grew a trifle more erect. He followed Brand from the table one morning, stopping outside, his face full of patient eagerness.

"I'm gettin' strong, neighbour. There's odd jobs you could gi' me. I'd be slow, perhaps, but seems as if

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anything 'ud be better 'n this continual doin' nothing."

"Fox and I was sayin' yesterday we'd like to put another man on the ditch," replied Brand. "It'll be easy work for a week till we strike the rock again. Then there's the greasewood. It's always on hand. You might take it slow when you was able. We'll find you jobs enough, man."

The scarred, colourless face brightened.

And so Price went to work on the ditch, gently at first, spared from the heaviest work by strong arms and rough kindliness.

And, ere long, another rude dwelling went up on the mesa, the blue smoke from its fireside curling slowly towards the pine-plumed mountain tops.

Brice had asked permission to build it, as he would have a little cash left after paying Mrs. Brand, and he hoped to settle there. The building fund, scant enough at best, was unexpectedly swelled by a sudden and obstinate attack of forgetfulness which seized good Mrs. Brand.

"No, Brice, you haven't made me any extra work, and I'm sure you've paid your way twice over, bringin' in wood and grindin' coffee and the like."

One day Brice came to Brand with a letter and a motley collection of coins—the savings from his wages. He wanted the money and letter sent to his wife, so that she could come and take up her quarters with him. And every day after that he was asking how long it would be before she arrived.

The southern winter blossomed royally. Bees held high carnival in the nodding spikes of the white sage, and now and then a breath of perfume from the orange groves in the valley came to mingle with the wild mountain odours. Brice worked every moment with feverish earnestness, and the pile of gnarled roots on the clearing grew steadily larger. With all her loveliness, Nature failed to woo him. What was the exquisite languor of those days to him but so many hours of patient waiting? The dull, hungry eyes saw nothing of the lavish beauty about them, looking through it all with restless yearning to the direction where he knew that a train, with its dust and dirt and noisome breath crawled over miles of alkali, or hung from dizzy heights.

"To-morrow's the third, neighbour, I expect she'll be here now, direckly."

"That's a fact; what a rattler time is." The days had not been long to Brand. "We'll go in to-morrow, and if they don't come, you can stay and watch the trains awhile. She won't know you, Brice, you've picked up so."

"I think Maggie will know me if she comes."

But she did not come. Brand returned the following night alone, having left Brice at cheap lodgings near the station. Numberless passers-by must have noticed the patient watcher of the incoming trains, the homely pathos of his face deepening day by day. The dull eyes growing a shade duller, and the awkward form a trifle more stooped with each succeeding disappointment. It was two weeks before he reappeared again on the mesa, walking wearily like a man under a load.

"I'm a'raid there's something wrong, ma'am. I come out to see if your husband would write me a letter."

So Brand wrote a letter to Brice's former employer, making the minutest inquiries regarding Mrs. Brice, and giving every possible direction concerning her residence. Then Brice fell back into the old groove, working feverishly in spite of Mrs. Brand's kindly warnings. "I can't stop, ma'am; doin' nothin' 'ud kill me."

The answer came at last, a business-like epistle addressed to Brand. Mrs. Brice had left about the time designated. Several of her neighbours remembered

"I stood and watched."

that a stranger, a well-dressed man, had been at the house for nearly a week before her departure, and the two had gone away together. The writer regretted his inability to give further information, and closed with kindly inquiries concerning his former employee's health and earnest commendation of him to Mr. Brand.

Brand read the letter aloud. Brice listened without a word, then he got up heavily, staggering a little as he crossed the door, and went out into the yellow sunlight. There was the long, sun-kissed slope, the huge pile of twisted roots, the rude shanty with its clambering vines. The humming of bees in the sage went on drowsily. Life, infinitely shrunken, was life still. A more cultured grief might have swooned or cried out. This man knew no such refuge; even the poor relief of indignation was denied him. None of the thousand wild impulses that come to men smitten like him flitted across his clouded brain. He only knew to take up his burden and go dumbly on.

No one spoke of the blow that had fallen upon him. The sympathy that met him came in the warmer clasp of hard hands and the softening of rough voices, none the worse certainly for its quietness.

Happily, it all came to an end one afternoon. Brice was at work on the ditch again, preferring the cheerful companionship of Brand and Bert Fox to his own thoughts, and Mrs. Brand was alone in the kitchen. Two shadows fell across the worn threshold, and a weak, questioning voice brought the good woman to her door instantly.

"Good-day to you, ma'am. Is there a man named Brice livin' here anywhere?"

It was a woman's voice, a woman with some bits of

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tawdry ornament about her, and a round eyed boy clinging bashfully to her skirts. Mrs. Brand brought them into the house, urging the stranger to rest a bit and get her breath.

"Thank you, ma'am: I'd like to be movin' on. Do you know if he's well—the man Brice? We're his wife an' boy."

The woman told her story presently, when Mrs. Brand had induced her to wait there until the man came home—told it with no unnecessary words, and her listener made no comment.

"My brother came a week before we was leavin', an' helped us off an' come part of the way. He had been doin' well, and he gave me some money. I was took ill on the road—I don't remember just where—an' they left me at a town with a woman named Dixon. She took care o' me. I was out o' my head a long time, an' when I came to I told 'em to write to Brice, an' they did, an' I suppose they took the name of the place frum the ticket. I was weak for a long time, an' they kep' a writin' and no word come, an' then I recollected about the town on the ticket—and then I couldn't think o' the place I'd sent the letters to before, an' the thinkin' worrited me, an' the doctor said I mustn't try. So I just waited, an' when I got to the town I kep' askin' for a man named Brand, till one day somebody told me."

Mrs. Brand told her husband about it that evening.

"I just took the two of 'em up to the shanty, and opened the door, and you'd a cried to see how pleased she was with everything. And I told her to kindle a fire and I'd fetch up a bit of supper. And when I'd carried it up and left it, I just come back and stood and watched till I saw Brice coming home. He was walking slow, as if his feet was a dead weight, and when he took hold of the door he stopped a minute, lookin' over the valley kind o' wishful an' hopeless. She heard him come, for she opened the door, and I turned round and came in. 'Barbara Brand,' says I, 'you've seen enough. If God wants to look at that I suppose He has a right to; nobody else has, that's certain.'"

Adam Heath.

Louis Hammond, who made himself famous catching counterfeiters for the Government, now manages an agency of his own. He is a stout and jovial person, with round eyes that beam through gold-rimmed glasses.

To the presence of this personage was ushered in, about one o'clock of a May afternoon, a young man of a rather commonplace appearance, dressed as well as need be, and seemingly about as intelligent as the average citizen.

"If you can spare a few minutes," he said, "I'd like to tell you about a queer thing that has just happened to me. I think, perhaps, you'd like to do something about it."

Hammond nodded, and bade him be seated.

"My name is George Weyland," the visitor said. "I work at a builder's near here. At twelve to-day I went over to Reid's billiard rooms and played a game with a friend. I took off my coat because it was warm in there, and after the game I put on another fellow's coat by mistake.

"He was playing at the next table to mine, and I had hung my coat on the next peg to his. When I got the coat on it felt awkward, and, to make sure that it was mine, I pulled some papers out of the inside breast pocket as I was walking towards the door. They weren't my papers, and I was just about to put them back when my eye fell on a folded sheet of letter paper, on which a name was written over and over again. The name was Henry Stanhope."

"Well?" said the detective, as Weyland paused.

"Of course you know Stanhope."

"Everybody does," responded Hammond. "The man who inherited old James Stanhope's money cuts too large a figure, even in this city, to remain altogether unknown."

"I was reminded of old Stanhope's money," continued Weyland, "when I saw that sheet of paper, and I'll tell you why. The name, as written on the top of that sheet, was a real signature, and all the others were imitations. I saw it at a glance. When Stanhope signs his name he makes a peculiar twist in the tail of the p. The imitator was trying to learn that in particular."

"How much time did you spend in studying that paper?" asked Hammond.

"About half a minute," was the reply. "Then I put it back where it came from, and went back and changed coats again. Just as I hung up the wrong coat the other fellow noticed it. He didn't seem to care. He put his coat on and started away, having finished his

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game. When he was half way to the door he took that batch of papers out of his breast pocket, and when his eye lit on the one I mentioned, he started, and turned quickly to look at me. I pretended not to see him. Then he put the paper back into his pocket and went on. Naturally I followed him. He and the fellow that he'd been playing with went over to the 'Bagdad' and ordered lunch in the small dining room. I came here at once," he continued. "I have heard more or less about you, of course. It struck me that perhaps you might recognise this fellow as a thief if you took a look at him. You know all the forgers, and this certainly looks like a forgery plot."

There was a peculiar smile on the detective's face.

"What did this fellow look like?"

"About my height," was the reply; "perhaps thirty years old; large-featured face, long, brown moustache."

"We'll take a look at him," said Hammond, with a peculiar, faint chuckle. "I was just going over there to lunch myself."

On the way Hammond continued to smile more and more broadly. Just as they were entering Hammond asked:

"Did anyone in the billiard room know this fellow?"

"I—I really didn't have time to inquire," said Weyland, blushing.

The two men were still in the dining room when Weyland and the detective entered. Presently the smile which Hammond had worn since they left the office became a silent but particularly joyous laugh.

"By the way," said Hammond at last, "I recognise your friend. He is Henry Stanhope."

"I think the lunches ought to be paid for by me," Weyland said good-naturedly, but Hammond wouldn't hear of it, and he forced the young man to partake of a very excellent repast. When it was finished they parted on the best of terms.

Weyland walked slowly away from the "Bagdad." He felt angry and ashamed, yet he was not ready to admit that he had been absurd.

"If Hammond could only have seen that sheet of paper," he said to himself over and over again. "It was an attempt to copy a signature. Of course, Stanhope can't forge his own name."

Urged by an impulse not altogether blind, but rather the product of a deep conviction, Weyland wended his way towards Stanhope's office. He passed upon the way a tall, gaunt man of fifty, who panted painfully, and laid his hand upon his breast, wherein the seeds of death were ripening fast. The next moment Weyland was in the hall of Stanhope's office.

"I have a note," he said to a clerk who came leisurely forward, "for Mr. Henry Stanhope, but it is not for the head of this firm. Is there anybody else here of the same name, or do you know of anyone?"

"Never heard of anybody else of that name," was the reply.

"Perhaps it's for me," said a voice, and Weyland turned to see the man whom he had passed just a short distance from the office.

The young man's heart leaped in his bosom.

"I expect it's for you," he said. "Come out into the hall and I'll give it to you, and also a message."

Two days later, at about the hour of his first appearance there, Weyland called upon Detective Hammond.

"I have found my forger," said he calmly.

"Have you, indeed?" rejoined the detective cheerily. "I'm delighted to hear it. Who is he?"

"Henry Stanhope!" replied Weyland firmly. "The man that we saw yesterday is a distant cousin of the same name, whose claim to a slice of old James Stanhope's property under his very peculiar will has never been properly adjusted. Young Stanhope, or his lawyer for him, drew up an agreement for his cousin to sign. It was a fraud, and the cousin wouldn't sign it. If he had he would have given up £40,000 for about £1,000. So young Stanhope proposed to sign it himself."

"Rather dangerous, wasn't it?" queried Hammond. "Of course, it would have been forgery."

"He wouldn't have been alive to do it," replied Weyland. "His days are numbered. He is far gone with consumption. Stanhope intended to produce the paper only after his cousin's death."

"How did you learn this?" demanded the detective.

"From Stanhope himself," said Weyland quietly.

"The dickens you did! I'd like to know how."

For answer, Weyland detailed his meeting with the claimant, and told how he had struggled to gain the man's confidence, and had succeeded. Then, together, they had called upon Stanhope, and asked for the agreement, saying that the claimant was ready to sign it. As Stanhope had already forged the signature, he could not produce the document, and he lacked the news to claim that his cousin had already signed it.

"Then," said Weyland, "I accused him of the thing point blank. I told him of the paper that I had seen in his pocket. I said I would have him arrested on the spot with the papers in his pocket, and I asked him incidentally if he had noticed you and me at lunch in the same room with him after the incident. At the mention of your name he trembled. From that moment he treated me as one of your staff, and, to make a long story short, before we left him he had executed an agreement by which his cousin got his rights."

* * * * * *

"Have you seen her?"

"I saw her last evening," replied Weyland blushing. "She is a very charming girl."

"And the property is considerable," said Hammond, smiling. "A very pretty romance it would make. And so," he added, "young Stanhope thought you were one of my men?"

"It was on his own responsibility. I didn't tell him so."

"Would you like to be?" asked Hammond.

"I would indeed."

"Then it is settled," said the veteran detective, "provided we can agree upon a stipend."

And he beamed upon the young man in his most cheery and amiable fashion.

ERNEST RICHMOND.

AUNTIE: "A penny for your thoughts."

Little Nephew: "I was thinking that if I kept quiet and pretended to be thinking you'd wonder what I was thinking about, and say just what you did. Hand over the penny!"

THE Bishop of Wurzburg once asked a sprightly little shepherd boy:

"What are you doing here, my lad?"

"Tending swine."

"How much do you get?"

"One florin a week."

"I am also a shepherd," continued the Bishop, "but I get much more pay."

"Then I suppose you have more swine under your care," innocently replied the boy.

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THE HONEST POSTMAN.

"A wild day, Marcaille," said the postmistress to the letter-carrier, who had just come in.

"Wild indeed, Madame Lefevre," replied Marcaille.

As he spoke he shook out his old cloak all wet with the rain, while the postmistress sorted the letters.

"There! that is done," she said. "But warm yourself before you start out."

Marcaille threw down his leather bag, black and shiny in spots, and came close to the roaring stove.

He was a little, wiry, tough-looking man. His face browned by sun and wind, was as wrinkled as an old apple.

His nose was a little too red, his eyes sparkled, his mouth was smiling; it was a good face that called forth friendly words and cordial hand-grasps. His moustache had a military ferocity, and on his blue blouse, with its red collar, a worn scrap of yellow and green ribbon told all his past:

Drawn in the draft, seven years of service, re-enlisted, petty officer, wounded at Alma, wounded at Solferino, honourably discharged.

Then Marcaille had been given the place of postman on the Champagnole route—four hundred francs a year, pension of one hundred francs, making a total income of five hundred francs.

And for ten years, for five hundred francs, Marcaille made twice a day, morning and evening, his round:

Cize, Pillemoine, le Vaudioux, Châtelnuef, Maisonneuve and Siane, a circuit of seven leagues in all weathers.

With his five hundred francs he took care of a wife and four children; the eldest was six.

But Marcaille had acquired the bad habit of a little "taste," as he called it.

In every village he had old acquaintances, almost friends.

In every house he found, in exchange for the letter he brought, a glass of wine that seemed to him to put strength into his heart and his legs. His nose grew a little redder; it even happened once that he lost a letter; not a very important one, fortunately, but it might have taught him a lesson.

"Here they are, Marcaille," said Madame Lefevre; "two letters for Cize, one for Pillemonie, one for le Vaudieux—nothing for Châtelneuf."

"That's good," said Marcaille. That "nothing for Châtelneuf" spared him a league and a half of rough walking.

"For Siane," went on Madame Lefevre, "pay attention! A registered letter!"

"It is not the first."

"No, but——" and Madame held up a great envelope bristling with stamps and notices, besides which spread out, like blots of blood, five enormous red seals.

"That's nothing worth caring for," said Marcaille laughing. "Who is it?"

"For monsieur the Mayor."

"Well, it will go through his hands, never fear."

"Not more than through yours," said Madame.

"No, but more of it will stick to his."

With this philosophic reflection, Marcaille dropped the letter into his leather bag, which he buckled carefully. He put on his cloak and opened the door.

"And above all," cried Madame after him, "don't begin Easter time too soon!"

"Don't be afraid!" and Marcaille was in a moment out of sight.

The cold pinched sharply; the piercing wind blew up little whirlpools of rain. Marcaille jogged along briskly, muttering:

"Not much Easter! A mouthful for six and a glass of water! But, after all, there are those who have nothing."

"Hullo, Marcaille!" cried suddenly a rough voice.

Marcaille turned.

"A glass of wine?" said the voice.

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"Hum!" grumbled Marcaille to himself; "attention, registered letter!" Then, aloud, "I'm late now; no, thank you!"

The window of the "Pineapple" public-house, which had opened, closed again, and Marcaille, proud of the victory over himself, went whistling out of the village. In the branches the wind whistled with its plaintive or menacing modulations, and its vague accompaniment to Marcaille's whistling.

"This rascally sack," he grumbled. "How heavy it is! I would have done better, after all, to stop at the Pineaapple. One glass of white wine is no killing matter. Yes, but then when a fellow takes one he takes two, and then away he goes! Brrrr! I was warmer than this in Africa. I can't feel my hands at all."

Marcaille stopped, put down his bag, and beat vigorously upon his sides with both arms. He drew in a long breath of icy air, and exhaled it with a breath that was much like a sigh, and trudged on again. Five minutes after he was at Cize and ringing at the door of the fine big house of the ironmaster.

"It is Father Marcaille."

"Hullo, Marcaille!"

"Have you got some letters?"

The children swarmed round him. He came up the outside steps, and the dancing youngsters pulled and pushed him to the door of the drawing-room. There, even as he let himself be pushed along, Marcaille thought:

"Attention, old fellow, registered letter."

Around him were happy voices and bursts of laughter. In the middle of the room the ironmaster and his wife were amusing the children in the warm and fragrant atmosphere, before a crackling fire, while outside the wind rattled the windows and whistled down the chimneys.

"A glass of wine, Marcaille?" said the friendly mistress of the house.

Marcaille gulped down a great sigh. Then he said: "Thank you, madame; not to-day."

This was indeed courage! To refuse a glass of wine in such weather, when he had still three good leagues up the mountain before him. But how light he felt when he proudly resumed his journey. He felt light, but his bag felt heavier than ever, never had it weighed so upon his shoulders.

"This rascally bag!" he grumbled. "It is that letter. What can be in it? if it should be bank-notes, judged by the weight, there should be a fortune. This rascally bag!"

Marcaille stopped. Decidedly this wouldn't do. The strap cut into his shoulder; he took off his cloak, changed it to the other shoulder and started off again. But things seemed no better. The road always seemed less long when he had had a glass of wine, at the "Pineapple," or elsewhere.

The cold, which he seldom noticed, made him shiver and groan. And then the wind whistling through the trees sounded so doleful.

And still grumbling: "The rascally bag!" and whistling at intervals, he went down towards Pillemoine. Below him stretched the valley, lost in the shadow; dotted here and there with lights, for the night was almost black. But he knew every village and every house, and in the blackness he recognized far away the house of the ironmaster, with every window lighted up, The joyous scene passed again before his eyes—the flaming fire, the cake on beautiful plates, the children dancing around their smiling parents.

"Yes, yes," murmured Marcaille. "There are some lucky people in the world. They have money, all they want, and with money one can do anything. Just get a little and its like a snowball; it rolls up bigger and bigger. Some have all, and others have none. There they are by the fire, and I'm out here in the rain. And what they spend for their amusement to-night I couldn't earn in a year. And yet they say God is just!"

Why did these ideas come to him?

He had never envied anyone. Why, then, did he stop and gaze fiercely at the lights shining below him.

He shook himself together.

"Forward, Marcaille!" he cried, "forward march!"

But the wind whistled and moaned in the pine-trees like a crying baby, and Marcaille, passing in thought from the ironmaster's house to his own, saw his four little ones gathered round their mother, by a scanty fire of faggots; he saw them searching in the cupboard for a forgotten bread-crust; he saw them going to sleep, all four on the same little wretched straw mattress. Oh poverty, poverty, it is hard! And to think that right here, in this bag——

"Registered letter!" he thought. "If it should be bank-bills! Imbecile! It is for the Mayor. It comes from the prefecture. It is probably only papers, and they register it and put on those big seals for a grand effect. Yes, but—if it should be bank-bills!"

He stopped short, perspiring, his forehead damp, and said suddenly, aloud, breaking the sombre silence:

"Well, and what then? If it should be bank-bills, what is that to you?"

His face flushed red at the thought that had crossed his mind.

"I haven't drunk anything, either," he murmured, with a shudder.

He entered Pillemoine.

At the door of a peasant's house he knocked.

A window opened.

"Oh! It is Marcaille. Come in!"

He went in.

"What ails you," asked the man. "You're pale. Have a glass of wine."

"No, no, thanks," said Marcaille, in a dull voice.

In rebuckling his bag he had felt the registered letter brush the tips of his finers.

The man had taken a glass; he held the bottle, all ready to pour.

"No," repeated Marcaille. And without another word he hurried out.

The ends of his fingers seemed to burn at the remembrance of the red seals.

Bank-bills, as many as there were there, how many things one could buy with them. A good house, like the ironmaster's, warm clothes, flannels! And what dinners! Rich—with what was in that letter one would be rich.

He began to whistle, but his breath failed him, and he felt his legs trembled beneath him. Without intending to, without wishing to, he had unbuckled the bag, he had taken out the letter, and in the half-light reflected from the snow he saw, like drops of blood, the five great red seals.

"Am I going mad?" he cried. "I have drunk nothing!"

He stood up at his full height, staring at the letter.

"I am an honest man," he said.

Then he put the letter back in his bag with an angry

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gesture, and marched on with a measured step, striking with his heel and counting as he used to do in the regiment when the march was long: "One, two; one, two."

The regiment! Ah! how far away it was at that time. How poor they seemed to him now, the brave joys of the soldier, which had made his heart beat for fourteen years. What a fool he was to enlist! Fighting in the field, hard fare in the camp, suffering in the ambulance. His medal! Great things, indeed. A bit of ribbon on his blouse. How much better he would have done to start out, like his brother, to seek his fortune.

"It was by this road he went," thought Marcaille, as he started across the great road to Geneva, whose white length to his right stretched along by the forest of Siane, "by this road."

That long white road, he had only to travel along it—and he stopped.

"The frontier," he thought, "is quite near. Ten leagues, what is that? Taking time to go for the wife and children one could be there by to-morrow morning. And once there, one is safe. The Mayor is not expecting this letter. If people missed us to-morrow, they would think something had happened to me in the night, that I had fallen into a hole or something, and that my wife was looking for me. Suspect me? Oh, no! Marcaille is an honest man, an honest man!"

The sweat stood on his brow.

Panting with eyes fixed on that white line which lost itself in the night, he repeated in a low voice:

"An honest man"

His hand slipped under his cloak, unbuckled the leather bag, and trembled as it touched the five red seals.

"Yes, but if I were wrong," he murmured; "if there were only papers in it."

Quickly he took the letter and felt it carefully to find out its secrets.

But the envelope was thick and hard, the paper crackled under his fingers with a little dry noise that sounded formidably loud, while the night wind whistled in his ears:

"Thief! thief! thief!"

"Who said Marcaille was a thief?" he cried, with a fierce gesture.

Then, seeing he was all alone, he came to himself and fell at the side of the road, crouching, his head in his hands, and murmuring:

"This is frightful! But I have drunk nothing."

Slowly he reopened the leather bag and slipped in the letter; slowly he rose; slowly still he crossed the road.

It seemed as if an implacable, invisible hand held him fast to the spot from which he would have hurried away.

The road to Siane was straight before him; a half-hour more and he should have finished his round, the letter would be given to the Mayor, and he would be safe.

"Come, Marcaille," he cried, "on with you!"

But no: he remained motionless on that fatal road that led to the frontier. And for the third time, carried away by irresistible temptation, he drew from the bag the registered letter, saying:

"I must know what is in it."

Very carefully with the point of his knife he raised one corner of the envelope enough to slip in his finger, and draw up one of the papers it contained. The task was a delicate one; he must go slowly, very slowly, in order to tear nothing. If it were only papers!

The night wind whistled in his ears: "Thief! thief! thief!"

But he did not hear it. He thought only of one thing: to know what was in that letter. He had only one fear, of not succeeding or of deceiving himself. At last he got hold of a corner of the enclosure. He took a match lit it, and by its light saw a bank-note.

It was really bank-notes. His head swam. The envelope was heavy, the sum must be enormous. He was about to tear it open to count it, but again he stopped.

"Let me see, let me see," he thought, "I need not hurry. I must plan out everything. I will tell Genevieve that we are going away. She will begin to ask questions. She will want to know everything. Bah! I will make up a story. I will tell her—but she will not believe me. Would she consent? Yes, yes, she must. To be rich, isn't that before everything? Are there not hundreds and thousands whom all the world bows down to who began just this way? Not to be caught, that is all. We will put the babies into the little cart. By daybreak we will be at the frontier. The gendarmes know me—don't they know that Marcaille is an honest man?"

He laughed convulsively as he said this, and again he heard the wind whistling in his ears:

"Thief! thief! thief!"

He folded the registered letter, and instead of replacing it in the leather bag, slipped it into his pocket.

It was his.

Then, with a strident voice, he cried out:

"Forward, Marcaille, forward. You are a rich man."

But he had hardly taken a step forward when his voice died in his throat.

Behind him, on the road he had just left, he heard voices clear and piercing.

It was like the indistinct murmur of a crowd.

Marcaille shivered.

Was he already suspected? Had his trouble betrayed him? Was he pursued?

He listened attentively.

The bells of the church at Vaudioux commenced to strike, slowly at first, then louder, calling to mass the good people of Châtelneuf, of Maisonneuve, and of Pillemoine.

Marcaille trembled with convulsive shivers.

Every stroke of the bell sounded in his ears and in his heart, and seemed to buzz in his head.

Then suddenly he burst into tears and buried his face in his hands.

"Oh, misery," he cried, "I had drunk nothing."

Reason came back to him, and with it a realisation of his incomplete crime.

And it was no longer the wind, it was the voices of his wife and children, it was the pealing of that bell, that had accused him.

"Thief!" replied the sombre depths of the forest.

Terrified, he tried to leave the voices behind him by running faster and still faster. And then a dizziness seized him. He knew not why he ran. Someone was after him, that was all. But who? His conscience or the gendarmes, he knew not which. Where was the danger? Everywhere.

In the shadows, to the right and to the left, he saw everywhere vague forms which followed him; the branches bent low over his head like arms to stop him. Wildly he ran along, the blood throbbing in his temples; then suddenly fell heavily in a dead faint.

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When he came to himself he was lying before the fire in his own room. Genevieve and the children were kneeling and crying beside him. He did not see them. The people of Siane, who, coming from the mass, had found him, were there also. He did not see them.

"The letter? the letter?" he cried.

With one bound he sprang to the leather bag which had been thrown on the ground in the corner.

It was empty!

"The letter! the letter!" he cried.

Then remembered, and drawing from his pocket the big envelope with the five red seals—still unbroken—he rushed out like a madman, straight to the Mayor's.

"A registered letter!" he cried.

"Oh, indeed!" said the Mayor, laughing. "What a state you are in. One would think you had come to ask pardon for a condemned criminal."

"Well they might," said Marcaille. "But take the letter first. It is a little soiled—I fell down—I——"

His lie strangled him.

"A drop too much," said the Mayor.

"No, I had drunk nothing," said Marcaille quietly, "and it is just for that reason that I have brought you my resignation."

The Mayor had broken the seals, examined the bank-notes and glanced over the accompanying letter.

"Your resignation?" said he. "Well, I should think so—I can understand that."

"Ah! you know——"

"I know you are rich, my good fellow."

Was this a joke, or had the Mayor in some way looked into his conscience and read the whole story?

Marcaille became pale at the thought.

"Rich?" he murmured.

"Why, yes, there is no doubt about that. This letter tells me of the death of your brother, Jean Marcaille, who died at Toulouse, where he resided, on the eighth of this present month. According to his last wishes, all he possessed has been disposed of by Michael Dulac, notary of that city, who sends to me the amount of twenty-four thousand francs, which I am instructed to hand over to you."

"Ah!" said Marcaille, overwhelmed, as he took mechanically into his hand the big envelope that the Mayor offered him: "Jean is dead, and I am rich!"

Then, after a moment of silence:

"It makes no difference," he murmured, so low that the Mayor could not hear him; "I should have been a thief just the same!"

Then, turning, he added, loud enough this time:

"But I am still an honest man, thank God!"

"No one ever doubted it, Marcaille," said the Mayor. "But take my advice and be more careful. A glass of wine too much goes to your head, and you might fare worse another time."

"You are right, sir," said Marcaille, and he went off whistling, with his head in the air.

Was Marcaille an honest man?

I should say so! T. E. H.

"My sister has lost her voice and we've tried every doctor in town."

"That so? Then try her with a mouse."

"Pa, is it right to call a man born in Poland a Pole?"

"Of course, my child."

"Well, then, if a man is born in Holland, is he a hole?"

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HOMESPUN YARNS.

By Levin Carnac.

IV.—OLD MARK'S ENGINE-GHOST.

A FEW years ago I was one of a party of half a dozen tourists who had got off the cars at Denver to spend a day or so looking round the famous mines whose deep shafts have swallowed up so many fortunes and so many lives, repaying the former with interest, but demanding unceasing toll of the latter in exchange for the silver treasures that they yield up.

Our guide was a typical miner of the old style, a sort of remnant of the roaring times of '49, when men had only just begun to suspect that these rugged hills and rocky valleys contained the millions that have been taken out of them since then. He knew everything about a mine, from the lowest gallery to the top of the engine-house shaft, and he was as full of mine-lore as the Comstock was of paying one.

When our day's sight-seeing was over, two or three of us who wanted to get the many fragments of anecdote dropped by our guide during the day spun into something like a connected yarn, coaxed the old man away into the smoking room of a small hotel, and informed him that whisky and cigars were duty free as long as he could contrive to stick to the truth and make it interesting to us. To which he solemnly replied:

"Gents, so far as square-toed true experiences of these mines goes, it's only the weakness of human natur' as would stop me reelin' 'em off as long as the tangle-foot held out; but I think as its gettin' a bit late, and as you've got to be on board early in the mornin', I can fix you up with one that'll give you something to dream about when you get to sleep. It's as true as gospel, too, so far as my knowledge of the matter goes.

"About five years ago we had a minder up yonder, on the Belcher, who was as curious a cuss as you'd meet with in a day's prospectin'. Though he was gettin' on in years, he was as smart and keen and plucky as any man on the mines, but he was superstitious from his boots to his hair, and that's what let him out at last, poor old chap.

"Old Mark was solid on everything but spooks, but about them he was a hopeless crank. He believed that his shaft was haunted, and that there could be ghosts working in engines just the same as round corpses, and graveyards, and old houses. I don't take much stock of them things myself, never having been a very heavy drinker, but Old Mark went his pile on them, and if any of you gents ever writes down what I'm tellin' you now, you can call this story, 'Old Mark's Engine-Ghost,' for that's just about what it comes to.

"One day I'd stopped by his engine-house to swap lies with him for a spell, when all of a sudden he held up his hand, and said to me in a sacred sort of whisper:

"'Sam, d'ye hear that?'

"'Hear what?' says I, going to the mouth of the shaft and peering down.

"'That holler, groanin', wailin' sorter noise among the ingines; that sound means death to someone down the mine at this moment.' As Mark said this, I saw his face grow white all in an instant, and his voice was just nowhere. He'd hardly got the words out of his mouth, when they rang up from the 2,000 foot level to hoist the cage. Mark gripped the lever, and sent the great reel spinning round, keeping his eye fixed on the indicator all the while and not making a sound.

"The hand pointed to the top level, when I heard, plain enough this time, a long, wailing scream come out of the machinery, just as though someone was being crunched up in it. Mark heard it too, and I saw his hand slip from the brake-lever for an instant. The cage shot up like lightning, and, before he could get the brake on again, jammed bang into the sheaves. The wire cable tautened under the strain for a moment, and then snapped like a thread. The cage dropped back to the shaft's mouth, and, as it fell, three of the chaps leapt out clear on to the timbers and saved themselves, the other two slipped on the slimy edge, and the dull 'thump, thump,' of their bodies, as they knocked from side to side of the shaft going down, stopped in my ears for a week after.

"That was Mark's last turn at that engine for many a long day. When an engineer lets his cage touch the sheaves he doesn't need to be told to go. He gets, without pay or notice; and not so long ago he thought himself lucky to get clear without any lead in his body. He was out of work for some weeks after that, living mostly on charity.

"Sometimes when he'd get hold of you and begin pitching his queer fancies the levelest headed man'd turn a bit queer over them, he seemed to believe them all so earnestly. He used to tell the boys as how engines is really living things, and get ill and low and merry and strong, and wants feeding and physicking just like other animals. And then he used to tell us about what he called the mysteries of the low levels down yonder in the dark, and how he'd seen doomed miners followed about the galleries by shadows which wasn't cast by any mortal light, and pointed at by the flames of their own lamps, until they got blasted into bits with a charge going off wrong, or were caved in and starved to death, or else got smashed up falling down the shaft like he had sent those poor fellows the day he went off his head.

"After a bit, people got to see that he was quite harmless, and someone gave him a job down below, and then he got worse and worse. 'Most every day when he came up from his shift he'd have some new horror to tell about that he had seen down in the levels.

"All this time, Old Mark was getting more and more down in the mouth. You see, he'd been the best engineer on the mine, and he'd lost his reputation. That worked on his mind, and made him so miserable, that a Chinee might have pitied him.

"One night, when he was off-shift, he turned into the South Consolidated engine-house, and sat, as he was very fond of doing, watching the machinery. All of a sudden, he caught the engineer by the arm, and said:

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Stood like a graven image, waiting for the cage to come up.

'Tom, I hear the death-moan in the wheels. Keep your ears open, something's going to happen soon.'

"The engineer was just going to order him out of the machine-house, when the signal for the quick hoist sent him to the lever, and a moment later the steel rope was flashing over the wheel like a streak of lightning. Presently a puff of smoke drifted up the throat of the shaft, and then came a shower of sparks. The mine was on fire.

"As the cage came clashing up to the landing-stage a crowd of half-naked men, blistered and choking, staggered off and reeled into the dressing-room. The cage was hardly empty before the signal to lower rang out, and it plunged back into the depths as though it had been dropped. Before it reached the bottom a big black cloud of smoke rolled up the shaft, and then came a sheet of flame that licked round the dry timbers and set them blazing like so much match-wood.

"Now came the signal to hoist again, and remember that the engineer hadn't only to bring the cage to the top. He had to stop it being smashed against the sheaves the same as Mark smashed it the day he went wrong. Well, just as that signal rang, a lump of timber fell and knocked Tom, the engineer, senseless. A dozen of us jumped for the lever, but Old Mark was there first, and, as he gripped it, he straightened up and looked a good two inches taller for the moment. A sort of instinct made us fall back, and then another rush of flame sent us staggering out of the engine-house.

"For a good two minutes Old Mark stood there in the flame and smoke waiting for the cage to come up. That hand of his on the hot lever held a dozen men's lives in its grasp, and there was no trembling about it now. Over that shaft-mouth, now belching out fire and smoke in clouds, he stood like a graven image, watching for the cage to come up.

"At last it came rattling up to the surface, and as it touched the level Mark jammed the lever hard down and stopped her true to an inch. Then with a cheer we jumped in and began dragging the fainting men out of the burning engine-house. We had got twelve men out alive, though badly burnt, and then with a crash and a roar of flame and smoke the whole shebang caved in and buried poor Old Mark and two others under a couple of tons of blazing timbers.

"Three days afterwards we dug them out, and there was the old man's charred body lying by the engine, with the right hand still gripping the lever.

"The next day three thousand men walked bare-headed after Mark Haverley's coffin, and nary man cussed aloud for a good week after.

"Ah, well, gentlemen," said our guide, as he tossed the last thimbleful down, "Old Mark was a curious sort o' chap with his spectres and engine-ghosts, but there was good leather in the man for all that."

Old Gentleman: "It is folly to talk of marriage for years yet. My daughter is a mere child. She knows nothing about the world, and could not manage servants."

Mr. Slimpurse: "Oh! that needn't make the slightest difference. We shan't have any."

Philanthropist: "Why are you crying so, my child?'

Little Girl: "Please, sir, me mudder sent me wid sixpence fer to git bread wid, an' I lost it in that there dark alle way. I'll be licked terrible."

Philanthropist; "Well, well, my poor child; dry your tears. Here is a match. Perhaps you will be able to find it."

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LOVE'S MADNESS

"Since you wish to know who I am," said Signor Cornelio, "let us go back, if not exactly to the deluge, at all events to the Norman invaders of Sicily.

"The expeditions of that race, you are aware, were noted for a certain violence and ferocity. Now my grandsire drew a genealogical tree proving my descent on the female side from a valiant knight and companion in arms of Robert Guiscard; and despite the mingling of Sicilian and Spanish blood with that of my ancestor, I remain a Norman; that is to say, restless, choleric and with a touch of the brigand.

"Without boasting, I may claim to have been the worst scholar in the college of Palermo. Rod and solitary confinement instead of taming, only irritated me the more. I lived like a pirate with masters and schoolmates, with one exception only, one pupil for whom I cherished a brotherly friendship.

"Pippino Castri was a gentle, yielding child, always the youngest and best boy in his class. His superior intelligence excited jealousy among his fellows, who gave him so many blows and used him so roughly that I commiserated his weak lot and took him under my protection, by which defence of the weak I redeemed somewhat my own bad conduct.

"College days ended, I was sent to the University of Catania, where I again met Pippino.

"Consistent with my past, I there fell out with the faculty, was insolent at examinations, and failed to obtain a degree, while my friend brilliantly completed his course.

"We returned together to Palermo; he a lawyer, and I professionless. But genuine Sicilian blood and Norman corsair instincts tingled in my veins, and I pitied my wise friend who sought to employ his talents in our island and keep close to shore like the barques that go to Cefalu.

"About that time a little Zingara on La Marina examined the palm of my hand and predicted that I should die dressed in all my clothes. Often recalling her prediction, I can declare that its non-fulfilment hitherto has been through no fault of mine.

"My father died when I was quite young, leaving me more than sufficient for the perpetration of many a madness; while my mother, re-marrying, let me shift for myself pretty much. To appease my vagabond cravings I planned a voyage to Malta and the African coast.

"Choosing three companions whose tastes were similar to my own and who would permit me to be their master, I hired a trading craft for a month, and with provisions, arms, and plenty of money, a high old time we had of it.

"After frolicking in Malta, Tripoli, and Tunis, one morning we landed on the island of Zerbi, without knowing where we were. In our efforts to make ourselves understood we wandered about till we came to a fountain where some damsels were drawing water.

"At sight of us the whole bevy of them fled. Hoping to hunt partridges or hares, we had brought our fowling pieces with us, and now I proposed to pursue a prettier kind of game.

"Away ran the maids up a steep path leading to their village on the hilltop; but one of them, less nimble than her mates, beholding us gain upon her, began to utter shrill cries, while the others spread the alarm through the village.

"A score of women presently came forth armed with pitchforks and staves, and vociferously threatened us; but one gun shot, sent twenty feet over their heads, completely routed them, so that we chased them into the very centre of the fig-tree planted in the village square, where, like a conqueror, I established my head-quarters for the time being.

"An old man, familiar with a few Italian words, was commissioned to parley with us; but I assumed so arrogant an air that he soon went off grumbling. Some young Arab men, being now come from the fields, produced their rifles and a volley from a housetop sent my hat off my head. For safety we were obliged to break into a house, where we held them at bay for a while.

"Finally, after peppering a couple of them with shot, we forced them to raise the siege and permit us to retreat to the beach to the vocal strains of the grand march in Verdi's opera of 'I Lombardi.'

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"Unluckily, as our boat was pushing off from shore, a bullet from the hilltop struck me in the shoulder, and I returned to Palermo suffering greatly from the wound and uneasy as to the consequences of our escapade. Pippino Castri established himself at my pillow, lavish in his attentions and eloquent in his protests against my conduct.

"Reminding me of the Zingara's prophecy, he extorted from me a promise, easily obtained from a man weakened by bleedings and a diet of herb tea, that I would be wiser in future. Meanwhile, the Zerbi islanders made no fuss, deeming probably that no justice was to be obtained from dogs of Christians; and the adventure rather added lustre to my reputation.

"I spare you the recital of many subsequent follies. My fortune, under such sorry management as mine was, ere long required to recuperate; for one morning my overseer announced to me that, if I continued to draw from my coffer without reckoning, the day would soon come when I should be penniless. Determined to curtail my expenses, I sold my horses and carriage, and shouldering my gun, set forth to hunt in the mountains.

"Going afoot, living on what game I brought down, and roughing it in peasants' huts, I always slept well, because I was always thoroughly tired when night arrived. On my return to Palermo I had a chance to purchase a yacht at a moderate outlay, and presently became a mariner and fisherman of notable proficiency.

"Tunny, *spada* (swordfish) and *lacerto* (a kind of mackerel) had no more dangerous foe than I was. Absorbed in such occupations, I led an active and healthy life until a fatal meeting upset it all.

"It was in the spring of 18—. A merchant of Trapini, grown rich in the sulphur business, sold his mines to an English company and came to Palermo to enjoy his wealth. He had a handsome wife and one daughter, eighteen, or rather an angel of grace and loveliness. Her image is graven in lines of fire on my heart.

"Black as a raven's wing was her hair, her Niobe-like eyes were veiled by long lashes, her nose was delicate and straight, her mouth was set with pearl, and so gentle and sweet a face was hers that all other countenances seemed but masks in comparison.

"It was one Sunday in the Duomo that I first met the peerless maiden, with whom on the instant I fell in love. Her father, Don Massimo, was a good though somewhat avaricious man, whose wife's fondness for spending induced him to commit extravagances that his natural niggardliness did not warrant. Late arrivals in the capital, the family were eager to enter society, so that I easily obtained an introduction.

"Then I took the ladies out sailing in my yacht, and gained the good graces of the father by allowing myself to lose a few pieces at divers games of cards. And wisely did I act in presenting myself betimes; for as soon as the daughter was seen at the concerts in the public gardens, her beauty attracted attention and suitors came forward in great number.

"One evening in the walks of La Flora I seized the opportunity to say a few words about love. She listened with her head to one side, toying with a magnolia blossom. All at once she seemed to comprehend, and raising her large eyes, she gazed curiously at me.

"'Why, do you really love me, Signor Cornelio?' she inquired.

"Encouraged by the question, I frankly vowed my sentiments.

"'Oh, so much the better,' she exclaimed, with artless joy. 'It must be so amusing to be loved by a man like you. I hope at least that you are in earnest, and that you will not love only in words.'

"'Put me to the proof,' replied I. 'Must I conquer the entire island of Zerbi? Must I go to China? Must I descend amid the flames of a volcano? Command me, dispose of your slave, and never fear that I shall be daunted by any obstacle or any danger.'

"Such language, with its corsair-like tone, appeared to interest her.

"'No,' quoth she, smiling, 'you shall not descend into the flames of a volcano, unless I throw my handkerchief therein. We shall see how you divine and forestall my wishes. Do not conceal from yourself that others have expressed their love in choicer terms than you; but attentive deeds will touch me more deeply, and for them I shall give you credit. Among indications of a veritable passion there is only one that I dread and regard with horror—jealousy. Terrible examples are given of it. If you would inspire me with something gentler than fright, do not be jealous, Signor Cornelio. On this condition I may be able to love you some day.'

"'I will use every effort to comply therewith,' I replied, 'but if you do not mean to make a hopeless suitor of me you must grant me a fair place in your heart, so that my own may remain closed to jealousy. The preservative against this ugly evil is confidence. Promise me to be frank and loyal.'

"'I agree,' said Aurelia in a serious tone; 'there shall be no falsehood between us. As to the preference you desire, here, to begin with, is a little token. Were anyone to ask me for this flower, I should refuse to part with it; receive it as a pledge of friendship; but do not show it to anybody, for it has been seen in my hand.'

"I pressed the magnolia to my lips, and with precious carefulness placed it in my pocket.

"'Come, sir knight,' said the young lady, 'what are you going to achieve in my service?'

"'Anything that may please you,' I replied. 'My Norman ancestor and his comrade, Robert Guiscard, unhappily chased the Saracens from this land, or else I should propose to meet them in single combat.

"Here Don Massimo and his wife interrupted our conversation; but enough had been said to send me home burning with the first fever of love and hope.

"On the very next day Aurelia expressed in my hearing a desire for some Indian figs. This fruit, though abundant late in the summer, would not be in the Palermo market for a month yet. I set out for Noto, where the cactus is more forward than in this part of the island, and the dozen Indian figs that I triumphantly brought back with me were worth such smiles as I would not have surrendered for a treasure.

"Many an opportunity did I find to render Aurelia a service; but when I urged her to authorise me to demand her hand of her parents, she would answer in a scared way, 'Not yet.'

"One evening, amid a flutter of society's butterflies, Aurelia took extreme pleasure in listening to a description of the Monday balls at the Academy in Naples. The dandy who was engrossing my sweetheart's attention had noticed at one of those balls a *parure* composed of blue feathers at the base of the jay's wing. I conjectured that a fancy for a similar adornment was lurking in Aurelia's mind, and the caprice must be satisfied under penalty of forfeiting all the fruit of my past services.

"So I scoured the mountains in every direction, even the zone of Etna called La Nemorosa, and at the expiration of a month returned with a supply of blue

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jay plumage. I expected to be greeted as though I had snatched a duplicate of the Holy Tunic from the infidels but, alas! I was hardly thanked and my gift thrown into a corner.

"While I was off in the woods killing the poor birds, certain newcomers had been making themselves agreeable in the house of Don Massimo; among others I there met my old schoolmate, Pippino Castri. Although his Narcissus-like visage attracted the women, it never occurred to me that my dearest friend could become my rival, and to avoid such a danger I promised myself to make him the confidant of my love affairs.

"All Palermo, socially speaking, was just then preparing for the festival at Piana dei Greci—a religious ceremony according to the Greek ritual, to be followed by dancing and other amusements. The population of Piana, composed of Albanians, was to dress up in the national costume. Not until the night before the fête would Don Massimo, after much coaxing, consent to attend.

"Everybody present wished to make one of the party, and as all could not go in one carriage, I proposed hiring a hackney coach. But Don Massimo objected and said that the second-rate carriage should be harnessed up. In wealthy Palermiton households two conveyances are kept, one for display and for making calls; the other, old and faded, used at night, and drawn by sorry nags that one is not afraid to keep waiting at the doors of palaces and theatres. These vehicles are, generally speaking, antiquated berlins, and Don Massimo's, with its threadbare, velvet, broad body, and tarnished gilding, had in days of yore swayed beneath the weight of a cardinal or of some Spanish governor.

"As honorary coachman I was commissioned to drive the folks in this worthy vehicle. The elderly people took the calash, while the young members of the party piled into the old carriage.

"From my high driver's seat I could see them attack their luncheon with shouts and laughter; then they sung, and I recognised Aurelia's voice and a clapping of little hands when Pippino recited a rigmarole of rhymes.

"On reaching Piana, I remarked an unaccountable liveliness in the maiden's glances, and for the first time the serpent of jealousy stung my heart. Impatiently watching for an opportunity to get Aurelia by herself, I saw her at last drop behind the company on the way to the Greek church.

"When I approached her, she said eagerly: 'I must speak with you. You look for an explanation and you shall have it; for every minute's delay makes the matter worse. Arm yourself with courage, my good Cornelio, and remember I have not seriously engaged myself to you. After all the proofs of love received from you it is cruel, I confess; but it cannot be helped. Only now do I see clearly into my heart; I can never cherish any other sentiment for you than friendship.'

"'Why, what has happened?' I asked, trembling.

"'Simply this: I had many admirers in Trapini, who were exhaustless in praise of my beauty; they wearied me and I departed for Palermo with no regrets. While in this mood I heard of your expedition to Zerbi, and pleased with your audacity, I persuaded myself that a love expressed by deeds would amuse me far more than all the fine talk in the world. But my heart remained untouched, and now I have found out what power there is in language.

"'For there is language and language, my good Cornelio. One day when least expecting such a thing, while you were roaming over Etna, I received a sealed missive, containing, what do you suppose? A piece of verse of thirty-two stanzas all in praise of me, and all so pretty I could not tell which I preferred.

"'Ah, what think you of this new way of speaking? when was ever such speech addressed to a woman before?'

"'A hundred million times!' replied I wrathfully.

"'Spite leads you astray; I can understand and forgive you,' continued Aurelia; 'but how, tell me, could these thirty-two stanzas create such a dizziness of delight, so that at last I shut my eyes while a flaming sword seemed whirling before me? Nor must you imagine that I am called Aurelia—no, but Chloris. The poet knew that I should pierce the veil of mystery. But was ever woman called Chloris before when her name was Aurelia?'

"'Oh, often,' I answered. 'In France such fiddle-faddles are known as Chloris bouquets.'

"'Oh, then it would have been unpardonable in me,' cried Aurelia, 'if I had not pierced the veil. How ingenious though, in the gentle rhymer! Now, tell me in good faith, unless blind or crazy, could I do else than love him? So, my good Cornelio, you will, you see, act wisely in not thinking of me any more. Poetry, which I offended, has reasserted its rights.'

"'Well, I must say you are cool about it, you ungrateful, frivolous girl! Do you believe it will be an easy matter to forget you?'

"'Yes, to a generous, devoted heart such as yours! Besides, your sacrifice will mean the happiness of an amiable youth whose merits I have heard you extol.'

"'I will crush him,' I exclaimed, stamping my foot. 'I will crush the viper, that little traitor, Pippino.'

"'Alas! this is what I so dreaded, jealousy, vengeance! To crush his best friend! Oh, heart of bronze! And me, too, he will kill, no doubt. Ah, my good Cornelio, must one die for so light a fault?'

"Stifled by her sobs, Aurelia could say no more, and as I saw that a nervous attack was coming on, I took her hands and said: 'Be calm. I will kill no one.'

"Instantly her tears ceased to flow. 'Do you grant me life,' she asked, 'and Pippino also? Will you swear it?'

"'Yes.'

"'Oh, then I am happy!'

"'But I am not going to sacrifice myself to a young man's whim. I shall question Pippino, and woe be to him if he does not love you!'

"Before entering the church, I beckoned to Pippino to follow me. When he came near, he could not endure the look I gave him, and when I informed him how matters now stood between me and Aurelia, he exclaimed:

"'Ah, wretched me, what have I done! Why did you not confide in your friend, Cornelio? What shall we do?'

"Then, after a moment's silence, he added:

"'I am the one to suffer. I will go away from Sicily, and live in Naples, or rather die there; for if I give up Aurelia, my friend, I must die.'

"His unexpected resignation disarmed me.

"'Do not doubt, Pippino,' I replied, 'that I would let you go and die, were I the preferred lover; but the sad privilege of self-sacrifice belongs to me now.'

"My friend caught me round the neck, clasped me to his breast, and lavished the tenderest epithets on me, and when I had once more declared my renunciation, he

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ran off to be with the fair one, while I, regardless where I walked, made my way back to Palermo.

"I had thought I had courage to consummate the sacrifice, and had sincerely believed myself a hero; but soon jealousy clutched me by the throat, all my fine sentiments vanished, my friend became my rival again, Aurelia a perfidious wretch, and their happiness an unendurable outrage.

"Ominous pictures rose up before me; I imagined I had surprised the lovers in low murmured, intimate converse, I was preparing to stab them, when Aurelia's beauty unnerved me and I turned the blade against myself. That night I paced my chamber in delirious rage. Weariness and daylight calmed me somewhat, and I was about to throw myself on my bed and endeavour to fall asleep when Pippino entered.

"He stretched out his arms and called me his generous friend; but I abruptly interrupted him.

"'Keep your praises to yourself,' said I, 'they are out of place. I really cannot bring myself to renounce Aurelia. An end must be made of one or the other of us. Let us seek some means of meeting on an equal footing, for I would not take advantage of you.'

"Pippino had taken a few fencing lessons. I handed him a foil and bade him be on his guard; but he had not the strength to defend himself, and I dealt him three blows that he could not parry.

"In the handling of firearms I had even greater superiority. A duel was impossible. I bethought me of another expedient.

"Pippino being a good swimmer, I proposed that we should take a small boat, go outside the harbour, and capsize it in the offing, two miles from the shore.

"'Madman!' he ejaculated, 'if you heard me call in fainting tones for help, would you be so cruel as to let me perish? No, you would not. You would forget all about women, love and jealousy, and turn back to save the friend who loves you, and whom you aided and protected all through his childhood. Go to! A sanguinary and wicked combat is not what we require to end our difficulty; a nobler strife shall be ours, from which the vanquisher may come forth without remorse. If, as you say, it is true that you cannot give up Aurelia, then take her; I surrender her to you!'

"'Alas!' I returned, 'she does not love me.'

"'Well, will she love you any the more after you have killed me? If you must lose your sweetheart, at any rate keep your friend.'

"'Yes, I will keep him,' I cried, embracing Pippino; 'yes, I will preserve this friendship of childhood's days and it shall repay me for my sacrifice. Away with women and love! I brave them, I defy them, I anathematise them!

"'Get married, my dear boy! Wed the delightful, amicable, fickle creature whom Heaven has thrown in our way to tempt us to slay each other. The result of it all will be to render us sublime.

"'Aurelia is yours; and may I die at once if ever I again dispute your claim to her! I shall now look on her with a brow of marble and a breast of brass; for this heart of mine is at least master of itself, strong as a lion's and great as Cæsar's.'

"San Cornelia, my patron saint, is my witness that I spoke thus with the best faith in the world: while the praises, tears, and grateful expressions of my friend confirmed me in my magnanimous resolution, corroborated by vows which would render a reversion to my previous way of thinking impossible unless I chose to be a pitiful turncoat.

"Still, although self-denial is a very grand virtue, it is difficult for a man of my stamp to practise.

"After Pippino's departure, Aurelia's father paid me a visit, to reproach me for deserting his party on the previous evening. He, Don Massimo, had occupied my seat on the return, but had not proved so satisfactory a coachman as I. The ladies having taken a fancy to such country rides, a trip to Santa Flavia had been arranged for the following day, and they depended on me to drive the team—this was the command and prayer of Aurelia.

"Profoundly convinced of the change in my feelings, I deemed that no harm could result from an acceptance of the invitation. A stoic's slumbers were mine that night, and I awoke next morning well satisfied with myself, never suspecting that the pleasure of seeing Aurelia once more had aught to do with my good humour.

"At eight o'clock I went to Don Massimo's, where I found the whole party in readiness to start. Aurelia welcomed me with smiles, and held out her hand, which I pressed with emotion.

"The calash dashed on ahead, and I whipped up the horses of the old carriage. At Santa Flavia Don Massimo produced a card of admission to the villa of the Marquis Artale, where the *concierge* permitted us, unwatched, to wander at will through the gardens.

"Merrily the day glided by, and I felt a freedom of mind that gave me the loftiest opinion of my courage. We were to dine on our return to Palermo; but, as a concession to appetite, we had brought a lunch with us, and while discussing it Don Massimo unluckily offered me some Marsala wine from his own vineyard. I drank three-quarters of a bottle, and at once felt my reason take flight as utterly as though a magician had corked it within a phial.

"A jealous man's madness is like a tiger's; but if to it you add the intoxication of wine, you will transform yourself into a brute like Nebuchadnezzar, nor is there any extravagance or even crime whereof a corsair-like nature such as mine is not capable.

"When I beheld Aurelia approach her lover and whisper in his ear, a frenzy took possession of my brain, and I ran like a raving lunatic across the flower beds, and, opening my knife, threw it from a great distance at the trees, with that sureness of aim which never deserts a Sicilian.

"I cannot say what other signs of dementia I mani-

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fested in that terrible outburst of passion. I had lost all consciousness of where I was when I heard voices calling to me from afar. Day was declining, and the party were waiting for me in order to return to Palermo.

"What remains to be told does me little credit, but the lash of shame will perhaps serve me in lieu of penance.

"Pippino and Aurelia got into the old carriage together. The route practicable for carriages and hewn into the rock, wound down the steep hill from the Marquis Artale's residence. Don Massimo's coachman carefully held in the calash horses and descended at a moderate speed, beholding in dismay my usually pacific team dash ahead of him at a gallop.

"Thinking of the pleasure of the lovers sitting together in that antiquated affair, I felt my dizziness increase.

"A fury seemed to fly through the air with arms extended over my head, suggesting to me the infernal though of overturning the vehicle.

"Arrived at a perilous curve, well known to me, I drove so near to the edge of the road that one of the wheels was in the air. Away went the carriage, down twenty feet of embankment; I felt the wind caused by the momentum of the fall; I heard something like a thunderclap echo through my brain, and then all was a blank!

"When I regained consciousness I was listening to the trickle of a little stream. It was the blood flowing from my arm into a basin. I was at home in my bed, with a hole in my temple and a broken collarbone. The surgeon, seeing me unclose my eyes, felt relieved and assured of my recovery; but what suffering I was compelled to endure

"For three months I lay on my back, motionless as a statue on a tomb, and bound fast as if in a vice by some twenty-five yards of bandages.

"Ixion on his wheel could not have experienced greater torture.

"There is a god for the lovers, but none for the jealous.

"Pippino and Aurelia had clasped each other in their fall, and thus the catastrophe procured them the sweetness of a tender embrace; while nobody was hurt except me.

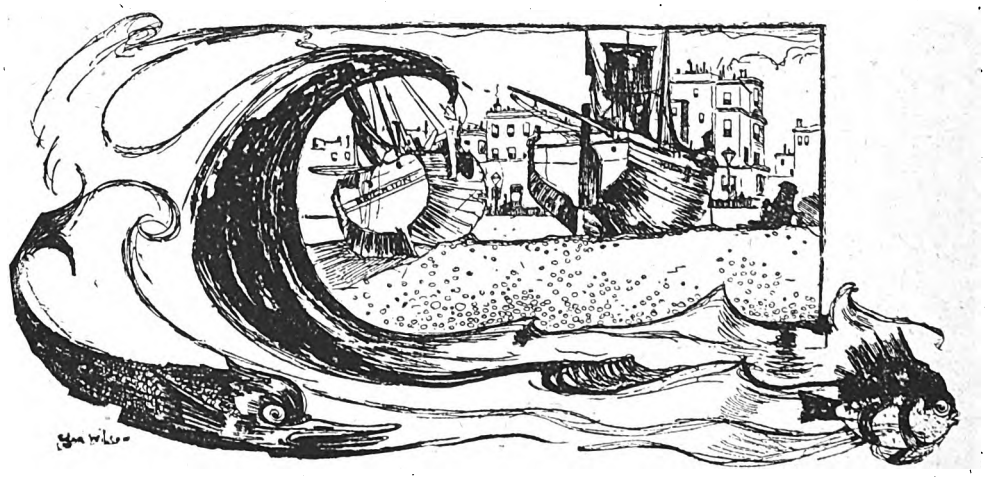
"Nothing sooner cures one of love's madness or jealousy than a cavity in one's skull and a fractured clavicle. Before I was convalescent, my friend and Aurelia were betrothed, and my first venture out of doors took me, limping, to the church of Santa Zita, in order to witness, with neither rancour or grief, the wedding of Pippino and Aurelia.

"Shortly thereafter Pippino had to practise in the law court at Messina, and took his bride along with him. Don Massimo, also, left Palermo not long afterwards, and went to live with his daughter.

"As for me, since that woeful adventure, I have endeavoured to be philosophical, and I do my best to live and amuse myself. Having discovered the danger of loving one woman, I now deem it wiser to love all womankind!"

Five years later Signor Cornelio, having hurried off to Messina to take part in the insurrection and bombardment that occurred at that time, with gun on shoulder and at the head of the detachment of troops of which he had been placed in command, was killed by the explosion of a shell; and thus the Zingara's prediction came true at last.

J. P. L.



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Football Players Competition!

OPEN TO EVERYBODY. £10 IN PRIZES. OPEN TO EVERYBODY.

Below will be found ten sets of words, each of which indicates the name of some well-known football player.

For example, "A young goose" signifies, of course, Gosling.

PIN ALL YOUR SHEETS TOGETHER AT THE TOP LEFT-HAND CORNER, PLACE THEM IN AN ENVELOPE MARKED "PLAYERS," AND POST TO REACH THIS OFFICE BY MONDAY, OCTOBER 10th.

To the person who succeeds in solving the greatest number we will give

A CRISP £5 NOTE.

TO THE NEXT, £2; TO THE NEXT, £2; AND TO THE NEXT, £1;

while consolation prizes will be awarded to the extent of twenty handsome volumes which competitors may select for themselves from the catalogue of books issued by this firm. In the event a tie, the prize will go to the sender of the neatest set of solutions.

If you are weak in the names of football players, your brother, or cousin, or male friend will give you a helping hand.

SHORT STORIES "FOOTBALL PLAYERS" COUPON No. 5.

41.	**A room for cooking.**	41. .....
42.	**A sore.**	42. .....
43.	**Conceited pedal extremity.**	43. .....
44.	**Plead.**	44. .....
45.	**An ancient warrior.**	45. .....
46.	**A fish.**	46. .....
47.	**A drink.**	47. .....
48.	**A greater quantity of ground.**	48. .....
49.	**You.**	49. .....
50.	**Unpaid.**	50. .....

Name .....

Address .....

.....

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What Might Have Been.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE.

This adventure happened to me last year. I had just taken my seat in a corner of an empty compartment in the train, and had closed the door, with the hope of remaining alone, when it was suddenly reopened, and I heard a voice say:

"Be careful, sir, the step is very high."

Another voice replied: "Don't be afraid, Lawrence, I will hold tight."

Then a head appeared covered with a round hat, and two hands, grasping each side of the door, slowly hoisted a large body whose feet made a noise on the step like that of a cane striking the ground. When the man had drawn his body into the compartment, I noticed the painted ends of two wooden legs.

A head appeared behind this traveller, and I heard its owner ask:

"Are you comfortable, sir?"

"Yes, my boy."

"Then here are your bundles and your crutches."

And a servant, who had the air of an old soldier, got in, bearing in his arms a lot of packages done up in black and-yellow paper, carefully tied, and placed them one after the other in the network rack above his masters head. Then he said:

"There, sir, that is all. There are five bundles; the sweetmeats, the doll, the drum, the gun and the *patés de foie gras.*"

"That's all right, my boy."

"A pleasant journey, sir."

"Thank you, Lawrence."

The servant stepped down, closed the door and went away, while I observed my neighbour. He was perhaps thirty-five years old, although his hair was nearly white. He was decorated, wore a moustache, and had that pursy obesity of strong and vigorous men whom an infirmity obliges to remain inactive. He wiped his brow, puffed, and looking me straight in the face, said:

"Does smoking disturb you, sir?"

"Not at all," I replied.

I knew that eye, voice and face; but where and when had I seen them? I had certainly met this man, spoken to him and shaken his hand. It was long, long ago, lost in that haze where the mind seems to obscurely seek and pursue its souvenirs, like fleeting phantoms, without being able to grasp them.

My fellow traveller now began to examine me with the tenacity and fixity of a man who recollects slightly. Tired by this steady contact, our eyes turned away; then, after a few seconds, attracted by the obscure but persistent action of the memory, they again met, and I remarked:

"Really, instead of looking at each other stealthily for an hour, would it not be better to try and recall where we have met?"

"You are quite right," replied my neighbour, with good grace.

"My name is Henry Bonclair," I added.

He hesitated for a few seconds: then, with a vagueness of eye and voice which generally accompanies great tension of mind, he said:

"Ah, yes! I met you at the Poncels, before the Egyptian war, a dozen years ago."

"Exactly. Ah! Ah! you are Lieutenant Somers?"

"Yes; I was even Captain Somers until the day when I lost my feet—both of them at a single stroke from a passing shell."

We looked at each other anew, now that we were acquainted.

I remembered perfectly well having seen this man when he was a fine-looking, slender fellow, who led the *cotillons* with a nimble and graceful enthusiasm. But behind this figure there still floated something that I could not grasp—some story that I had known and forgotten—one of those stories to which one lends short attention, and which leave only an imperceptible impression on the mind. There was love in it. I recalled the peculiar sensation from the depths of my memory but nothing more.

Little by little, however, the shadows cleared away, and the face of a young girl rose before my eyes. Then her name, Miss Mandal, flashed upon my mind Now I remembered everything. It was in fact a love-story, but an ordinary one. This young girl loved this young man when I met them, and people spoke of their coming marriage.

I raised my eyes to the rack where all those bundles were trembling with the motion of the train, and the servant's voice returned to me as though he had just finished speaking. He had said:

"There sir, that is all. There are five bundles; the sweetmeats, the doll, the drum, the gun and the *patés de foie gras.*"

In a second a romance was composed and unrolled in my mind. It resembled all the romances which one so often reads, in which the young man or the young woman marries his or her choice after overcoming all obstacles. So this officer, mutilated during the war, had again found after the campaign the young girl who

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was pledged to him, and keeping her engagement, she had married him.

I considered that to be beautiful but simple, just as we judge to be simple all the heroic actions in books and at the theatre. When we read or listen at these schools of magnanimity, we always feel that we should have sacrificed ourselves with an enthusiastic pleasure and a magnificent impulse. But we are always in a bad humour on the following day when a wretched friend comes to borrow money.

Suddenly, another supposition, less poetic and more realistic, replaced the first one. Perhaps the officer had been married before the war, before this frightful accident that had cut off his feet, and his wife had been obliged, grieved and resigned, to receive, care for, console and sustain this husband who had started off strong and handsome, but now returned, after having lost his feet, a frightful wreck, condemned to inactivity, impotent anger and fatal obesity.

Was he happy, or wretched? I was seized with an irresistible desire to know his history, or at least the principal points of it, which would permit me to divine what he could not or would not tell me.

I talked with him while thinking at the same time. We had exchanged a few commonplace remarks, and as I raised my eyes to the rack, I thought to myself: "So he has three children; the sweetmeats are for his wife, the doll for his little girl, the drum and gun for his sons, and the *patés de foie gras* for himself."

Suddenly I asked him: "You are a father?"

"No," he replied.

I felt confused, as though I had committed an impropriety and continued:

"I beg your pardon. I thought you were, on hearing your servant speak of playthings. We often hear without listening, and draw conclusions, in spite of ourselves."

He smiled and murmured: "No, I am not even married. I stopped at the preliminaries."

I pretended to remember all at once. "Ah, that's true; you were engaged when I knew you—to Miss Mandal, I believe?"

"Yes, sir, your memory is excellent."

I was excessively audacious, and added: "I also have a vague idea of having heard that Miss Mandal married Mr.—Mr.——"

"Mr. Johnson," he interrupted, in a calm tone.

"Yes, that's it. I remember, even, to have heard about your wound."

I looked at him intently, and he blushed. His full, puffy face, already purple from the constant afflux of blood, became still more highly coloured. He replied with the animation and sudden ardour of a man who pleads a case lost in advance in his mind and heart, but who wishes to win it before public opinion:

"People are wrong in coupling Mrs. Johnson's name with mine. When I returned from Egypt—without my feet, alas!—I could never have accepted her offer to become my wife. Was such a thing possible? When a woman marries it is not to make a parade of generosity; it is to live every day, every hour, every minute and every second by the side of a man; and if he is deformed, as I am, she condemns herself, in marrying him, to suffering that will last unto death. Oh, I understand and admire all the sacrifices and devotion when they have a limit; but I do not admit that a woman should renounce an existence which she hopes will prove happy, and abandon all her joys and dreams for the sake of satisfying the admiration of the gallery. Do you believe that a man can induce a woman to tolerate what he himself cannot bear? And, besides, do you think that my wooden feet are attractive?"

Captain Somers became silent. What could I say to him? I felt he was right. Could I blame her, scorn her, or even admit that she was wrong? No. However, the *dénouement*, which conformed to the rule, to the average, to truth and probability, did not satisfy my poetic appetite. These heroic stumps called for a noble sacrifice that was wanting, and I experienced a profound disappointment.

"Has Mrs. Johnson any children?" I asked him suddenly.

"Yes; a daughter and two sons. These toys are for them. She and her husband have been very kind to me."

The train shortly after entered King's Cross. I was about to offer my arm to help the mutilated officer to alight, when two hands were stretched towards him through the open door.

"Good afternoon, Captain."

"Ah! good afternoon, Johnson."

Behind the man was a woman smiling radiantly and throwing her "good afternoon" with her gloved fingers. A little girl by her side jumped with joy, and two youngsters looked with eager eyes at the drum and gun that their father was taking down from the rack.

When the disabled man was upon the platform, all the children kissed him. Then the crowd started off, the little girl holding in her hand the varnished support of the crutch, as she would have been able to hold, in walking at his side, the thumb of her big friend.

G. H. W.

If a girl knows she is pretty it is not because any other girl told her so.

Teacher: "Mary? And what is your last name?"

Young Woman: "I can't tell just yet, but the chances are that it will be Smith."

Fair Visitor: "How can you tell an optimist from a pessimist?"

The Artist: "The one says: 'That's good,' and the other: 'That's not bad'!"

Bank Teller: "This cheque, madam, isn't filled in."

Madam: "Isn't what?"

Bank Teller: "It has your husband's name signed to it, but it does not state how much money you want."

Madam: "Oh, is that all? Well, I'll take all there is."

"Papa," said Johnny, to his paternal ancestor, "did you know that some insects could be decapitated without being hurt in the least by the operation?"

Papa: "No, Johnny, I did not know anything of the kind, and you needn't spring any such yarns on me."

Johnny: "There's no yarn about it, papa. I've often seen bee-headed insects flying about"

"Is it possible, sir," said the visitor, as he looked at a specimen in the museum of the Scientific Association, "that this is a petrification?"

"Yes, sir," replied the custodian, with pardonable pride, "that is a genuine petrified ham."

"Is it for sale?" demanded the visitor excitedly. "If it is, I want it. I don't care a bit what it costs?"

(You have guessed correctly. He was the proprietor of a railway refreshment bar.)

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

TIME 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

France and Germany declare war against Great Britain.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

An inventor secures an audience with the Prince of Wales and demonstrates to him the utility of a new weapon, with the result that steps are immediately taken to manufacture an enormous number of them.

The *Hornet*, a torpedo boat, commanded by Rodney, blows up the Suez Canal. Paris is in a state of fermentation owing to the repulse of the Allied fleet.

Admiral Sir Michael Culme-Seymour's fleet gains a decisive victory over the Allies off the Rock of Gibraltar.

A representative of the *New York World* interviews Lord Salisbury on a matter that is not yet made public.

The British organise two expeditions, one to invade France, and one to invade Germany. The first army corps appears off Havre, and after a short bombardment which lasts till nightfall, the fleet withdraws, the troopships move northwards, and the soldiers are landed at a point opposite Bléville.

The French are routed and the British enter the city.

On receiving news of Lord Roberts' successes in France, Sir Evelyn Wood sets sail with his expedition for Germany. A small but powerful fleet under Sir Nowell Salmon engages the attention of the enemy at the mouth of the Kiel Canal. Meanwhile, the main body of troops arrive with a large escort in sight of Stralsund. A brigade of cavalry under Colonel Lockhart attacks and captures the town from the rear. The next morning 200,000 Englishmen lay encamped on German soil.

The United States meanwhile remains neutral, but contemplates the ultimate annexation of Canada. The merchants of New York purchase £40,000,000 worth of the newly-created stock. Admiral Mahan commands the United States Fleet to maintain the security of her merchantmen.

The British win the battle of Les Rois d'Yvetot; the allies fall back on Russian aid, and their leaders set out by special train to interview the Tsar.

CHAPTER XIX. (*continued*).

CAPRIVI was silent for a moment or two and then remarked with emphasis:

"You are right in the main. We should have crushed England at once. We forgot that every Englishman is a soldier by instinct and by inheritance. Give Britain a moment to breathe in and the earth swarms with her armies, the seas teem with her fleets."

"Still, there is a limit," interposed Dumpf sagaciously.

"A limit!" laughed Hanotaux. "Annihilate one army and there are two in its place."

"True!" quietly put in Caprivi. "You will remember that it was the raw levies of Surrey that won the day at Waterloo!"

The two Frenchmen turned pale with anger at the remark, and the German General interposed quickly:

"Let there be no quarrelling," he said. "We are friends and allies now, and the task before us is not an easy one. We must, for our own credit, do everything to prevent the necessity of calling out the Reserves. That would be an ignominy not to be endured. Russia has given her word; she will now give her armies. It may cost us something; but there is no looking back. England must be crushed now, or for ever dominate the earth."

The four ambassadors were treated with grave ceremony at Petersburg. The phlegmatic Russians, never eager to welcome a defeated ally, regarded them with a coldness which the French statesmen observed with much misgiving. There were no rapturous crowds to acclaim them, only a few casual bystanders gathered on the corners of the streets to gaze curiously into the carriage. The Russian capital was indifference itself.

The audience given at the Royal Palace was one of the strangest in history. Three of the most powerful nations in the world were meeting in conference, and their one object was the destruction of the great people who had taught each the art of government.

They met in the Tsar's private study. It was an impressive spectacle.

The young Tsar, filled with a sense of the divine right of monarchy, possessed of the madness of autocracy which blindly believed in the inspiration of its mission, received the French and German legatees with a chill, imperial dignity.

On his right sat General Gourko, the only statesman admitted into the imperial confidence. The Tsar's impetuous, often arrogant temper was balanced by the shrewd, calculating genius of a diplomat who had no illusions, and weighed his men as the analyst weighs the ingredients of a poison.

With infinite skill and sagacity M. Hanotaux unfolded the designs of the united powers and sought to show the necessity for Russia's intervention.

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"We have the enemy in our grasp," he argued. "There are two British armies landed upon the Continent. One of them is hemmed in a few hundred miles from Paris. The other is hopelessly inclosed in the defences of Stralsund. We are millions to their thousands. Our victory is a matter of days. But——"

"But you come to Petersburg!" drily interposed Gourko.

"We come, it is true, but why? Your Majesty, the position is simple. We can defeat the enemy. But that is not enough. If England is to be crushed, she must be crushed at once, and not only on our shores, but on her own. Every day makes shorter the distance that separates her from her colonies. These Saxons have the brute instinct of the family. Give them a month and we shall have the Canadian, the African, the Australian, and the Indian fighting side by side in Europe. If it were only needed to beat England, it is done. What can half a million avail against seven millions? But much more is needed. England must be overwhelmed, invaded, blotted out, and that at once. We must be in London in a fortnight. Otherwise we shall not be fighting a country but a whole hemisphere!"

The Tsar turned full on the speaker.

"Are your millions not enough for this?" he asked.

"What?" exclaimed the Tsar.

"Your Majesty," answered Count Caprivi, "it is, you are aware, dangerous at all times to call up the whole fighting strength of a nation; but under such conditions, after—well let me frankly say it, after failure which should have been success, it might be disastrous. A nation roused to action is a terrible force that may strike we know not where!"

"Your meaning is clear," said the Tsar with a certain proud scorn. "Your democracy, it appears, knows how to dance and play, but it clearly is still a child. You, M. Hanotaux, are afraid of this great infant you have called to life. He plays in his nursery now with rattles and nine-pins; but at times it is crowns and portfolios and even heads that he plays with. And you, Count, are afraid to arm your loyal burghers for fear that gunpowder will teach them the secret of freedom."

"No, sire," replied Caprivi with dignity. "We are prepared to do our part as Heaven may will. But is it fair that the burden should fall upon two nations who have no less to gain than you? Russia will not decline the responsibility which her profit demands from her."

"What?" exclaimed the Tsar, suddenly rising, and hot with passion. "Do you deem that Russia stands in aid of Europe to secure whatever her heart is set on? What are France and Germany to the splendid empire which is mine, an empire unmeasurable and irresistible, filling the two continents with its acres, sending forth its tendrils to every country, and slowly and silently absorbing the earth? France plays with her toy constitutions, sets up her sham ministries day after day, calls herself republic or monarchy as the whim seizes her, aye, and sends ridiculous trinkets to Sandy Hook, monuments of Europe's folly to America's madness. And Germany? She whines and pules for land like a fretful invalid, with a ruler who pipes and paints and chatters and stalks, as if kingship were a huckstering, a mere jack-of-all-trades. Russia is the sole, the great representative of the one lasting idea that the world can never forget—the idea of imperial sway, of autocracy, of divine rulership. She stands aside and apart from all nations. She needs them not. Some day they shall become part of her. The hour of the Slav is upon you; you feel it even now and stand abashed. Talk not to me of Russia's fear of Britain or of the world itself."

Gourko, who had listened gravely and with respect, here quickly interposed.

"Russia has no need of alliances," he said. "But if you ask for help, she is not therefore deaf."

"General," exclaimed de Visne, "you will remember that you are committed. Your hand is set to the league of Europe."

"In part," replied the General. "We are inactive. If we interpose and rescue you from your unfortunate position what compensation do you propose?"

"Compensation!" cried Caprivi. "You have already India!"

"We have India as fee for inactivity."

"But it is the biggest prize of all!"

"And well earned, surely. Had we moved there might have been no need of a storming of Stralsund. If we are to send our armies and our ships we shall need some other price."

"And that is——"

"Gentlemen," said Gourko impressively, "we claim Turkey and Asia Minor."

The four delegates looked at one another in hopeless astonishment. Russia, grasping in all she did, had outwitted them. Already the brunt of the war and all its horrors had fallen upon France and Germany. And now Russia demanded the two most coveted territories that earth still held out to tempt a nation's vanity.

There was a hurried consultation. The Tsar and Gourko sat apart, cold, impassive, inflexible. The game was theirs. They knew too well the pitiful dilemma of the suppliants to their favour. When M. Hanotaux sullenly announced acquiescence in the monstrous terms proposed, barely a smile broke the rigid calmness of Gourko's impenetrable face.

"And what would you have us do?" he asked.

Count Caprivi urged the necessity of breaking up the English navy.

"Destroy the fleet at Stralsund," he said, "and we shall have crippled her strongest arm and caught the English army in a snare. Both Stralsund and Havre demand relief. Break through the blockade, sink the enemies' ships' and we are free to decimate the land forces and make unopposed for British territory."

M. Hanotaux agreed with this advice.

Gourko whispered in his Sovereign's ear. The Tsar nodded assent and the General observed:

"That may be well as a matter for your own relief. But we have a larger duty before us. We must cripple England. What avail the fleets at Stralsund and Havre? They are impotent to do further harm. You can cut to pieces without difficulty the rash, adventurous men who have landed on your shores."

"Pardon me," interposed Hanotaux, "the destruction of the English navy is the first consideration. Leave *that* alone and no matter what is done we have not yet begun."

"His Majesty thinks otherwise," coldly replied Gourko. "He is of opinion that our best course is to invade England now that she is unguarded and destitute of her men. Let us seize the island and the fleet can be decimated by degrees. You will never advance a step in the war till you have set foot upon British soil."

The envoys were not of his opinion; but after some deliberation the crafty Gourko had wrung from them an admission that his plan was the wiser.

For an hour the General and the envoys deliberated over the details of this new and terrible movement in the war, and then, with gracious condescension, the Tsar dismissed his visitors.

When they had left the apartment, General Gourko smiled grimly.

"And these are their statesmen!" he exclaimed.

"General," was the Tsar's reply, "Heaven fights for Holy Russia. Her future expands, resistless. This war is but as an instrument for her omnipotence."

"The way is clear," said Gourko. "With your permission,

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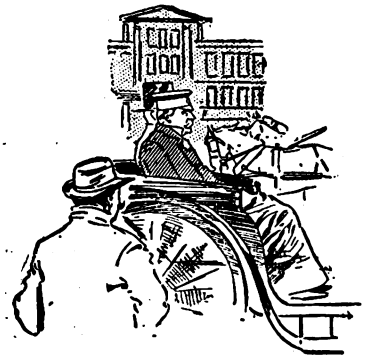
sire, I will see that a message of sympathy is telegraphed to London. It is essential that there should be no suspicion of the part we shall so soon be playing."

The Tsar turned upon his general a scornful glance.



The envoys drove back to their hotel.

"General Gourko," he said imperiously. "We are not hucksters. Russia has no need of lies. It is humiliating enough if she needs to keep back the truth; to speak the lie is unworthy of her ruler and of one whom her ruler trusts."

Gourko smiled at this rebuke, retired, and sent the telegram.

The envoys drove back to their hotel half mollified, half jubilant. Caprivi, more than his companions, was moody and silent.

As the carriage was turning into the courtyard, an oath suddenly escaped him, and the others, looking upon him, saw his face dark with rage.

"Dupes!" he cried. "Dupes! Fools that we are. I see it plainly enough!"

"What do you mean?" cried Hanotaux.

"What do I mean? Do you not see? We asked the Tsar to destroy the English fleet. Any fool can see it is our one hope of safety. And instead he insists upon slipping by and landing on English soil."

"Well?"

"Is it so inscrutable, this perfidious purpose? They can do nothing if they land; England's citizens are still there. Can a few ships hope to master an Imperial island? No: they know full well that the move is only a blind."

"For what?" demanded de Visne.

"Gourko wants to alarm England by threatening her shores. He hopes thereby to force her to send for her Indian army. That arm of hers, the strongest military arm in the world, once on the high seas, and Russia can march across the boundary and take possession of India!"

"And we——?"

"Bah! We, indeed! Russia does not care a rap for us. She leaves us to invasion, to sieges, to blockade, to all the burden of the war. She is simply looking out for herself. She will seize her own booty and leave us to pay the bill!"

CHAPTER XX.

The German Emperor.

Sir Evelyn Wood had successfully accomplished the difficult task committed to him.

A powerful English army had landed at Stralsund, and now occupied one of the strongest positions upon the sea-coast of Germany.

It was true the English General had only 200,000 men, against whom were ranged the entire military forces of Germany. Although for the present the huge army of the "Fatherland" was variously engaged, part of it being occupied in northern France and part still waiting with impatience upon the shores of the Mediterranean at Marseilles till their imprisoned transports might be able to get past the steel fence at Gibraltar and carry them to the agreeable task of dealing a blow at Great Britain herself, there was yet available for immediate purposes a large and well-trained force, which, in point of numbers, seemed likely to overwhelm the brave captors of Stralsund.

Before twelve hours had elapsed nearly 400,000 men, gathered from the Capital, from Dantzic, from the Kiel Canal, and from the various military depots of the North, had made their way by rail to Grimmen, a town not twenty-five miles distant from Stralsund, and there prepared to crush the adventurous foe either by a decisive onslaught or by the painful agony of a determined siege.

One enormous advantage Sir Evelyn Wood possessed. The position he occupied was such as a general might have prayed for.

Behind him lay the marsh-bound city with its invulnerable sea walls. In the land-locked channel beyond rode the splendid fleet that had so superbly silenced the guns of Rugen.

Three lines of railway ran out from his base. That to his right ran beneath the Schleswig-Holstein Peninsula towards Lübeck and Hamburg; that to his left to Stettin; whilst due south a third made direct to the German capital.

Stationed at the convergence of these three railways, it was clear that the General could throw out his army in large and distinct masses for a considerable distance, and yet keep in rapid commnication with every section.

Whilst Sir Evelyn was inspecting the outlying district in the direct front, having for its centre the line to Berlin, he pointed out to those members of his staff nearest to him the natural advantages of his position.

"Whatever the odds against us," he observed, "we should be invulnerable."

"So long as we stay here, sir," assented one of his officers.

"Do not look forward to an excursion into Germany yet awhile," responded the General with a grim smile. "Our duty is clear. We must cling to Stralsund with desperation. With 200,000 men not even Napoleon, with Wellington as chief of the staff, could march into a hostile country teeming with gigantic armies. No; we cannot afford to indulge in the mere vain glory of fanatical heroism. Our men have need of self-restraint as well as courage here."

"Then you intend to keep at Stralsund?"

"Yes. In two days or less we shall be surrounded by an immense army, through which it will be impossible to cut our way. But luckily we have a strong position. I will establish my lines on those low hills, which are, I should calculate, about four miles away. With this spacious plain as my base, with three miles of railways, with a strong fortress at my back, it will not be difficult to remain here as long as our stores last."

"And thus keep the Germans engaged?"

"Exactly," responded the General. "It is our part to hold stoutly to Stralsund and keep at us one or more of the German Army Corps. We shall thus prevent a massing of the two nations in France, and Lord Robert's task will be so much the lighter. Don't be afraid that there will be no fighting. We shall have to be troublesome, but we must not hazard a fixed engagement. We must wait in patience till we can go forward."

The officer looked at his general in surprise.

"Wait?" he asked. "For what?"

"Wait," was the laconic reply, "till Canada and South Africa and Australia come swimming down the Baltic."

And with these words he turned his horse's head and rode back to his quarters. Within a very few hours the first rough entrenchment of the English army was perfected. Soldier and sailor, working side by side, with cheerful song and unfailing jest, accomplished miracles. Stralsund was once more herself, and her guns gleamed more cruelly than ever over the blue water.

Four miles distant from the outskirts of the town ran a low ridge of hills. Through deep cuttings the three railways burrowed their way east, south, and west, opening a passage to all Germany. Where these cuttings lay, Sir Evelyn Wood took up his main positions, throwing up earthworks which hourly became more formidable, and whence the British guns swept for miles the whole of the shelterless plain that spread to the south. In the delta formed by this line of forts and the town of Stralsund the

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army lay encamped, sheltered by the sloping hills no less than by the guns.

Of ammunition and supplies there was abundance. Hour after hour the ships gave up their wealth of stores, and it was quite clear that Sir Evelyn would be able, with ease, to maintain himself and his army in position for at least a month or six weeks.

It was not long before the strength of his defence was afforded an opportunity for proof.

On the day after the landing of the British, the German Army Corps assembled at Grimmen, was already overwhelming in its strength, and a determined effort was made by the Germans to drive home a reconnaissance in force.

At first the General in command thought to pierce through the British lines by the mere vehemence of his assault. A desperate attack was made upon their position, but the plan was folly itself. The English guns swept down the advancing foe with fearful precision, and the plain lay littered with the dead before the assailants could deal a single effective blow.

Twice was this wild course followed, with only repeated havoc and butchery. It became clear to the German General that it was a case of investment and not of isolated attack.

He next sought to tempt the English to a sortie, and on one occasion, after a bitter and apparently well-meant assault along the whole line of front open to him, he withdrew his right wing so rapidly as to give the idea of a precipitate flight.

Sir Evelyn Wood smiled.

"We will give them all they will care for in the way of attack," he observed, "but we will choose our own time and method."

Thus for three days the British lay at Stralsund, secure yet unable to move, whilst intermittent fighting and occasional assault filled up the burden of the hours.

Throwing up earthworks.

It was then that the German Emperor realised that he himself was needed. The sacred Fatherland was soiled by the print of a hostile foot, and yet no visible earthquake had occurred. Only the print became larger and larger, and its toe threatened to stretch to his own Palace under the lindens.

He had good cause to be mortified. No sooner had the false intelligence of the landing of the invaders on the English coast reached him, than with impetuous enthusiasm he sent the following telegram:

To General Von Bremen, Worthing. Your success is only what your Emperor expected. You shall name your reward when you enter London.

Next day the telegram was returned to him, as the continental cables had not been destroyed. The postmaster at Worthing was not without his sense of humour. His endorsement was:

Returned, address not known, neither of him or any other German general. Try English Channel.

This was not pleasant, but the German Emperor was not to be easily dispirited. He felt that the hour had come when he should prove himself the saviour of his country, and he laid aside with reluctance the composition of an epic and the music of a comic opera on which he was engaged.

He was closeted with Herr Pimpelnick, a poet of some renown, when the news of the capture of Stralsund arrived.

The poet handed him a few verses, which the Emperor had given him to correct. They flamed with patriotism.

William looked at the paper with some perplexity.

"It does not seem quite the same," he declared.

"Your Majesty," replied Pimpelnick. "I have merely ventured to alter one or two expressions."

"But the rhymes?"

"Yes, sire; I made a few changes in the metre, and gave just a touch or two to the scansion. One or two lines you will see I have left out, and I have added——"

"Impertinent!" exclaimed the Emperor. "Have you dared to tamper with your sovereign's poetry?"

"Pardon, sire," stammered the trembling Pimpelnick; "but by the laws of prosody——"

"Laws of prosody!" fiercely interrupted the Emperor, "Do you think that the Emperor William is bound by laws as other men? I make laws, not follow them."

He might have done many unpleasant things to the poor poet had not his Chamberlain created a diversion by bringing the disastrous news of Stralsund.

William was courageous enough, but his sense of proportion was distinctly weak.

His first act was to order 4,500,000 copies of his last patriotic song to be printed and distributed to his soldiers.

He also ordered that it should be sung with regularity each day. And sung it might have been, only that no tune could be found or devised to fit the eccentric vagaries of the words.

Next he issued a proclamation to his people in magniloquent language, in which the whole pomp and sublimity of the Teutonic tongue displayed itself.

"My people," it began, "your Emperor at last calls upon your patriotism. Your devotion to him and your respect for the God of your religion alike bid you go forth to battle for your native land. It will be some consolation to you to feel that you are not only fighting for your country, for your household hearths, for your children, and for yourselves, but that you are also fighting for your Emperor. He will be watchful and untiring, and his presence shall cheer and his wisdom direct his subjects in their holy quarrel.

"England has dared to invade our Fatherland. She alone is responsible for the terrible crime of a murderous war.

"She has incited the nations to revolt by her selfishness and the cold heartlessness of her pusillanimous prosperity. Every colony she has planted in the savage world has been a blow at peace.

"And now she throws off the mask. She resents the punishment the nations would inflict upon her for her insolence, and dares to set foot upon our beloved soil.

"But she has reckoned without the German Emperor and the German people. Let us go forth to eject the impious foe.

"Your Emperor's voice calls upon you. The supreme hour of Germany's great destiny has come."

This proclamation was read with much interest by the good people of Germany.

The general feeling was to laugh at the English army corps which had managed to slip into Stralsund. It was caught neatly in a trap. But a few days were needed, and the foe could be outnumbered ten to one.

And yet there was not lacking an undercurrent of revolt. The liberal spirit, so often crushed and maimed by the new Imperialism, looked with fear and loathing on this unholy conspiracy against the one nation which stood before the world as a champion of freedom. There came, too, the conviction that another triumph of militarism would be the last fatal blow to the hopes of German liberty. Let the united powers trample upon Great Britain and Imperialism would become a despotism, unveiled and unassailable.

Beneath the loyal shout that rang through the columns of a handcuffed Press there was, therefore, an ominous muttering.

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For four days the English guns had snarled down from the slopes round Stralsund on the German army, and twice had a definite onset of the enemy been turned to rout and confusion, when the Emperor reached the seat of war.

William looked at the paper with some perplexity.

He immediately sent for General Von Bremen, who was in command—a Von Bremen of a somewhat more chastened spirit and a milder demeanour since his return in a battered ship from the fight at Worthing—and informed him that the direction of affairs would in future be his—William's.

"I will inspect the position at once," he said. "On my return I will meet the General officers. See that they are assembled in two hours' time."

"At headquarters, sire?" asked the General.

"No. I observed a school house on my way here. Let them assemble there."

So saying he rode away.

The prospect was not encouraging. The English lines lay round Stralsund in the form of a huge semi-circle. On either side the morass pushed out its deadly slime. A chain of batteries which swept the whole field of action presented an inseparable barrier.

The German army was arranged in three divisions. Each was over 100,000 strong, and was possessed of ample artillery. But the position they occupied was most unfortunate. The low ground that spread its monotonous plain towards New Brandenburg afforded no point of vantage for a blockade. William saw that following the tactics of a siege they might remain there for ever, so long as the English fleet held the Baltic and threw supplies into the town of Stralsund.

He rode thoughtfully back, without a word to his escort, and reaching the school-room dismounted and entered.

There was something ludicrous in the spectacle that greeted his eye—had he but realised it. On forms and benches where little Deutscher boys were wont to grapple with the intricacies of the German language, sat old and grizzled veterans, officers who had spent a stormy apprenticeship in the great war of 1871, generals of experience and long-proved skill.

But the Emperor was not a man of humour. He did not even blush when he stood in front of the little group and said abruptly:

"Generals, I have had you assembled here that you might learn my conclusions upon the problem that is set before you. I propose to give you a brief lecture upon the science of attack. I shall be glad if you will make notes of the more important points I shall raise."

So saying, he picked up a piece of chalk and began to draw—somewhat rudely—upon the blackboard a representation of the disposition of the forces.

The generals listened respectfully. The Emperor waxed warm. It was a peculiarity of his discourse that "what was true was not new, and what was new was not true." He elaborated his scheme. His generals, it is true, had learnt it from the French Campaign, they had learnt it from Napoleon the Great, they had even seen it discussed in books, pamphlets, and in the Berlin War Gazette. But they said nothing of this.

They only looked impressed, astonished, convinced.

"Thus you will see, Generals," the Emperor was continuing, "that the most certain line of attack is to hurl your strength full upon the enemy's centre. You will lose many men, the loss may be disastrous. But you will find that the tactic is certain of success in the end. Divide the foe into two parts without inter-communication, decimate his centre, and——"

At this moment he was interrupted by the arrival of a messenger, breathless and excited.

The Emperor turned angrily upon him.

"Your Majesty," exclaimed the new-comer, "the enemy have made a sortie. They have advanced upon us and are now in full attack."

"Where are they attacking?" the Emperor eagerly asked.

"They are attacking our centre, Sire!" was the response, and the dead silence of the group as it was gazing upon the hieroglyphics on the blackboard changed to sudden excitement.

The lecture was not brought to a close in the schoolroom. There was, instead, a complete and more convincing demonstration outside!

CHAPTER XXI.

The German Emperor Gets a Lesson.

The day had dawned cold and grey, and a faint mist, heavy with the fetid air of the surrounding marshes, enveloped the plain of Stralsund.

Both armies lay concealed in its treacherous embrace, and the English outposts, doubly alert, sought anxiously to catch the ominous sounds which might betoken the enemy's advance. But the guns on either side were silent, and there prevailed that horrible stillness which, pregnant with catastrophe and destruction, broods over a brief pause in the stress of battle.

Admiral Fitzroy and Sir Evelyn Wood had spent the forenoon in close discussion of the situation.

"I fear," said the General gravely, "that I ought not to accept your proposal that the fleet should remain in the harbour of Stralsund. It is, of course, for you to decide, but you will doubtless be of much more assistance to the English forces elsewhere."

"Candidly," replied the Admiral, "I do not care to leave you here. Our situation generally is, I know, full of the most terrible difficulties, and we have to violate almost every law of military science. But still, the fleet gone, you are alone, penned in an awkward country by an army that is practically inexhaustible. What can you do? How can you hope to break through? With us behind you, there is a certain path of escape; but if we go, you are not only menaced by decimation in front, you have also the danger of a hostile fleet entering the roads and turning its guns upon you."

Sir Evelyn shook his head:

"My own duty, Fitzroy, is, it seems to me, clear. I hope you will see it from the same point of view. There is not, and cannot be, escape for my army."

"No escape?"

"No. We must either hold our ground or be destroyed. It is not a case where we can talk of retreat. If we hold out we gain time. We may do considerable havoc. We at least keep a huge army corps from mischief elsewhere. But how can we retreat? Retreat can only mean that we throw up the game: it means England invaded. Do not forget that we have got to a desperate issue. We cannot indulge now in the luxury of territorial manœuvres. The fate of England must be settled here and now. If we are to be crushed, let it be on German soil. We will at least die fighting. But we must, whatever happens, remain. I shall cling to Stralsund till my last man is shot. There is nothing else to be done."

"If you are determined," replied the Admiral reluctantly, "I will say no more. It is a terrible case where a sailor has

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to turn calmly out to sea whilst the soldier is fighting for his life. I don't like it, and it goes against the grain."

"Fitzroy," said the General earnestly, "this war will see many changes, and God knows what the end will be. But we will at least not think of ourselves, only of old England. You do not know how she may need you. You cannot tell what new enemies will spring up to attack her. You cannot know what peril she may be in now. Let us part, old fellow. You know I shall do my best here. I'm not going to throw up the game without making the enemy pay more dearly for it than they care. We can only die for the old land, anyhow. And here I shall stay with all the pluck and pride of England to help me. If we win, we shall meet again. If not—well, I don't know that you or I or any one here—no, not the least amongst my men, will care a jot to keep on living. You know what I mean, Fitzroy. It is a true case of death or glory."

The Admiral pressed the General's hand.

"After all, you are right," he said. "I guess there's a task like yours for me somewhere, and I hope so. It will be some consolation to be in the thick of it."

A faint smile passed over the grave face of Sir Evelyn.

"We won't talk too much of dying," he said. "My army here is a pretty tough problem for the enemy, after all. Don't be astonished if the day of miracles returns. Two hundred thousand Englishmen! My dear Fitzroy, there's victory in the very phrase!"

And the two men, passing swiftly into matters of detail, concluded their arrangements. Two days later Admiral Fitzroy was to steam out to sea and make for the English Channel. A cruiser alone would remain in the harbour for purposes of communication.

And General Wood, with the sea at his back and countless foes in front, alone in a hostile country, cut off on all sides from deliverance, was to make his stand—a long, stubborn, desperate stand, and defy the united armies of the German Empire.

When the Admiral left him the General gave a few brief orders to his staff, and then entered the train—consisting of the engine and a single carriage—which stood on the Berlin railway, and was kept in readiness night and day for rapid journeys to the advance lines.

There was a curious expression upon his face, one that betokened both anxiety and elation.

The fact was that he had resolved upon an audacious move which the enemy least expected. Sir Evelyn Wood knew his Livy, and had not studied the strategic subtleties of Fabius in vain.

He realised that the strongest defence he could make was one judiciously blended with attack. He could not hope to put to rout the enormous army before him, but he could at least attempt to undermine its moral strength.

To give repeated blows to the enemy, to rush out when opportunity favoured, and sting them where they showed weakness, and always to retire as soon as he had made them smart, giving them no opportunity for leisure battle, was a policy which he knew would do more to make his position secure than the most desperate resistance upon his own lines. It was his intention to break down the confidence of the foe, to create a sense of uneasiness, and to goad them into rash retaliation. Sir Evelyn Wood was a master of tactics, and knew the galling power of swift, destructive sorties followed by brilliant retreats.

During the morning many picked regiments had been drafted from the three wings of the British Army into a magnificent division, which now rested on the seaward slopes of the centre of the line of fortifications. They formed a Reconnaissance Corps which, for experience pluck, and discipline, could undoubtedly not be equalled outside the English ranks.

Conspicuous amongst these favoured troops were the 2nd Life Guards, commanded by the Earl of Dundonald, the 1st Dragoons, under Lieutenant-Colonel Tomkinson, the Seaforth Highlanders, the Royal Irish Regiment, and the 2nd Battalion of the Buffs. The Reconnaissance Corps, was commanded by that brilliant officer, Lieutenant-General Keith Fraser, who had relinquished his position as Inspector-General of Cavalry for service in the field.

Cavalry and infantry were supported by six batteries of Horse gunners. Thoroughly equipped in every department, the corps was eminently suited to the dangerous task before it. A smart attack, swift manœuvring, a rapid and effective blow, and a hurried and orderly retreat—this programme was one which troops, trained to the last degree of perfection, and to whom concerted action had become an instinct, were likely to carry out with the utmost success.

With hearts beating high, and envied by every other soldier in the army, the Reconnaissance Corps moved down the outer slope through the faint mist and made rapidly over the plain. This human projectile, hurled when least expected, was falling upon the centre of the German army at the very moment when the young Emperor was lecturing his generals upon the art of attack and upon the specific virtue of the Napoleonic method.

The Admiral pressed the General's hand.

In all, there were not less than 3,000 sabres, and 18,000 infantry, a body large enough for inflicting a severe blow, and yet not too unwieldly for the purposes of rapid movement and a speedy retreat.

Barely had the alarm been raised, and the unsuspecting army apprised of this new danger, than a severe fire from all arms of the British forces poured into the German centre and with a dash the corps was upon them.

A slight disorder appeared in the enemy's ranks. It had not occurred to the commander to anticipate an attack. He regarded the Englishmen as so much quarry, held fast in a difficult position, waiting—it might be for a day or two—to be quietly annihilated.

Before therefore the enemy had time to reply, or to put themselves in a position to receive the onset of the English soldiers, a destructive fire had committed enormous damage, and Teuton complacency had a first and severe experience of the quality of the Saxon mettle.

In a few moments, however, the Germans had recovered themselves, and prepared to give a terrible response to the attentions of the gallant English corps. A heavy fire was opened from the batteries; but owing to the mist which still prevailed, and to the extended character of the English lines, the damage done was little, and much wild firing resulted in a waste of ammunition rather than in any effective injury.

General Fraser handled his men with consummate skill. A rapid change of front confused the German gunners, who had to guess as far as possible the position of the attacking forces.

With all the ingenuity of scientific calculation, the British Commander directed his fire upon the huge target that lay at his mercy and never halted a moment to await the reply which might be made.

In a brief time the English infantry came into close conflict with the advanced troops of the enemy. There was a shout of triumph as, with merciless aim and unwavering force, the Seaforth threw themselves upon the startled 2nd Berlin regiment, and, after a brief moment of indecision, hurled it back upon the main body.

It was at this instant that the Emperor William arrived at the front, enraged at the suddenness of the blow which had caught him napping, and excited beyond measure by the fierceness of the onslaught.

(To be continued.)

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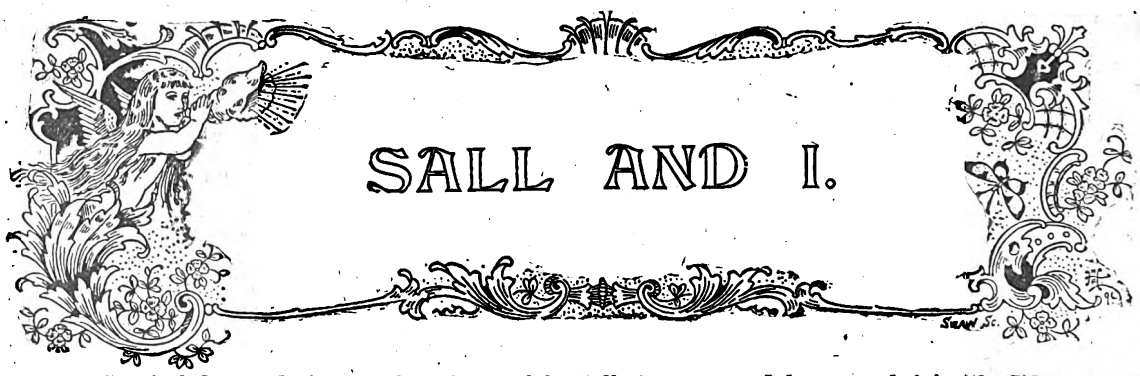

SALL AND I.

One day Sall fooled me; she heated the poker awful hot, then asked me to stir the fire. I seized hold of it mighty quick to oblige her, and dropped it quicker to oblige myself.

Well, after the poker scrape, me and Sall only got on middlin' well for some time, till I made up my mind to pop the question, for I loved her harder every day, and I had an idea she loved me, or had a sneaking kindness for me. But how to do the thing up nice and proper that perplexed me orful.

I bought some love books, and read how the fellers git down on their knees and talk like poets, and how the girls would gently fall in love with them. But somehow or other, that way didn't exactly suit my idea. I asked mother how she and dad courted, but she said it had been so long she had forgotten all about it. Uncle Joe said mother did all the courting.

At last I made up my mind to go ahead and chance it, for this thing was fairly consumin' my mind; so I goes over to her dad's, and when I got there I sat like a stupid, thinkin' how to begin.

Sall seed something was troubling me, so she said, says she:

"Are you ill, Peter?"

She said this very soft-like.

"Yes! No!" sez I. "That is, I ain't quite well. I thought I'd come over to-night," sez I.

I thought that was a good beginnin'; so I tried agin.

"Sall," sez I, and by this time I felt a bit nervous and a little shaky about the knees, "Sall," sez I.

"What?" sez she.

"Sall," sez I agin.

"What?" sez she.

"I'll get to it after a while at this rate," thinks I.

"Peter," sez she, "there's suthin' troublin' you; it's very wrong for you to keep it from a body, for an inward sorrer is a consumin' fire."

She said this, she did, the sly minx. She knowed what was the matter all the time very well, and was only tryin' to fish it out; but I was so far gone I couldn't see the point. At last I gulped down the big lump risin' in my throat, and I sez, sez I:

"Sall, do you love anybody?"

"Well," sez she, "there's dad and mother," and a countin' of her fingers all the time, with her eyes half shut like a feller shootin' off a gun, "and there's old Fido (that were their old dog) and I can't think of anybody else just now," sez she.

Now this was orful for a feller ded in love; so, after a time, I tried another way. Sez I:

"Sall," sez I, "I'm orful lonely at home, and sometimes think if I only had a nice, pretty wife to luv and talk to, move, and have my bein' with, I'd be a very happy feller."

No notice.

"Sall, do you know any gal as would care for me?"

With that she begins, and names over all the gals for five miles round, and never once came nigh naming of herself, and sed I oughter git one of them. This got my back up, so I hitched my chair up close to her, and shut my eyes and sed:

"Sall, you are the very gal I've been hankering after for a long time. I luv you from the sole of your head to the crown of your foot, and I don't care who nos it, and if you say so, we'll be jined together in the holy bonds of hemlock!" sez I; and then I felt as if I'd throwed a ton weight off my back, I felt so relieved.

With that she gave a little scream, and then she, sed sez she:

"Peter!"

"What, Sally?" sez I.

"Yes!" sez she, a hidin' of her face behind her hands.

You can guess how I felt.

"Hooray!" sez I. "I must holler, Sall, or I shall bust. Hooray! hooray! May I jump over the table?"

With that I sat down by her and clinched the bargain with a kiss.

Talk about your blackberry jam! Talk about your strawberries and cream! You wouldn't a got me nigh 'em—they would all a'been sour after that! Oh, these gals! how good and bad, how high and low they make a feller feel! If Sall's dad hadn't sung out 'twas time all honest folks was a-bed, I'd a sat there two hours longer!

You ought to 'a' seed me when I got home! I pulled dad out of bed and hugged him. I hugged mother, I hugged Aunt Jane, I larfed and hollered, I crowed like a rooster, I danced round there, and I cut up more capers than you ever heerd tell on, till dad thought I was crazy, and got a rope to tie me with.

"Dad," sez I, "I am goin' to be married!"

"Married!" bawled dad.

"Married!" squalled mother.

"Married!" screamed Aunt Jane.

"Yes, married," sez I; "married all over, married for sure, married like a flash, joined in wedlock, spliced for worser or better, for life and for death—to Sall. I am! Me! Peter Samson, Esquire!"

With that I ups and tells 'em all about it, from A to Z. They was all extra well pleased, and I went to bed as proud as a young rooster with his first spurs.

G. Bennett.

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RAPID METHOD
OF BANISHING
SUPERABUNDANT FAT.

Extraordinary Success in the Treatment of Obesity.

INCREASING POPULARITY OF AN EFFECTUAL CURE.

"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCE.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's now popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.) These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address three penny stamps for a copy (post-free) of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently by stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

The following are extracts from other journals:

SOME GOOD NEWS FOR FAT PEOPLE.

Our corpulent readers will be glad to learn how to positively lose two stone in about a month with the greatest possible benefit in health, strength and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular paradox that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state, with increased activity of brain, digestive and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto, yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one or two pounds daily, as the weighing-machine will prove. Thus there is no suggestion of starvation. It is an undoubted success and the author, who has devoted years of study to the subject, guarantees a noticeable reduction within twenty-four hours of commencing the treatment. This is different with other diseases, for the patient in some cases may go for weeks without being able to test whether the physician has rightly treated him, and may have derived no real or apparent improvement in health. Here, we repeat, the author guarantees it in twenty-four hours, the scale to be the unerring recorder. The treatment aims at the actual root of the disease, so that the superfluous fat does not return when discontinuing the treatment. It is perfectly harmless. We advise our readers to call the attention of stout friends to this, because, sincerely, we think they ought to know. For their information we may say that on sending threepence in stamps, a book entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), containing a reprint of press notices from some hundreds of medical and other journals (British and Foreign) and other interesting particulars, including the "recipe," can be had from a Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.—*Belfast News Letter.*

VICTIMS TO OBESITY.

This is a question which has occupied the attention of medical authorities from time immemorial. Some argue that the lean kind take longer to shuffle off the mortal coil than their stout brethren. The statistics naturally favour this argument, and no doubt are correct to a great extent, because sufferers from obesity are more susceptible to disease in consequence of the debilitated state of the system when clogged with abnormal adipose tissue; but a curious fact has been overlooked, viz., that corpulence generally commences about the age of thirty-five to fifty, after which time it seems to decrease; therefore, before the proverbial "three score and ten" is reached, the whilom fat man is, by a natural process, again reduced to what may only be called moderate plumpness, and thus cheats the statistician. Stout persons can now, thanks to science, reduce their weight in a most extraordinary rapid manner, without the slightest injury to their constitutions, or without resorting to those drastic remedies which only operate for a time, or by the continuance of the use of toxical drugs extending over such a period that renders it baneful to the long-suffering patient. An eminent Continental therapeutist recommends the victim to obesity to eat fat meat, while an equally eminent American prescribes lean ditto, and the stomach is to risk an accumulation of serious disorders by swallowing a pint of hot water daily, a most nauseous remedy we should think, and not unattended with danger. The past master in the cure of corpulence is Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., whose book (256 pages), entitled "Corpulency, and the Cure," price only three penny stamps, seems to impress us considerably, for he reduces more weight by his system than the Continental and American physicians, without any of the absurd restrictions which would make life scarcely worth living. He uses simple herbs, the properties of which he seems to possess a more than usual knowledge of, and he makes but little secret of his method, so refreshing after the mystery made of most chemical and herbal concoctions for various complaints.—*Wetherby News.*

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CONSULTATIONS FREE.

You will observe that we have commenced a remarkable offer of fifty sovereigns to be distributed amongst the readers of *Short Stories* every week. We select fifty names and addresses from the various London and provincial directories and other sources, write them on fifty envelopes, put one sovereign in each envelope, and lock the whole up in the editorial safe. All the persons named who apply will have the money sent to them. Applications must be made on post-cards, and no money will be sent unless applied for. In view of the fact that the names are chosen promiscuously, it may so happen that some of those selected are of people who do not read *Short Stories*—your neighbour, for example, or your dressmaker or milkman. It would be doing them a good turn, therefore, if you suggested their applying to this office. If it should so happen they receive a sovereign, they will thank you. But don't omit to apply yourself at the same time.

T. G.—In some parts of Sweden women often work as farm labourers. If a woman has an infant she carries it in a leather bag on her back, after the manner of the Indian squaw, and is thus enabled to work with both hands.

Investors.—On an average, about two-fifths of the companies promoted yearly in England come to grief.

W. S.—Musket-balls were used as current coin in New England from 1638 to 1652. They were valued at one farthing, and were legal tender up to one shilling.

Cholly wants to know how to manage a silk hat when it has got a wetting. ——Leave the hat until partly dry without touching it, then wrap a towel carefully round it to absorb the dampness, moving the towel a little with the lay of the silk. When nearly dry, rub with a hot cloth until perfectly smooth and glossy.

Gallus.—There is a lake of blood-red water in the Grison Alps, between the places called Bruggershorn and Wolfsboden. The colour of the water is due to the presence of millions of vegetable infusoria. That portion of the Alps where the lake is situated is very seldom visited by tourists.

Max.—The figure of Britannia stamped on all our bronze coins owes its origin to the Romans, who cast it on medals to signalise their conquest over Britain. The figure is represented sitting on an island in order to show the nature of Great Britain, and her warlike accoutrements show the warlike spirit of her inhabitants. The lighthouse and ship are both modern innovations.

S. P.—A Roman camp, a Saxon temple and three cathedrals have in turn occupied the site of St. Paul's. The present cathedral was built from a tax on seaborne coal.

H. V.—The period known as the "Middle Ages" is not a fixed period, but varies in different countries. It may be said to cover 1,000 years, from the fifth to the fifteenth century. It may be roughly said to extend from the transfer of Imperial power from Rome to Constantinople in 476 to the beginning of the Reformation in 1520.

Reader.—The word "preface" used in the beginning of books was originally a word of welcome to a meal, and was equivalent to "Much good may it do you."

Ex.—The first formal and written treaty made by England with a foreign nation was that entered into by Henry III. with the Dauphin of France in 1217. The Dauphin was then in England and was leagued with the Barons.

Jack Tar.—The most dangerous part of the British coast is that which lies between Flamborough Head and the North Foreland. This includes both the Thames and the Humber. The next most dangerous coast line is that between Anglesea and the Mull of Cantire.

E. L. D.—The term "El Dorado" was not originally used to designate any particular place; it signifies "the gilded" or "the golden," and was variously applied. According to some authorities, it was used to designate a religious ceremony of the natives, who covered the anointed body with gold dust. On that account the whole of Guiana was at one time known by the name "El Dorado."

Clock.—The so-called "Dutch" clocks were "made in Germany," the centre of the trade being the village of Freyburg. They were exported to all parts of Europe under the name of "Dutch clocks." In his play of *Love's Labour Lost* Shakespeare discourses thus: "A woman that is like a German clock, still a-repairing; ever out of frame, and never going aright." There is evidence to show that Shakespeare was a 'cute business man, and he appears to have known a thing or two about clocks. Whether his comparison was right I am unable to say, not being personally acquainted with the lady referred to.

A. L. G.—The title of "Lord" Mayor of London was first conferred in 1354 upon Thomas Legge. There had been sixty Mayors of London before the more imposing title was conferred.

M. A.—The brown-red colour in the wooden shoes or sabots of the French and Belgian peasantry is produced by exposing them to the smoke of burning wood.

C. B.—Try a mixture of oil and graphite for preventing screws from becoming fixed; it will also protect them against rust for years. This mixture facilitates tightening up, is a good lubricant, and reduces the friction of the screw.

Toe.—Square-toed boots were the fashion in the time of Queen Mary. The width of the toes of men's boots became at length so great that a proclamation was issued, limiting the the width to six inches.

W. W. asks: "Why do glow worms shine?"——It is difficult to say for certain, for there are many reasons put forward. It is only the female who emits the phosphorescent light, and some people think it is for the purpose of attracting the attention of the males. Another theory is that glow worms shine in order to save themselves from capture by birds which feed upon insects, for the flesh of the glow worm not being particularly palatable, the light helps their would-be captors to recognise them, and so leave them alone. Other people think that the glow is to enable the little creature to see its way in the dark, while again others declare that it is an attraction for the bringing of other small animals within the range of the worm.

Flor.—The modern British florin was first coined in 1849, but florins are of ancient date. The first English florin was issued by Edward III.; its value was 6s. The piece derives its name Florence, where it was first coined. The two-shilling pieces coined in 1849 were called in owing to the fact that the letters F. D. (Defender of the Faith) were omitted from the Queen's title.

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Free Cash Prize Competition

NO ENTRANCE FEE WHATEVER.

1st Prize **£25.** 2nd Prize **£20.**
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The above money prizes will be given away as an advertisement amongst the competitors who can rearrange the following twenty-four letters to represent the names of four well-known trades, selected by us.

TUBREHCKAREBROCEGRPARDER.

Send in your solution at once, and we will inform you if correct, and give you full details of the Competition with conditions and date of closing. If you cannot solve all four do as many as you can, as there are four prizes to compete for. No Solution can be received after October 17th, 1896.—Address: "COMPETITION" MANAGER, 117A SEVEN SISTERS ROAD, LONDON N.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See Ild. Guide (230 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000 **Tobacconists' Outfitting Co.**, 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers

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NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps. ALEX ROSS, 62, Theobald's Road, London, opposite Bedford Row. Est. 1850. Parcel free from observation.

SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

SHILLING BOTTLES.

MASON'S The Only Painless Corn Cure.

Never known to Fail. **KILLCORN**

Sold by all Chemists, Stores, &c., Price 1/- per bottle, or post free from the Proprietor, 3 Guildford St., Leeds.

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HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A £5, £3 OR £00 HOUSE

LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.

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Send 2 stamps for Sample to 13 Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

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Readily Reduce Weight and Cure Corpulency Permanently by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. Reduction begins immediately.

An English Countess writes: "Your *Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

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PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.—Really Genuine, in patent air-tight tins. ½lb., 10d.; 1lb. 1/4, 1½lb. 2/4 including tin and postage. Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.

The Best Hair Dye

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d. 5s. 6d. & 10s. 6d.

COMFORT, CLEANLINESS AND CURE

FOLLOW THE USE OF

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Gives ease at once and effectually removes Piles, Cracks, Fissures and Ulcerations. In boxes 1/- & 2/6 each. Post free 1/2 & 2/9

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Good! it's Mason's

EXTRACT OF HERBS

6D. BOTTLE MAKES 8 GALLONS

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The most palatable refreshing tonic drink producible.

IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE, for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 3d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

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The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

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Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

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DOSE: Five to Ten Drops in half a wineglassful of water.

A Specific Remedy for Biliousness, Liver Inaction, Heartburn, Indigestion, Acid Risings, Constipation, Headache, &c., &c. Prices: 1/1, 1/10, 2/8 and 4/9, post free.

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NUCOLINE

A PURE VEGETABLE BUITER.
For Baked and Boiled Pastry, Frying, &c.
A Perfect Cooking Butter.
Nutritive, Digestive, Economical.
Five Prize Medals Awarded.
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A Sample Tin sent post free for 3 stamps.
Write—
LODERS & NUCOLINE Ltd.,
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See that the name spelt L.O.U.I.S is stamped on every Yard.

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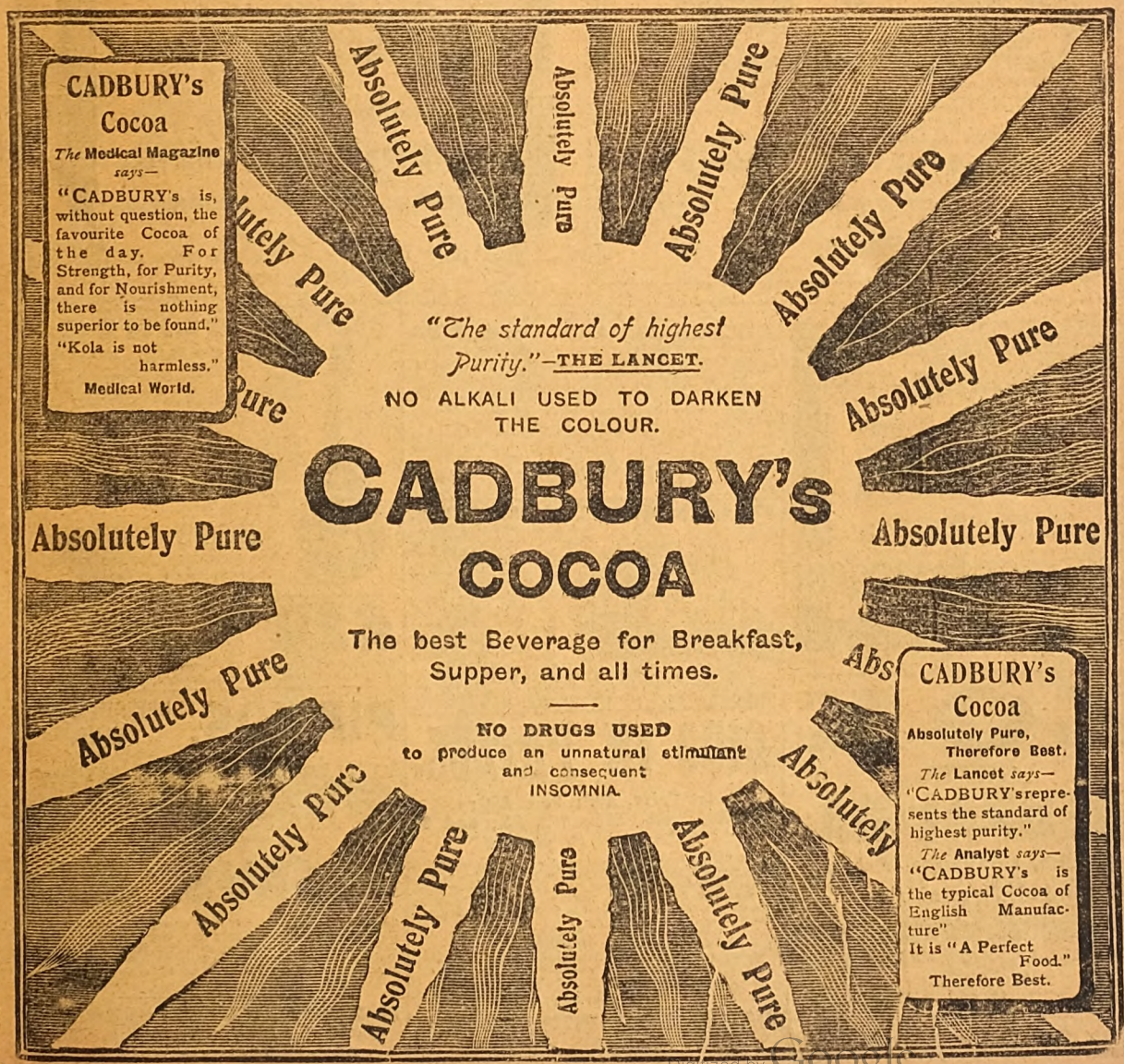
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY
G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 511. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 15TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.



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The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

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. . THE . .

"RELIANCE" Fountain Pen,

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Double Feed, Handsome Chased Vulcanite Holder.

THIS PEN WILL LAST FOR YEARS

EVERY PEN GUARANTEED.

WILL NOT GET OUT OF ORDER.

Sold at 10/6.

We send this pen, complete in box, with filler and directions, post free for

5/-

WONDERFUL VALUE.

THE RELIANCE PEN CO. LIMITED,
26 IVY LANE,
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Reduced Facsimile

REMEMBER, a 10/6 FOUNTAIN PEN for 5/-

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Don't Cough-use

They at once check the Cough and remove the cause.

The Unrivalled

One Lozenge alone relieves. Sold everywhere, Tins 1½d. each.

Keating's Lozenges

ESTABLISHED 1851.

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Telephone No. 5, Holborn. Telegraphic Address: "Birkbeck, London."

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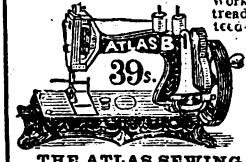

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work.

39/-

THE ATLAS SEWING MACHINE CO., 188B, High St., Camden Town, London, N.W. 63 Seven Sisters Road, N.; 14 High Rd., Kilburn.

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FINE ITALIAN MODELS, 13 Red Maple Ribs, 7s. 6d.; Brown and White Ribs, 10s. 6d.; GENUINE ITALIAN, with 15 Maple Ribs, 15s. 6d.; ditto, 17 Rosewood Ribs, 17s.; 19 Rosewood Ribs, Pearl Inlaid, 24s.; ditto, superior, Closed Machine, 30s. Magnificent Do Meglio Model, Rosewood, 50s.; ditto, superior, 63s. Genuine De Meglio, finest-toned instrument made, £5 15s. For cases, strings and pick, see list post free. All with machine heads and bent sound boards. Crate and carr. free.

JOSEPH RILEY'S,

ON CONSTITUTION HILL, BIRMINGHAM.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See 11d. Guide (239 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £30 to £2,000 Tobacconists Outfitting Co., 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers

ZOX

CURES

NEURALGIA

Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

Do not be persuaded to take a substitute, there is nothing as good as ZOX.

Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 Hatton Garden, E.C.

£100 IN PRIZES.

1st Prize, £25; 2nd, £20; 3rd, £15; 4th, £10; 5th, £5; and 25 Prizes of £1 each.

CASH PRIZES, as above, will be given away as an advertisement for PRAIRIE POWDERS, the unequalled pleasant and harmless remedy for Headache, Neuralgia, Nervousness, Rheumatism, and Tic, among competitors who succeed in turning into the names of five common ailments the following letters:

ACHEHEDA, GANRLEUAI, ESNUOVSRENS, HEMSATIMUR, ITC.

Post your solution, together with a Stamped Addressed Envelope, for result, to

THE PRAIRIE POWDER CO.,

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PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron Frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Riveted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.

Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 sets of Reeds. 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

THE LONDON AND LIVERPOOL PIANOFORTE CO., Granby St. & Selborne St., LIVERPOOL.

Agents wanted where not represented.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 511. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending October 15th, 1898.

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 3.—Bugler of the 12th Soudanese.

THE SHAWL WITH THE TORN CORNER.

THE evening express was swinging along the Great Northern line, carrying its usual quota of sleepy passengers and valuable luggage.

Suddenly there was a queer rocking kind of motion; a lurch, a flying of gravel against the windows, a horrible grinding of wheels, and a sudden halt, which effectually awoke the passengers and scattered the luggage promiscuously.

"Fire-box of the engine has dropped," called out the guard, in the same careless tone in which he announced the last station; but he condescended to add, reassuringly:

"No danger, ladies—only a delay of a few minutes."

Of course, all the gentlemen—with womanly-curiosity—flocked out to inspect the damage, while we ladies gave long sighs of relief at escaping what might have been a serious accident, and began talking as if the incident had introduced us.

We were only three in number; a motherly old lady, a young married woman, and myself—a girl whose girlhood was almost in the past tense; for I had past from my teens into the twenties, and was the last unmarried member of a wealthy county family.

Like a spoilt child whose chief delight is to run off to the neighbours, my greatest enjoyment lay in travelling hither and thither, with or without pretext, just as fancy willed; this time it was a letter from a friend, inviting me to visit her and help her plan her wedding-trousseau, which had proved the all-powerful magnet.

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Though scarcely half-way to my destination, I had already planned trousseaux enough to supply all the society brides of that season; but now—who can continue the same train of thought when once grossly interrupted?

The old lady was too flighty and talkative to suit me, but the younger one was very pleasant, and we chatted like old friends.

Before the accident she had been deeply engrossed in a novel, and seeing her finger its pages caressingly, I was wise enough to plead sleepiness and excuse myself for a nap.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "that jacket does not make a good pillow, let me lend you a shawl!"

And with several dexterous movements she adjusted it beneath my head, smiling sweetly, and went back to her book.

Instead of sleeping, as a well-regulated young lady should, I stared about, or idly twisted the fringe of the shawl.

A scent of wild roses came from its soft folds, and I quietly smiled my approval of the owner's taste, for the wild rose was my choice of all perfumes, and I had used it since a mere girl.

I lifted my head to readjust the shawl, and how familiar it seemed—soft and grey, with long knotted fringe, just like one I had had many years.

I nestled down again, and fell into a train of reminiscences; how my great-aunt had brought it over the sea, how it had saved my life in a storm, and how our pet dog used to play with the fringe. Yes, and one day he got angry and bit a piece off the corner!

Involuntary I turned the shawl over, and there—wonder of wonders!—one corner was torn in precisely the same way. Could it be that this was my shawl? Surely mine was in one of the attic trunks that—no I remembered distinctly; it was among the articles that our chamber-maid stole last year.

Then I pondered slowly over that event, recalling our surprise and dismay, when, one morning, not only the new servant was missing, but many small valuable things; the India shawl for one—making a motley array, and no doubt a larger one than we ever realised. The same night she disappeared the bank had been robbed of thousands of pounds and some silver which had been placed in the vault for safe keeping. The authorities were quite positive that the theft had been committed by one of the under book-keepers; but a year of skilful detective-work had failed to trace his whereabouts, and the people of the town had well-nigh forgotten the occurrence.

There was a strong conviction in our family that the book-keeper and our chambermaid had left by the same route, and that, could one be found, the other would be easily brought to justice also.

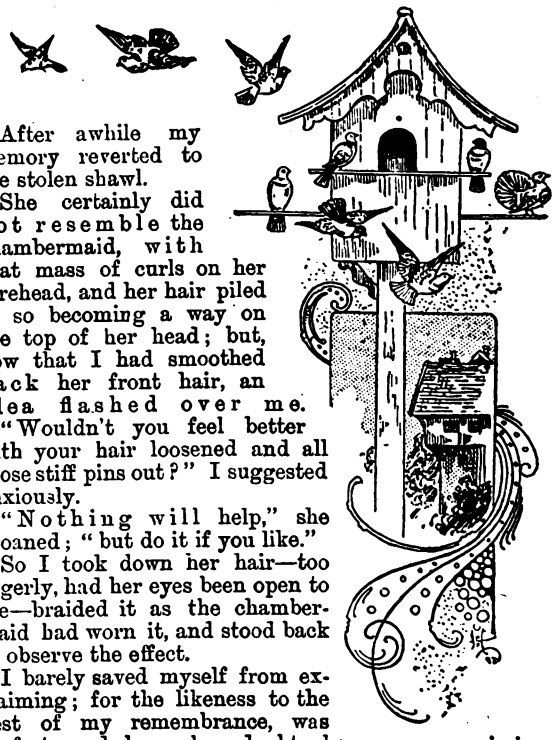
As I pondered, the idea grew stronger that I had stumbled upon one of the stolen articles; for did not the wild-rose scent proclaim it—the torn corner, and even the knots in the fringe testify to it?

The owner—I turned to scrutinise her, and saw her lying down, her book on the seat, and a look of intense pain on her face.

"One of my miserable headaches," she said, in answer to my query; adding wailingly: "and I haven't a thing to stop it!"

"Let me dampen a handkerchief to lay on your forehead! It might aid you," I asked.

She seemed so ill that I stood stroking back her hair and trying to charm away the dull pain by magnetic touches.



After awhile my memory reverted to the stolen shawl.

She certainly did not resemble the chambermaid, with that mass of curls on her forehead, and her hair piled in so becoming a way on the top of her head; but, now that I had smoothed back her front hair, an idea flashed over me.

"Wouldn't you feel better with your hair loosened and all those stiff pins out?" I suggested anxiously.

"Nothing will help," she groaned; "but do it if you like."

So I took down her hair—too eagerly, had her eyes been open to see—braided it as the chambermaid had worn it, and stood back to observe the effect.

I barely saved myself from exclaiming; for the likeness to the best of my remembrance, was perfect, and beyond a doubt she was our missing servant.

But I must have more proof to bring before a court. Besides, the gentleman with her might prove to be the book-keeper—whom, alas! I had never seen—and by keeping still I might ferret out the greater criminal.

There was no danger of losing their company, for our engine was too badly broken to admit of reaching a side-track, and we must wait for aid. Presently a gentlemen entered, swearing half-audibly.

"Oh, here is James!" my invalid exclaimed: "let me introduce you, Miss——"

"Miss Warren, of Brighton," I supplied, purposely taking to myself a fictitious name; but the "Brighton" slipped out correctly, and caused my tongue an awful bite.

"My husband—Mr. McCord, Miss Warren," my acquaintance said, and, bowing, we began conversation with the useful phrases.

He was a good-looking man, but his eyes seemed always in the act of opening widely, which gave him too alert a look. He had caught at the word "Brighton," and saying that he used to live there "a long time ago, when a mere boy," he asked endless questions about the changes that had taken place.

I became loquacious: told him, among other things, that none of the new buildings surpassed that of the Bank—"the bank which was robbed last year, you know."

"No! Is it possible? When was that?" he exclaimed, evidently to lead me on.

So I launched into the sea of falsehood without compass, sail, or oar, knowing not whether I was working for or against myself, only knowing that I had aroused an intense interest in my companions, and hoping to secure some clue.

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The detectives were still at work, I said, and it was rumoured that they were now on the right track, and were merely waiting for more evidence. It was an outrageous fib, but the chance of frightening him was too good to be lost.

Plainly he considered me, from my conversation, a very simple-minded girl, for he was quite unguarded, and, in his anxiety to hear more, showed that he had not only heard of the robbery before, but had been in Brighton since he was "a mere boy."

Once more speeding on our way, we sought our berths, mine adjoining theirs. A long, wakeful night followed, in which I racked my brain in vain for a scheme that might lead to the law's success; for I felt positive that I had tracked the thieves.

When the grey dawn was creeping in, I heard whispers from the adjoining berth, finally these words:

"It may all be true. I had better telegraph to Don to hold up yet awhile; but we do need the cash!"

That was all, but it was something to go on. When the train stopped at Edinburgh, he left her to get breakfast while he went to the telegraph office. I followed, and the instant he left, went in and asked to see the telegram.

"It is not customary for us to do such a thing," the man said, coolly eyeing me with mingled surprise and contempt.

It was an audacious request, but not till afterwards did I realise fully its impertinence.

"Yes, but it is important I see it—most important! I'll give you five pounds for it!"

Stealthily glancing round to see that no one overheard, he handed me the slip, remarking, as if to justify himself:

"You mistake, there's really no importance in it. You are his wife, I presume?"

He had given me the *rôle* of the jealous wife, and I accepted it by a nod.

I copied the telegram, though he demurred greatly, handed over the money, and hurried back to the refreshment room.

To my vexation the McCords had gone.

I had understood that they were going on to Aberdeen like myself.

I waited on the platform for them to return.

I had been waiting for some time, wondering what I should do, when I was informed by a messenger that there was a telegram for my husband at the office.

I went in at once, and the clerk handed it to me with a sly remark that perhaps I would take it for my husband.

"He didn't expect an answer, I suppose," he said, "for he didn't say he would come for it."

Of course I took it—how eagerly, he never knew.

The first one was addressed to J. C. Duncan, 17, Gale Street, Brighton, and read as follows:

"Don't trade the w—— yet. It isn't safe."

The answer was:

"Have traded with an old German in Lucas Street. Safe enough."

"The w——"! What could that be? I thought long before I remembered that other valuables were stolen from the bank. Then the mysterious "w——" began to stand in my mind for a watch, and at a venture I decided to telegraph to one of the bank directors:

"Was there a watch stolen from the bank last January? If so, please describe."

His answer was:

"Yes; a large gold one, with seven small diamonds forming an 'L.' Why?"

Too excited to heed his question or think of my visit, I bought a ticket and took the first train back.

Doubtless I should have put the matter in a detective's hands; but, with all a girl's ardour, and also excited beyond reason's range, I determined to act alone. I was certain the McCords had eluded me.

The next day I was in a shop in Brighton, and the watch with its tell-tale "L" lay before me.

I secured a promise of the old Jew to keep the watch twenty-four hours, and then, seeking the detectives' headquarters, told my long story in all its details, and handed in the three addresses which had cost me so many manœuvres—that of J. C. Duncan, the McCords' home address, and that of their destination, which she had given me in our first chat.

Within forty-eight hours, in a Brighton court-room, were assembled three officials of the Bank of Brighton, Mr. and Mrs. James McCord, alias Jim Mallory, the ex-book-keeper, and Mattie Frayer, our ex-chamber-maid, J. C. Duncan, alias Don Mallory, the old German Jew, several lawyers, detectives, and myself.

The Mallory brothers struggled hard to asseverate innocence; but the case became too strong, and they confessed, accepting the inevitable decision with stoical resignation.

Not so did "Mrs. McCord," whose conduct for a time was violent.

The shawl will be handed down to our family as an heirloom; and though all this happened years ago, the scent of the roses clings to it still.

T. K. L.

He: "Are you sure I am the only man you ever really and truly loved?"

She: "Perfectly sure. I went over the whole list only yesterday."

Jack: "What did you think of that cigar I gave you yesterday?"

John: "Not much. It cost me sixteen shillings. How so? Why, it gave my wife the idea that the gas was leaking somewhere, and she sent for a plumber."

Mr. Figg: "I see that some man with a fondness for figures has estimated that if all the babies born in 1890 were placed in a stack, 8ft. square at the base, it would over-top the Eiffel Tower. What do you think of that?"

Mrs. Figg: "I think that a man who could talk that way about babies is nothing but an old brute."

At a reception Mr. Evarts was once drawn into a discussion between two ladies.

"Mr. Evarts," said one, "do you not think I am right in saying that a woman is always the best judge of another woman's character?"

"Madam," replied Mr. Evarts, "she is not only the best judge, but also the best executioner."

Mrs. Hoon (looking up from her newspaper): "Mercy me, I have just been reading an account of an anatomist whose house was packed with skeletons, and who had a paper knife which he used for cutting comic papers which he declared was made from the funny-bone of his first wife. I cannot believe any man capable of doing such a thing as that!"

Hoon: "Neither can I. There never was a woman who had a funny-bone."

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HOMESPUN YARNS.

By Levin Carnac.

V.—THE WHITE FEATHER.

A LOG-BUILT house in a remote gorge of the British Columbian mountains is not exactly the place in which one would expect to find complete suites of handsome furniture, overmantels, Liberty curtains, and art-china suspended by wires on the polished, match-boarded walls and stood about on pretty brackets and crewel-fringed shelves.

Yet it was only a few summers ago that I found myself a guest for a fortnight's shooting and fishing in just such a house, furnished in just such an incongruous fashion. I had met my host down at Victoria; the rendering of a small service on my part had led to a better acquaintance, and that had resulted in an invitation to go with him into the hills and have a taste of sport in the wild North-West.

It was on the evening of my arrival that I learnt the chapter in his life-story which I am about to set down here.

"You've made yourself a remarkably comfortable nest out here in the forest primeval; but if you'll excuse my saying so, it looks to me rather to have been built for a pair than a single bird."

My host's brow clouded for a moment as I spoke, and I was beginning to fear that I had said what had been better left unsaid when he reassured me by replying with a short laugh that had more pain than fun in it:—

"Yes, you are right. And as a fact it was built for two, and there would be two or more in it now if the greatest mercy that has ever befallen me had not come to me in the shape of what I then thought the greatest misfortune that could befall a man."

I didn't like to ask for the story, much as I wanted to hear it, for there was evidently a tragedy in the background; so I was well pleased when my host leant back in his easy chair, nodded towards a framed cabinet photo that stood on the centre shelf of the overmantel, and said:—

"That was the girl. Get up and look at her, and then I'll tell you the story. It'll help us through the evening anyhow."

I looked and found it the portrait of a very pretty girl of about twenty. A girl with just the face to drive a man half crazy with its saucy, tempting beauty. Beneath the glass at the foot of the photo was neatly pasted a tiny white feather, and just as I was going to ask why it was there my host said:—

"I see you notice the white feather. Well, that's the key to the story, so now you can sit down and listen.

"I've been out West for nearly fifteen years, and, as things go, I've done very well. Years ago I won a lot of then almost worthless shares in a copper mine at poker, and for the last ten years that mine has been a gold one to me. Then this timber estate has panned out very well, and altogether I am, though I don't look it, a rich man.

"It is just three years back this spring that some business connected with the purchase of the range on the other side of the valley took me to Montreal, where I had located the owner after a considerable hunt. While I was in the city I determined to stop a few weeks and look round, for it was my first visit east since I had left Ottawa as a boy of sixteen. I had been at my hotel for a week and had done all my business, and was beginning to get sick of town life, when one afternoon in the vestibule I ran up against an old chum whom I had known out here five years before. He had been even more fortunate than I had, and was just off for a trip to England to see the old folks at home. Half an hour later he had persuaded me to go with him, and in two days we were on blue water steaming eastward.

"We had a very good time in the old country. My chum introduced me to his people, and they invited their friends to meet us, and so it came to pass that I met Maggie Jeffries, the original of that photo—and then the good time became a glorious one, for I fell in love with her at first sight, and before very long found out that all the love was not on my side.

"The upshot of the matter was that I proposed, was accepted and formally engaged, but Maggie's father, who was really very much attached to her, insisted that at least six months should pass before we were married, and after some disputing on my part it was settled that I should return here and set my house in order, and that Maggie should come out to me at the end of the stipulated time.

"When this was all arranged Maggie made a suggestion which took my fancy immensely. She proposed that I should buy the furniture for our backwoods home in London, and that she should help me to choose it. For the next fortnight we were as happy as two lovers with plenty of money to spend could well be. Maggie had very good taste, and as I was in no humour to spare the cash we got a very pretty little fit-out—as you can see from the remains of it. At last it was all bought and packed up ready for shipping over, and I said a fond farewell and took passage in the same boat that brought it.

"I needn't try to tell you what loving pains I took in fixing up the outlandish home that was to be the scene of the first few years of our married life. I was determined that the house should be as cosy and comfortable as money and work could make it, and so I went at it with a light heart and counted the days until the letter came that was to tell me to go to meet and marry my bride.

"At last it came, and I started off across the continent, feeling—well, if you've ever been in love yourself as badly as I was, you will know without my telling you, and if you haven't it's no good thing to tell you.

"I put in the necessary residence at Halifax, and was ready armed with the license by the time the steamer came in. I went out to her in the pilot boat the happiest man this side of the Atlantic and came back the most miserable wretch that the sun of that summer's day shone upon.

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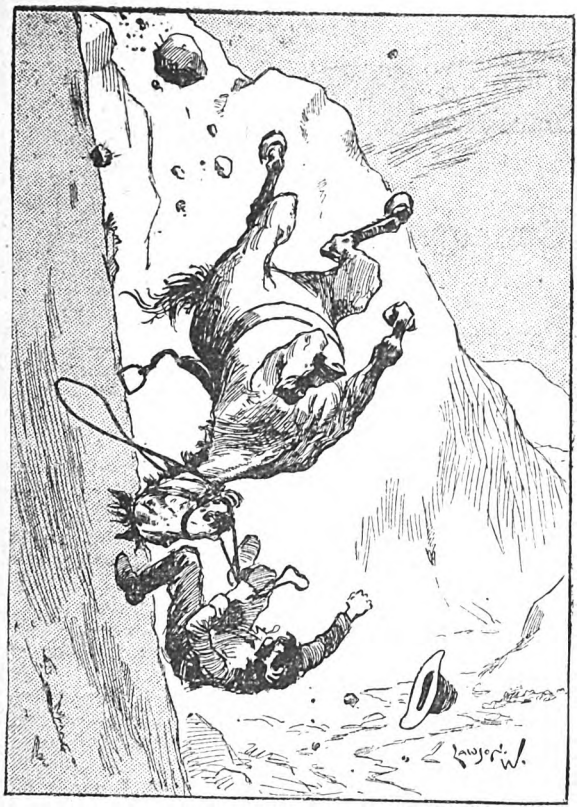

His horse slipped on a rock ledge, and carried its rider over a hundred feet sheer into the cañon below.

"Not to dwell longer than I need to on what is still to me the most painful part of the story, I will just say, in as few words as may be, that the girl I had trusted with the happiness of my life had sold herself to a higher bidder during the brief interval of the passage from Liverpool to Halifax.

"The man who had out-priced me was a vulgar, flashy millionaire, who had struck oil in Pennsylvania, and after a miserable scene with me, during which she first tried to excuse her fickleness, and then broke down and cried, and implored me to forgive and forget her and live to be happy with someone more worthy of me, and all that sort of rubbish, I started back West, sad and angry and soured with all the world, and she married her oilman and started off on a tour through the States.

"When I got home I felt fit to set fire to the pretty little home that I had prepared for her with so much pains, and burn up everything that reminded me of her, but common sense prevailed after a struggle, and I set-to to conquer my misery by hard work instead. As time went on my heart softened towards her a bit, and I even came to take a sad sort of pleasure in the furniture we had chosen together in the Old Country.

"When a couple of years had passed the wound had healed again, and I was getting pretty contented once more, when one night, after I had settled down to my book and my evening pipe, I heard the sound of horses' hoofs outside, and then a loud knock upon the door, and a voice which said:

"'We have lost our way among the hills, and shall be very grateful if you can take us in for the night. We will pay well for the accommodation if you will oblige us.'

"I threw the door open, and by the light of the lamp that still burnt in the passage I recognised the man that Maggie had married in preference to me. I swallowed the left-handed blessing that rose to my lips, and asked who was with him. 'My wife,' said he, and the next moment I was outside helping Maggie off her pony.

"Of course I took them in, and gave of the best that I had in the house. Maggie had put on experience so fast that she treated the meeting as a mere matter for polite surprise and pleasure at meeting an old acquaintance. I thought differently, but I knew enough to hold my tongue, and I did. I even took a savage sort of pleasure in watching Maggie's queer expressions as she recognised one after another of the pretty trifles she had helped to choose.

"At last I was evilly gratified to see the surface ice of her artificial training melt into tears under the influence of the old associations. Her husband was out of the room at the time, and my gratification was quickly changed into a fiercer emotion when she turned to me with her pretty eyes brimming over, and sobbed out:

"'Oh! Jack, how I wish these were mine now. I am *so* miserable.'

"Before I had any time to shape a reply her husband came back, and we went into another room to supper, and as soon as that was over Maggie went to bed complaining of fatigue, while her husband settled himself to a struggle with the whisky bottle. I soon saw that the man was a perfect brute, an animal in every respect but sobriety. Maggie might well be miserable.

"After two hours' hard drinking the whisky beat him, and I helped him to stagger to the door of his bedroom, and returned, sad and disgusted, to think things over. I suppose I must have dozed off in my chair, for I woke up with a start, feeling a pair of soft arms round my neck and a kiss trembling on my lips. I cannot tell you what was said during the next half-hour or so, and, if I could, it wouldn't be right.

"Let it be enough to say that I was tempted to the last limits of an average man's endurance by the pitiful story of my old sweetheart's wrongs and sufferings, and her passionate plea to be released at any price. I believe I was just on the point of yielding, when she whispered a few fierce words in my ears which, in an instant, froze the hot blood that was boiling in my veins, and turned all my lawless, re-awakening love into horror and disgust. Without a word I cast her from me, and left the room with her last words, 'You coward! you are not worthy of me!' hissing in my ears.

"That night I dreamt that Maggie stood by and smiled on me as I flung her drunken husband into the mill-race, and the next morning I was off to the woods before they were up.

"I never saw either of them again; but what Maggie tempted me to do happened all the same, for within the month I received by post a cutting from a Victoria paper detailing a fatal accident to a gentleman travelling in the mountains alone with his wife. His horse had slipped on a rock ledge, and carried its rider over a hundred feet sheer into the cañon below. Both were killed instantly. I knew enough to feel convinced that the 'accident' was probably, if the truth were told, a case of murder.

"The cutting was pasted neatly on to a piece of scented notepaper, and underneath it was tied with a true-lover's knot of red silk that little white feather."

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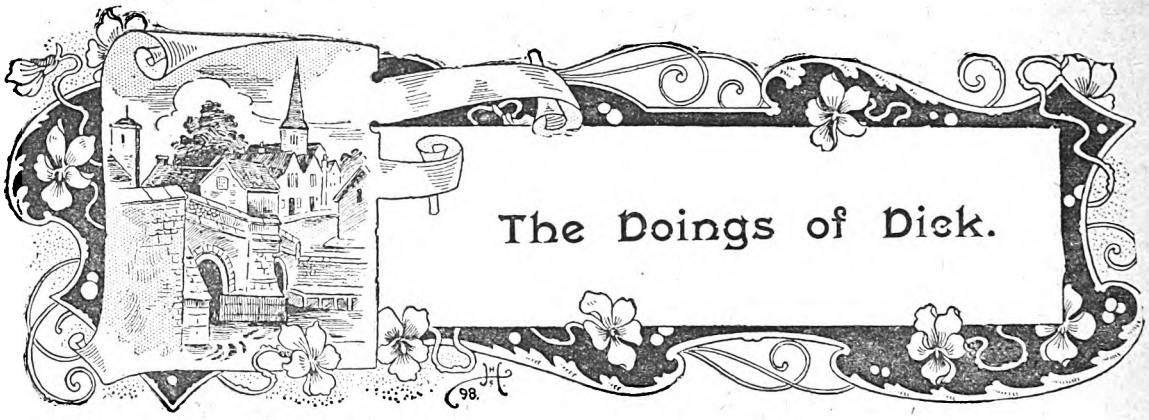

The Doings of Dick.

It was the autumn of the year; we had all many studies for future use.

At that time Jules and I shared a studio, and Dick occupied the adjoining one.

Jules and I were on rather cool terms with Dick just then, for he had entered our studio, like a thief in the night as we remarked—though it was really in the afternoon when we were both out—and had "borrowed" our lay figure.

I had tried to induce Jules to leave town for a holiday. This was the day before Dick stole the lay figure.

Jules would decide nothing, however, just then, and we did not see Dick; it was not until after his unspeakable treachery that Jules agreed to go.

"We will hasten from a place tainted by that man's presence," he said to me, "and on our return we will remove to some secluded spot where he will seek for us in vain."

I did not share Jules' indignation to its full extent; in fact, had Dick not taken a new half-pound tube of white of mine at the same time as the lay figure, I should have felt quite friendly towards him; still, it was clearly impossible to anticipate a pleasant time, with these two fellows perpetually quarrelling. No, it would be more peaceful to go away with Jules alone. I could always sit on Jules when we were alone. So we decided to go to a little fishing village on the Norfolk coast where I had stayed once before.

It was agreed that we should start in two days.

Nothing was to be said to Dick.

Judge, then, of my surprise, when we entered the station on the day in question, to behold Dick.

I turned to Jules.

"What is the meaning of this?" I asked, white with rage, of which, however, with masterly self-control, I allowed no trace to appear.

Jules feebly affected surprise, and said he "did not know; perhaps Dick was not going by our train."

I knew now that treachery was afloat.

How much longer would I go on trusting these two with my guileless heart?

It only wanted Dick's words to make all clear.

"Hallo, Arthur, my dear and attached friend!" he said. "Surprised to see me, eh? You see, Jules came to me yesterday about the lay figure, and accused me in round terms of taking it without permission. I told him how astonished I was, and how you had said I might have it any time I wanted it; and then Jules explained your mean behaviour, and told me of your plan of going away. He said he could not leave me after all that had occurred, and I consented finally, yielding to his persuasion, to accompany you. You know I bear no malice, so you've only to say you're sorry, and we'll forget the past."

I was boiling with rage; but I held my peace.

Jules had whispered while Dick was talking—

"He's sold a picture, and is taking down a dozen of cham. with him."

I merely mention that to show Jules' disposition. Determined not to do things by halves, I forced myself o smile genially, and holding out my hand to Dick, I said:

"Well, to tell you the truth, old man, I was a bit surprised to see you. Jules told me you could not possibly get away, as you had some work to finish, and, judging by the absence of my flake white, I felt I had corroborative evidence."

"Oh, the white; that was not for myself. Jones dropped in and asked me for some, and I sent him round to your place. I am surprised, though, that he should have taken it in your absence. Not a gentlemanly thing to do, I must say!"

I felt it was no use. Natures such as Dick's, where the moral qualities are almost dead, are adamantine in their hardened iniquity.

At the end of our railway journey we found the trap we had ordered waiting to convey ourselves and our luggage to the village five miles away. Dick was delighted with every inch of the scenery, and extolled its quaint, unusual, un-English character at every turn.

Presently, as we approached the village, Dick and Jules were surprised to find that the peasants recognised me and touched their hats; that the farmers nodded, and the occupants of a sumptuous landau, an elderly gentleman and a young lady, bowed to me as we passed. I had not told them that when I stayed at Miversham before it was with a relative, who was at that time rector of the parish, and that through him I knew everyone.

Dick said:

"Why, you never told us you knew anyone down here. Who were the people in the landau?"

"Oh, only Lord Miversham and his daughter, Lady Juliet; he's the lord of the manor, you know," I replied, with nonchalance.

Jules pricked up his ears.

"The Earl of Miversham?" he said. "Why, he's one of the biggest picture buyers in England!

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Jules was essentially aristocratic in all his views and feelings, Dick decidedly radical.

I now enjoyed my triumph to the full.

Jules wished to make the acquaintance of Lord Miversham, because, as he said, the Earl might buy his "Psyche."

Dick was anxious to know him, in order to persuade him to convert his estate into a co-operative farming company, renounce his title, and speak on socialism in Hyde Park.

He said an Earl stumping in Hyde Park on a Sunday would be useful to the cause.

I gave them both to understand that I could not take the initiative, but said that I should call at Miversham Court, and if Lord Miversham chose to include them in the invitation to dinner which I was sure to receive well, of course, they could go, that is, if they had brought their dress clothes; I had. They had not, and they banded together to abuse me.

Arrived at last at our inn, Dick and Jules both expressed themselves delighted with their quarters, and again and again commended me for inducing them to come to Miversham. I was amused with Dick: I had not induced him at all. We had a bottle of champagne, and they drank my health, and expressed, in the warmest terms over the whisky, later on, their appreciation of the sterling qualities I possessed.

I hate to say anything against either Jules or Dick, but I must set it down here, that some time afterwards, when they were friendly, they made a great joke out of what they said that night; and would say that the serious way in which I "swallowed their blarney and replied to it was too delicious!" I tell them not to be ashamed of the one good, generous action of their lives, even though it was under the influenced of—but, no! I will not betray them.

The next day I had to show them round; of course, we did not expect to do any work for two or three days. As we were walking through the village I met Dr. Sinton, whom I knew very well. He was delighted to see me again; asked me to introduce him to Dick and Jules, and said he would be pleased to see us whenever we could drop in at his place. During lunch I spoke of Dr. Sinton and his daughter Cicely, mentioning, in a casual way, that when I stayed at Miversham before, she was an extremely pretty girl. Jules and Dick both thought it would be pleasant and civil, to call at the Doctor's that afternoon.

"Rather bad form to drop in the same day we were asked," I said.

"No, my boy," said Dick, "you see, Dr. Sinton's introduction to us may be regarded as a call, and in foreign courts it is the custom to return a call upon the same day. Now, we may be recognised as foreigners here, so we shall be only right in following the usages of the best society."

I was annoyed at Dick airing his knowledge; I did not, of course, believe in the truth of his information, but Jules was gazing admiringly at him, as much as to say: "That's up against you, Arthur! What a lot Dick does know!"

"I did not imagine, Dick, that a person of your Spartan radical views would frame your conduct on the example of an effete aristocracy!" I retorted.

"Don't talk rot; of course, while the world remains in its present condition of ignorance, a wise man must assume its imbecile habits and customs," was Dick's remark.

So it was decided we should call. And we did.

Cicely Sinton was at home, and was, of course, pleased to see fresh faces. She was delighted, too, to see me again; but with feminine deceit concealed the fact so well that neither Dick nor Jules perceived it. Jules was not much attracted by her; he admired dark women just now, and Cicely was divinely fair. But Dick? Well, I blushed for him. He started at once, and neither Jules nor I could get a word in.

The conversation during the Doctor's absence (he was called away to see a patient) consisted of this:

Dick said: "Miss Sinton, how happy you must be in this sweet spot, far from the madding crowd with its million of squalid by-ways. For my part, it is the ambition of my life to dwell in some such fair Arcadia, and attune my whole soul to the song of the nightingales!"

Cicely said: "Well, do you know, I'm sure you'll be disgusted to hear it, but I love London, and long to be in its bustle and life. Existence in the country saddens me."

"Yes," said Dick, "I could see that you had the grand free spirit of the modern life, that laughs to scorn the musty mediæval yearnings for rural simplicity, a simplicity that exists only in the febrile brains of the minor poets."

"But," said Cicely, "I thought you but now professed a love for the country?"

"Yes," said Dick, "I am universal, and love all things in degrees; but my chief love is for the beating pulse of some mighty city—the cradle of civilisation, the hive of the universe!"

Jules and I exchanged glances, but felt it would be ill-bred of us to expose Dick; and Cicely seemed quite satisfied with his equivocations and mixed metaphors.

The conversation now turned to music, and Dick, who had about as much ear for music as a Bactrican camel, and whose favourite melody was "Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-Ay," gravely assured Miss Sinton that Bach's fugues afforded him exquisite enjoyment; that he could read the mystery of Wagner's great modernism, and that Mendelssohn might be likened in music to Wordsworth in poetry. Poetry and painting passed in review before them, and even politics were lightly grazed.

The Doctor had come in during the latter end of all this; and had glanced inquiringly at us when Dick had given vent to something more than usually idiotic.

I had a few words with Cicely before we left; I reminded her of the happy time I had spent at Miversham before, of how well she and I had got on together at tennis; and hinted that existence since that time had been grey and gloomy. I always considered it impolite not to tell a girl that her absence obscures the sunshine; it pleases her and it does not hurt me. I also apologised for Dick's erratic oratory; but here she stopped me quite fiercely, and remarked that Dick was one of the cleverest and most universal men she had ever met.

The next day I decided to call at Miversham Court, and Jules said he would just stroll up with me, so we started. As we neared the great grey Tudor pile, which had been the home of the Mivershams for so many centuries, Jules' enthusiasm positively glowed.

Jules was in the midst of an eloquent discourse on the pride of descent, including his own history, when we arrived at the Court. We learnt to our annoyance that the Earl and his daughter, Lady Juliet, had left for town the previous day. I was disappointed on Jules' account; and began to express my sorrow, but instead of taking what I said in the right spirit, he insinu-

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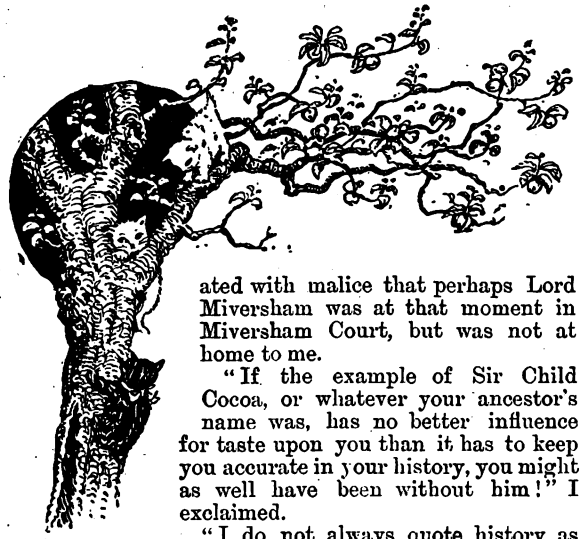

ated with malice that perhaps Lord Miversham was at that moment in Miversham Court, but was not at home to me.

"If the example of Sir Child Cocoa, or whatever your ancestor's name was, has no better influence for taste upon you than it has to keep you accurate in your history, you might as well have been without him!" I exclaimed.

"I do not always quote history as you learnt it in your school books" (I agreed with him cordially), "but as it stands recorded in the archives of our family!"

I suggested that he alluded to the Newgate Calendar, and we walked back in silence.

Presently we came to a meadow overlooking the back of Dr. Sinton's house, and we beheld a solitary figure pacing solemnly up and down, with eyes cast upon the ground, and anon raised to a window of the Doctor's house.

It was Dick.

He did not see us, but continued his meditative posture all unconscious of prying eyes.

Jules suddenly forgot my remark anent his family archives.

It had indeed only been a small revenge of mine, for Jules used at one time to lead the conversation round to pigs, and when he arrived there he would turn to me and say—

"And talking of pigs, old man, how are your people?"

Jules, I say, forgot my remark, and nodding knowingly in the direction of Dick, he winked meaningly at me.

"It is a case," he said, "a bad case; we must do all we can to prevent this for the sake of the poor girl, Arthur!"

I agreed with Jules; I thought it would be a sad and solemn thing for me in the future to have to bear the reproaches of Cicely's broken-hearted father—when Dick, having married the girl, would take to drink, and sink lower and lower towards poverty and vice. Yes, we must unite in this common cause and rescue the still unsuspecting Cicely.

Dinner-time arrived, but no Dick.

We dined, Jules and I, and had a bottle of Dick's champagne.

Dinner ended, still no Dick.

We began to grow anxious, and had serious thoughts of going out to look for him, when Dr. Sinton's boy came round with a note addressed to both of us. I opened it and read:

DEAR ARTHUR AND JULES.—Happening to meet Dr. Sinton quite by chance at 6.30 this evening, he prevailed upon me to dine with him. Of course, I demurred, fearing you would miss me, but the Doctor was so pressing he would take no refusal. Solacing myself with the reflection that both of you were blissfully happy in your toadying flunkeyism at Miversham Court, I yielded; but sad to relate, as I was rising from the table I was suddenly seized with one of my old attacks of cramp, and found myself unable to move. Dr. Sinton did all he could for me, but the pain was so intense, every time I put my foot to the ground, that, in short, I'm going to accept the spare bedroom here for to-night. Send my things, and don't weep for me. No need for either of you to come.

DICK.

We stared at each other in stupid amazement.

"Old attack of cramp!" said Jules, "must be so jolly old, he forgot even to mention it before!"

"Stay at Dr. Sinton's," said I, "when he's only ten minutes' walk from here!"

"At any rate," said Jules, "it would be unfeeling, if he is really bad, not to go and see him. We should reproach ourselves eternally if he never got over it!"

I agreed, and dismissing the boy, we collected the raggedest and worst of Dick's things and walked over.

We found him reclining in an easy chair by a cheerful fire in the dining-room, with the suffering (?) limb extended upon a low chair. He was smoking one of the Doctor's cigars, and talking in low tones to Cicely, who sat near him with an anxious look on her sweet face.

The Doctor had been again called out.

We rushed up to Dick and began expressing our sympathy.

"Forgive me, Miss Sinton; in the horrible racking anxiety for our old friend I had almost neglected an apology for our intrusion. Dick, my dear Dick, how are you? Is it dangerous? You must be careful, and above all not smoke!" So said Jules.

"No, Miss Sinton," I broke in, "pray do not let him smoke. When he has had these attacks before we have been told to keep everything away from him. He is not allowed wine, or cigars, or——"

"Arthur is right," said Jules, "he must be kept in a darkened room—padded, if possible—and left severely alone. In this lies his only chance!"

Cicely, who did not appear so pleased to see us as I should have expected, now became terribly concerned.

"My father did not seem to think the case so bad as you say; in fact, he said that so far no virulent symptoms had supervened, but that the patient must be kept quiet," she said.

As for Dick, the workings of a suppressed rage on his features—a rage he dared not in the least betray—had the effect of making him like some ghoul who strives to appear like a good angel.

"Really, Miss Sinton, Arthur and I could carry our poor friend back most carefully, and it is a shame to impose an invalid upon your hospitality," continued Jules.

Cicely would not hear of this, however, so I said:

"At least let us relieve you of the task of nurse. We will remain with him turn and turn about, and so release you from the trouble and responsibility."

I don't know what would have been the outcome of this, for Dick was fast degenerating into a frantic maniac, and had already reached down towards the heavy brass dogs in the fender. Luckily a diversion was caused by the return of the doctor.

Cicely seemed surprised. "Why, how soon you're back, papa. I thought you were called to the Freestones at Amperton?"

"There appears to have been some mistake, my dear,"

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replied Dr. Sinton. "I met Maurice Freestone before I was halfway there, and feared he had come to hurry me and that it was a serious case. He, however, was smiling, and asked me where I was going. I told him I had been sent for, half an hour before, to attend to his father, who had had a fall from his horse.

"Maurice said: 'Oh, it's a hoax, Doctor; there's the guv'nor coming down the road,' and, sure enough, there he was. I inquired of Robert" (the Doctor's boy), "and he says he was told by Brown's boy down in the village, and that Brown's boy was spending a shilling in ginger beer and chocolate creams at old Mrs. Choople's shop. I can't make it out at all, unless it's the work of that villain Smalldoes, the German quack homœopathic, who's trying to get my practice away."

Jules and I registered a mental oath that we would interrogate Brown's boy, and felt that his revelations would only justify our suspicions. Yes, it was a black and deep-laid plot, and what could we do? To actually betray Dick would be to bring down the wrath of the Doctor upon me for introducing so vile a character to him and his daughter.

The Doctor asked me if I had seen Dick under a similar attack before.

"Yes," I replied, "he is very liable to them, and they are unfortunately of long duration. The doctor who attended him last said that six weeks would be about the minimum of the next attack, but that he could be moved with safety within twenty-four hours after the seizure, so I thought that next day at the latest we had better send for him; he could be carried home on a door!"

"It is a very peculiar and interesting case," Dr. Sinton said. "I can find no swelling and no tendency to inflammation, and this confirms me in a theory of my own that in cases of approaching tentanus, which frequently arise from latent paroxysm of the gastric nemius, no symptoms of any kind are manifested; and, in fact, it is by the entire absence of them that a diagnosis may be arrived at."

I said: "As you say, Doctor, the absence of symptons is conclusive."

The Doctor at first seemed pleased, but, recollecting that he was bound to assume I knew nothing about it, he said—

"Not always, I assure you, but in the present case, certainly."

Jules and I saw that, at any rate, Dick was booked there for one night; so all we could do was to sit close to him and talk incessantly, thus effectually preventing him from exchanging whispers with Cicely, which he had been doing all the time the Doctor was talking to me.

We reluctantly rose to go at length.

We said good-night effusively to Dick, and repeated to the Doctor (when we got him in the hall) what the specialist whom Dick had consulted before had said about his not being allowed to smoke or touch stimulants, and then we departed gloomily to the inn. It was impossible to think of work while we had this terrible responsibility on our shoulders.

As soon as we had finished breakfast next day we started for the Doctor's, feeling exhilarated at the thought that to-day at least, we would set matters to rights, and if absolutely necessary drag Dick back even to town with us.

You can imagine how exasperated we were, then, when we were shown into the Doctor's small consulting room, and not into the dining room as before.

The Doctor entered presently.

"Your friend is no better this morning, but I feel sure he is not physically worse. He has, however, become somewhat excitable and hysterical, a very common phase in his complaint, and cannot bear to see anyone except—er—myself or my daughter. He even shows signs of impatience when I enter the dining-room!" So said the Doctor.

"We are both deeply grateful to you for your care and kindness," I returned, "but I assure you when he is like this, to humour him too much is apt to prolong the attack. The special——"

"Pardon me," interrupted the Doctor, somewhat piqued. "I am, I feel confident, as capable of treating a case of this sort as any man."

Jules and I quite agreed with him in our own minds, but did not say so. Presently we came away and did not begin to employ bad language until well out of sight and hearing of the house. Then Jules burst forth.

When we had cooled down we began to make plans.

"Suppose we send an anonymous letter to Dr. Sinton describing Dick's character?" I suggested.

Jules the Bayard, the chevalier *sans peur et sans reproche*, the descendant of the valiant and immaculate Childe Kau, affected to be shocked at this.

"No," he said, "I could never condescend to an action that was not straightforward, manly and open. I propose," he went on thoughtfully, "that we listen to Dick's conversation with Miss Sinton, hidden behind those laurel bushes—we can very well hear, because they have a fire and the window open; then we will bribe Brown's boy, who seems open to corruption, to tell Robert, who will tell the Doctor, who will question Dick, who will get moved on—eh, what d'ye think of that?"

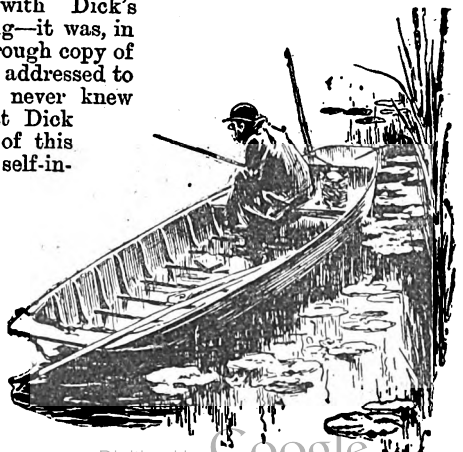
There seemed to be something in this; at any rate, it was worth finding out how matters stood before we took any decided action. So I agreed with Jules to try the laurel bushes.

We had lunch, and drank to Dick's confusion in some of his own champagne, then we started upon our errand of mercy.

Taking a roundabout way, we skirted the meadow at the back of the Doctor's house; and stealthily, with movement like the subtle savage on the war trail, we crept nearer and nearer, till at last each found himself hidden in the shadows of the two huge laurels that flanked the dining-room windows.

My attention was caught by a crumpled piece of note-paper on the grass.

I picked it up, and smoothing it out, discovered it was covered with Dick's handwriting—it was, in fact, the rough copy of some lines addressed to Cicely. I never knew before that Dick was guilty of this species of self-indulgence, and any lingering leniency I might have felt towards him took wings and flew as I read the lines.



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my teeth as I came to the end of the effusion and was about to tear it into small atoms and scatter them to the four winds, but on second thoughts I put it in my pocket. The murmur of voices began to reach my ears, and I could distinguish Dick's speaking in low tones. Presently Cicely spoke.

"But do tell me, Dick, all about your life with your two friends; of course, I know something about Mr. Arthur—and will you be angry if I tell you something?"

Dick declared that nothing she could say would anger him, and she went on:

"Well, Dick, I don't like him; he has a most objectionable habit of patronage and finality about his own remarks, don't you think so?"

Dick said: "As one of my oldest and best friends, I feel I cannot speak against Arthur, so I will content myself with admitting that what you have said is no more than the truth, and that, as a matter of fact, he is, without exception, the most argumentative, dogmatic, and at the same time ignorant and objectionable fellow it has ever been my lot to meet with—unless it be Jules, who has all Arthur's faults and none of his good qualities, supposing Arthur to possess any."

Jules and I had had enough of it; we felt that we were too late.

We stepped stealthily away and joined each other as soon as we were out of sight of the house.

Whatever our thoughts may have been just then we did not express them.

Each felt that collaboration had been a failure; we must play the game now, as Jules would have said, being an enthusiastic if incapable cricketer, "off our own bats."

As for me, although Cicely had gone down in my estimation through her manifest preference of Dick to myself, I felt that this would not have been the case had I given her any encouragement.

I merely regarded her somewhat disparaging remarks about me to Dick as a woman's subtle flattery.

Of course, I knew Jules would not be likely to take my philosophical view of the case.

He would resent Dick's treachery to the end, and would never forgive Cicely her remark about me, his friend.

No, I would say nothing to him of my altered views, for to Jules the man who changed his mind was not a philosopher, but a vacillating and weak-minded person.

The remainder of that day we spent in friendly fashion, carefully avoiding all reference to Dick.

We talked of what we should do the next day, and explained that we had seen some subjects, and we were most eager to commence work.

At twelve the next day the prodigal returned.

He wore a look partly truculent and partly nervous.

He limped as he approached us, until he read the looks exchanged between Jules and myself, when he relinquished that effort.

"Well, you fellows, I'm much better, sudden improvement, could not trespass any more on the Doctor's kindness. Real good fellow he is, too!" he said.

For a moment we were silent, then we said in a breath, "How is Miss Sinton?"

Dick blushed. (Yes, it's the truth!)

"I believe Miss Sinton is quite well," he said. And another silence fell upon us.

Then Jules asked lightly: "Doctor been called away lately?"

"Scandalous trick of Smalldoes," said I.

"I hear Brown's boy is very ill, suffering from an overdose of ginger beer and chocolate creams, and that he has made some sort of confession to Dr. Sinton," remarked Jules.

Dick began to fidget in an uncomfortable manner, but he said nothing.

Then I began to talk about poems and quoted some of Dick's effusion.

"You unmitigated sneaks!" he said in a rage; "you underhand, contemptible, contumacious jackals! You two vipers, whom I have nourished only to plunge your poisonous fangs into my heart, and trample my simple faith beneath your boots! When have you known me to commit a deceitful action? When have you found me aught but honourable and true? I have done with you both! Go, leave my presence! The very sight of you disgusts me with humanity. Go!"

It was then that my nobility of character came in and averted a catastrophe. I said to Dick:

"All you have just said to Jules is, though perhaps too bitter, scarcely more than the truth. I deeply regret the part I have played in yielding to his persuasion and playing the spy to some extent upon your actions; yet I have the consolation of knowing that I besought Jules, with tears in my eyes, to destroy the beautiful lines he became possessed of in some way unknown to me, and not to profane those words of love by reading them in the wrong spirit. No one can be more rejoiced than I at the happy result of your *ruse de guerre*. Let me, my dear Dick, be the first to offer you my most sincere congratulations."

Dick was delighted. To have me in his camp set his heart at rest about the future, for he did not forget that Dr. Sinton might come to me for information when he came to know the state of affairs between Dick and his daughter.

As for Jules, stunned by Dick's attack, flabbergasted by my position, his brain was in such a whirl that it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to join me in congratulating Dick.

And thus through my diplomacy, tact and benevolent sympathy for human failings, we three were once more united.

Dick is engaged to Cicely now, with the Doctor's consent. But somehow, I don't think Cicely likes Jules or myself very much. Can Dick have told her anything? If I thought he had I'd—No! I wouldn't!

H. P. Lacey.

Amateur Scientist: "Can you explain to me the reason why so many people become insane?"

Guyer: "The answer ought to suggest itself. They have no reason."

"When I asked my wife to marry me," said Feltt, "she did not answer. Silence gave consent."

There was no reply, and Feltt added:

"Since we have been married, though, she does not express her sentiments that way."

Tradesman (to old gentleman who has purchased a lawn mower): "Yes, sir, I'll oil it, and send it over imme——"

Customer (imperatively): "No, no, no! it mustn't be oiled! I won't have it oiled. Mind that! I want noise! And, look here—pick me out a nice rusty one. My neighbour's children hoot and yell till ten o'clock every night, so—(viciously)—I mean to cut my grass from four till six every morning!"

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A Premature Proposal.

IT was early May, and two were walking together in the Elysian Fields.

To see Lizzie Robinson, to exchange ideas with her, to discuss theories of life, to tell all that had been in his mind in the past, and almost all that he hoped for in the future, was at one time the chief necessity of Frank's existence.

What she felt in return was his ever-recurring problem.

She liked him, of that he was certain. A dimple showed near her lips whenever he approached her, and her eyes rested on him as if they had found what they had been seeking.

Often he was pervaded by a soft intoxication of belief that she waited for him; that his coming was the signal for the real interest to begin. Oftener still, he was depressed by the conviction that her sympathy for him was purely a matter of curiosity; that she was trying to read him as she might read a book, and that, when she reached the last leaf, she would throw him aside.

The girl seemed to him to feel no vital need of any friend, any helper.

Her instinct was—freedom.

To-day he had chanced to encounter her near her home, and had asked if he might speak to her a moment.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, and at the same time took three steps away from him.

He then passionately blurted out what he had never meant to utter until the right moment came, and by every sign this was the wrong moment.

"Having said so much," he went on, "I must say more; I ask you to be my wife."

"Oh," said Lizzie again, a sense of outrage implied in her look and tone.

He took one stride and reached her. He laid his hand on her arm.

"Do you hate me?" he demanded.

"Hate you? Why should I hate you? Not the least in the world."

"Do you love me?"

"Not the least in the world."

"Then," said he, "I will go away. If you will not love me, the world itself is not wide enough for you and me."

Their eyes met, and she was frankly amazed at the signs of trouble in his face.

"What nonsense!" she cried, with scorn. "We were friends, we are friends, we can go on and be better friends."

"Lizzie!" he exclaimed, with fresh impetuosity. "Friends? You do not seem to know what the term can mean. Only as your husband can I be your best friend."

She shrank from the word.

"Nothing could induce me to marry," she cried.

"If you like me as a friend," he persisted, with vehemence, "why not as a lover, a husband?"

"I do not like you at all, at this moment, simply for thrusting such a word upon me. I feel you to be a tyrannical personality towering above me, trying to govern me."

"You would hardly, here and now, care to have me go down on my knees. But in heart and feeling I am at your feet, Lizzie. Honestly, if life is to be worth anything to me, I must have you in it. There is a vacuum in my existence; I ask you to fill it up."

"No, no, no," said Lizzie. "I am very much interested in myself," with a brief laugh. "I intend to give myself free play and see what I can make of my life. I have all sorts of schemes. I intend not to marry."

He drew a long breath as he spoke. He averted his eyes; he bit his lip.

"Schemes in which I have no part," he said heavily. "Well, I wish you all happiness, Miss Robinson. But no—I will not be insincere. I can't wish you to be happy without me. The day I become purely disinterested I shall suffer less than I suffer at this moment."

Then saying: "I must bid you good afternoon," he walked rapidly away, while she entered her father's house.

Lizzie could hardly gather her thoughts together. A thousand words she had been ready to utter to Frank burned in her heart, and her tongue was stiff and stubborn.

It had all been so sudden; he had been so impatient.

She had altogether been taken by surprise, and felt that she had not made her case clear. She was conscious of a tumultuous rush of sensations.

A fortnight passed, and she heard that he had gone abroad.

She could not at first believe that he had deserted her. What had she said, what had she done, that he should in a moment renounce the pleasant intercourse which had become their habit? Yet, when she recalled his words, his tones, his glances during that interview, she was no longer inclined to be angry; in recollection, they gained new efficacy—she was thrilled as his meaning became magnified and intensified. Then, conscious that she was softening, she would cry: "I must be wise, strong, consistent, true to myself!"

All these three months that she had known Frank she had been conscious of a sense of power. How

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insidious his influence had been, flattering her that she was free, yet all the time imprisoning her in meshes which, light as gossamer though they might be, she found it hard to throw off. For she was obliged to confess that, now she no longer saw him, although she was to all appearance leading the life she had hitherto led, the interest had flatly gone out of it; it lacked the central moving figure.

She would never think of him again. Then, having decided never to think of him again, she went on thinking of every word he uttered—of the general why and wherefore—of things tangled, which might have been smooth—of what is, compared with what might have been—until the fifteenth day of May, on the evening of which day she was to appear at Mrs. Fabian's ball.

The night was warm. Lizzie was dressed in white, and looked airy and girlish. A murmur ran round the room as she came forward.

Suddenly she flushed. The truth was that Lizzie had caught a glimpse of Frank standing in a corner of the room, and for a moment everything had whirled round before her eyes.

He approached her as she stood surrounded by a group. Her eyes met his with conscious meaning.

"I had almost forgotten you," said Lizzie, saucily. "It is so long since I have had the pleasure of seeing you."

Later, when she was following Mrs. Fabian to her carriage, he came up.

"Why not walk home?" he said. "The moon is full, the night is like summer."

"I am going to walk," Lizzie said to Mrs. Fabian. It was a pleasure snatched out of the very teeth of loss and loneliness to see him.

"Please take my arm," he said. "I want to monopolise you for a moment. I sail for America to-morrow at three o'clock."

"I heard you had already sailed."

"Without bidding you good-bye? Hardly."

"Ah!" murmured Lizzie.

Let her struggle as she might to vie with him in high spirits, Lizzie was conscious of a lack of rebound. He evidently considered everything rounded off, complete, finished, dead. He looked at her with an eager expression when she did not speak.

"Well?" he said presently.

"You see," she observed with an effort at lightness, "that I supposed you were half way across the Atlantic, that you had gone without a word."

"Did you care particularly? But no—I will not press questions. Still, I wanted to snatch just one moment. We are at least friends. You yourself said that we had been, were still, and could go on being friends."

He bent his head and swiftly kissed the hand which lay on his arm. She would have withdrawn it, but his own closed over it.

"This is mere friendliness," he said. "To-morrow night I shall be out of sight of land, and you will be free to go your own way."

Lizzie felt like crying out. She had quivered at his words; they were like the shrewdest irony. All of human blessedness seemed to be offered in this companionship.

Alone against the world?

Why should she stand alone? Why should she fight the world?

Conquered and despoiled, what could the world give her in return for rejecting this joy immeasureable? What childish folly for her to reject that which was the only thing she realised a clear need of?

Still, what she said was:

"I hope your journey will be pleasant."

"Delightful," he returned curtly. "Much you know of my state of mind. But you have refused me. Wretch in fetters, as I am, I must bear my pain and be silent. Is this good-bye?" continued Frank, and he took both her hands in his.

And what was the sequel? some reader might exclaim. In her reply to Frank, did the girl exalt herself in the glowing light of Love, or weakly seek shelter again under her Will o' the Wisp of Friendship?

Let us draw the curtain—and leave them in their happiness.

HAROLD MALTHOUSE.

The Pledge of a Man.

THOSE who know Cape Dolphin in the summer only, when fair winds mingle the odour of kelps with the scent of new-mown hay, and the docile sea licks the feet of the bluff like a well-trained hound coaxing his master to play, are likely to think of the fisher-folk as enjoying a holiday existence. But I, who have dwelt among these simple people from my boyhood, and have heard the dull roar of the monster, and seen the red froth upon its lips red with the blood of those who were near and dear to me, have other memories; and when the storm goads the waters to fury, my heart ever puts up its prayer for the men at sea.

And there is one storm that will ever be present in my mind. It was in 1882, and it left its trail of mourning all along the coast.

Of all the folk that lived in the little fishing village there was none (save my parents, for whom I held a due reverence) who seemed to me half so brave and admirable as Bob Finney, whose father was the master of the *Rose Marie*. We were almost of an age; indeed, I was a month the elder, yet such was the size and vigour of this young giant that he instinctively arrogated to himself the position of a superior, which I, ever of puny build and faint heart, as instinctively acknowledged.

It was Bob who cast me, a lubberly boy of fourteen, into the water, and compelled me to learn swimming, an art of which a mother's over-tender care had left me ignorant. It was he who hoisted me, struggling and howling, to the masthead of the *Lively Annie*, and it was he who thrashed Tom Taylor for doing the self-same

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thing. He was the hero of my boyish days, the staunch friend of my early manhood.

But, although we remained steadfast friends, we came to see each other less often as the years passed by. Bob was all for the sea, and could no more hold away from blue water than I could part company with my beloved books. It was this wide difference of tastes that forced us apart and sent him out into the blue horizon, while I still hugged the desk at school and blossomed from an eager scholar into a doubtful teacher.

Now, although Bob's love for the sea was as deep and broad as the sea itself, there was that in the village which held him back from long voyages and kept him knocking about in a fishing smack, when he ought to have been at least second officer on his father's brig. And that which kept him back was the love of a woman; perhaps, as Bob said, the best woman at Cape Dolphin. And so, here was Bob, beaten like a shuttlecock between the battledores of his two loves—his ingrained love of the alluring sea, and his absorbing passion for Hilda Manter—who was a woman well worth some sacrifice.

Hilda had sat beside me in the little red schoolhouse, week in and week out, for years, and I felt that I knew her much better than Bob, who was reefing and luffing in his boat. Indeed, there was a time—but I am telling Bob's story, not mine, and I can only say that I was wrong, and that Bob, at sea in his boat, had kept far closer to her than I at the next desk.

And so it was he who was in her thoughts as her eyes wandered from her book and out over the sparkling sea to where the fleet lay, a cluster of white specks on the horizon. And it was he who came at last to be looked upon as her true love, while I was counted their steadfast and mutual friend, who held the open confidence of each and listened to many a tender tale with what inward fortitude I might, but always, on the outside, pleased and proud of their trust in me.

And so it was that I knew before anyone else when these two birds were planning for the nesting. And very modest and charming their plans were, though falling short in ambition of what seemed to me right and proper. For I held that a rocky little farm, a week now and then at the fishing, and the wage of a lifeboat man—for Bob held a berth in the lifeboat—were all too little for a man who deserved a command. But the twain were happy, and Hilda wore such a light in her eyes, and looked upon me at times with such a dreamy, tender gaze, that my heart fell a-throbbing, and I went hot and cold in an instant, until I remembered that a lover loves all mankind, and it was in this general, and in no sense an individual, way that Hilda regarded me.

Now, it grieves me to the heart that I must write down aught against Bob; but I have set myself to write a true account of these matters, and, to their proper understanding, no fact must be omitted. Moreover, I hold that my dear friend emerged so strong from his troubles that a passing weakness may well be forgiven.

Bob was a man of large and generous nature, and it has fallen under my observation that such men fall the more readily into this particular weakness. Your mean and narrow soul knows not the temptation of conviviality.

Nevertheless, it was a sore blow to me when I first found him in liquor, loud and boastful before the inn door. He fetched me a buffet when I rated him, which I did, perhaps, a thought too roundly, there being others present. He was ashamed of it afterwards, and begged my pardon humbly enough when he was sober; but, for all that, he dropped more of his wage at the bar than a decent man should. Hilda noticed it, I felt sure, though she said never a word; but the town gossiped over it not a little.

And so matters went on from bad to worse, until one night there came a stiff nor'-easter, and a great ship drove bow on upon the rocks. The men of the lifeboat station got the crew safe off the wreck; but it was fearful work, and they were short-handed, Bob and one other lying drunk and sodden in the public-house.

I met him next morning when he was in that savage mood that follows a debauch.

"Bob," I said, walking close up to him and standing face to face, "you're a bigger man than me, but you're a villain, and so I tell you."

For a minute I thought he would have thrown me from the cliff into the sea, as he had done in boyhood, but in far different mood. His face grew white, and his great hands clenched tight. But he only said—

"Not another man here would dare say that to my face, John."

"But I dare," I retorted angrily. "Do you remember Jerry Watson, the scandal of the village when we were boys? Well, you are the Jerry Watson of to-day. Take care that you don't die as he did—drunk, and face down in shallow water."

"You take a deal upon yourself," sneered Bob. "You milksops always do. A man has but to take a glass or two, and you are down on him with your cant. When I want your opinion, I'll ask for it; until then, keep it."

"A glass or two, indeed!" I cried. "You lay like a sot in the tap-room while better men than you risked their lives in the boat where you belonged. No thanks to you that the crew of that wrecked ship don't lie awash in the surf to-day. I thought better things of you, Bob Finney. Think of your family, man—think of Hilda."

He took a quick step towards me then, and made as if to strike me down, so that I threw up my hands to ward off the blow, when round the corner came Hilda herself, her soft eyes widening in alarm at our fierce attitudes. Bob swung on his heel, and went to her at once.

"Hilda," he said slowly and heavily, "will you turn against me? I was discharged from the crew to-day for drunkenness, and here is John Ladd, of all others, casting me off with scant ceremony and no loss of time."

Before Hilda could answer I had my say, which was not much, and tapered weakly off because of what I read in her eyes.

"That is not true, Hilda," I began with heat. "I do not cast Bob off. But I do say he lacked much of manhood last night, and that I was ashamed for a man of his stock to lie like any tramp in the gutter while his mates took their lives in their hands, as brave men should when need comes. And I say, too, that it is little love and less respect he shows to you, and that he is not worthy to——"

But Hilda held up her hand to stop me.

"That will do, John Ladd," she said, with quiet dignity, laying her hand in Bob's. "And I think it is very ungenerous of you, who have always been Bob's friend, to talk so. But what you say and what others say will make no difference to me, for I love Bob Finney,

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and am not the woman to thrust him down when I should raise him up. There is not his equal for manliness in the whole country; and I will marry him and save him, let people think what they may."

And with these brave words and a scornful glance at me, she slipped her arm through his and the two went off, her head proudly erect, but Bob's hanging low upon his breast.

But though Hilda spoke bravely, and was enough of a woman to live up to her words, she had no thought to sign articles with an untrustworthy skipper, and so she told Bob Finney, as I afterwards learnt, as soon as they were out of earshot of myself.

"Bob, my man," she said, 'twas Bob himself told me, so I can vouch for the truth of the matter, although the words are my own, "Bob," she said, "you've got your work cut out for you. I'm thinking you'll be easier at the head of the house if you save yourself, than if I do it for you. I'm giving you a chance. I'll marry you one year from to-night, if we are both alive and you do not change your mind. It rests with you whether I marry a man or a sot. And I have faith to believe, Bob, that there'll be a man beside me at the wedding."

Of what Bob said I have less knowledge, but as a man in his case will promise anything, I make no doubt his answer sailed close to the wind of her wishes. But as those who have the greatest claim upon a man's love are the last to learn of his shortcomings, it so happened that the townspeople knew more of Bob's failings than ever came to the ears of the gentle Hilda.

Moreover, a man cannot bid farewell to a congenial habit without strong regrets, which even a strong will may not always overcome at once. The old boon companions are ever ready to urge, cajole, and sneer at a man who seems to set himself above them by leading a decent life. And a tithe of Bob's earnings still found its way to the bar.

And so it was that Hilda grew pale and sad of face, and the neighbours pitied and scorned her, according as their natures were soft or harsh. But neither pity nor scorn did they offer openly to Hilda. There was that in her nature which taught them better. And while she grew pale, Bob's face waxed red and venous. But just when the village had made up its collective mind that Bob Finney was past hope, there happened a thing which made him come about like an unworthy craft in the teeth of a sudden gale, and shape his course for the safe port of sobriety; no less a thing, in fact, than the great storm of 1882.

It happened in the early autumn, before people had fairly bidden good-bye to summer, and made up their minds to face cold winter. In the morning the boats set out for the fishing before a white-ash breeze, and the fishermen bobbled peacefully in their dories and sang cheerfully at their work. In the late afternoon the women-folk were huddled on the head, peering out to sea to behold the battered fleet come staggering in one by one, driven like chips before the gale.

As each boat came in, they shrieked to one another in shrill voices that seemed a part of the tempest:

"That's Sampson's boat!" "No, it's Binley's! I know it by the patched sail." "Heavens! They'll be on the rocks!" "Thank Heaven! she's over!" And then an awful shriek as one small sloop, with three men clearly to be seen, went down before their eyes.

At last the night fell, and the storm grew in fury as the night hid its deeds. The lighthouse twinkled hopefully, and the wretched women kindled great fires on the beach and crouched beside them, waiting for the dawn. None who wore the long night out, as I did, on the open beach, can ever forget the horror of it all.

It was just past two in the morning when a gun was fired out there in the storm, and a rocket went flashing athwart the black sky. Then we knew that a ship was on the rocks, with but one chance in a thousand that she would hold together until morning came, and the crew, if any were then alive, be brought ashore.

It seemed worse than useless to launch the lifeboat in the darkness and in such a sea, but the crew could not hug the driftwood fires and wait for daylight while men's lives were being beaten out by the surf. So, with infinite labour and much loss of precious time, the Lyle's gun was hauled to the point nearest the wreck, and an attempt made to throw a line across the hulk. And all this time those on the wreck kept burning signal lights and firing the minute gun.

I well remember how, as the line was thrown again and again, and each time fell short, the hardy men about me, their faces white in the light of torches, clenched teeth and hands, swearing deep-throated oaths; and once, when a sudden flare of light aboard the wreck, more brilliant than most, showed us the poor fellows clinging fast to the rigging, I saw the capt in bury his face in his horny hands, and sob like a little child. Then, turning to his mates, he shouted hoarsely:

"Boys, the gun's no use. We must try the boat or let 'em go under. All hands to man the boat!"

And with a quiet "Aye, aye, Cap'n," these men turned and tramped sturdily back to face death.

There was a wail among the women when the boat was run out, but the men thrust them quietly aside, and as the grey dawn was turning all faces ashen, they ran her out through a smother of white foam, and were swallowed from sight in the rush of waves.

To those who watched her as she was thrown greedily from crest to crest, as if the mob of famished waves were wrangling among themselves for this choice morsel, it seemed as if she buffeted an endless time. Yet I have no doubt she had not struggled a quarter-of-an-hour with the sea, when it cast her back again, reeling and helpless, with two men and the captain lying stunned across the thwarts.

As we gathered stupidly round the half-drowned men, I became conscious of one that elbowed his way through the throng with masterful purpose. It was Bob, his face set and determined.

"Men!" he cried, "we must try it again. There's no time to lose. Run her out again and give those poor fellows a chance!"

But though, indeed, all could see that the men dropped from the rigging one by one, like ripe fruit, no man stepped forward to man the boat. It looked like certain death, and the men were cowed.

"Will you come?" roared Bob, "or will you stand like curs and let good men drown?"

Then, as they still stood like clogs:

"You won't?" he cried. "Then I'll bear a line to them myself! Stand you by to pay it out! You can do that at least!"

And with that he began hastily to knot a light line about his waist and coil it down free and smooth, while the others crowded about him and sought to hold him back.

"Stand off!" he cried. "I'll show ye there's a man yet in Bob Finney's skin!"

But I had read of such another scene, and could not bear to think of Bob throwing himself away, and I was about to cast myself upon him when Hilda stepped

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calmly to his side, and, drawing down his face to hers, kissed him before them all.

"Now, let him go, if you will," she cried, turning scornfully upon us. "He's a man. Go and skulk by the fire and let him drown, you that have held yourselves above him! Fine men you are, and I hope you'll die in your beds of old age, with the shame of this day's work black upon you!"

Now, whether she meant all this, or whether it was a shrewd play upon our manhood, I never knew, but it worked well. I felt the blood rush to my face, and a force quite beyond my control thrust me into the circle where those two stood alone, and I said:

"I'm for the lifeboat, Bob!"

He looked at me with a strange and wholly cold expression in his blue eyes.

"You were always a lubber at the oar, John," he said.

"I can steer," I retorted hotly.

"Let him go, Bob," cried one, and so many thrust themselves forward for a place in the boat that Bob had but to choose his men.

Now, in the telling, it seems a long wrangle, but we had the boat afloat again ten minutes after she was cast ashore, and the men were pulling, strong and steady, for the wreck.

"No hurry," said Bob; "save your strength; it's a hard pull."

The men lay to it with a will, and I held her head well up into the wind, taking the waves bow on and expecting each one to smash us like a toy.

The boat was awash with icy water, and a driving sleet froze stiff on our oilskins. We rose on the crest like a cork, and dropped into the trough like a rock, with a thud that was like to open every seam. But we could see that we were nearing the wreck, and Bob seized a heaving-stick and prepared to let fly a line into her rigging, where her crew might make it fast.

"Heaven grant they're not frozen stiff," said Bob.

But when the line fell among them, as it did at the second trial, it was plain to see that they were beyond all power to help themselves, and, such as were not dead, frozen fast to the ropes. Twelve men they were, and death stared them in the face. A groan went up from the lifeboat.

"They're gone!" cried one. "Heaven help them!"

"We'll help them ourselves!" roared Bob. "Lay her close under the bow, John, and hold her while I jump for the chains. It's a chance, and I'll take it."

Once more he knotted the line about his waist, and without a word I put her where he said. It was a desperate chance. The great ship was pounding on the rocks, and likely to part amidships at every blow.

The green waves fell away from her shining, black hull, until she towered above us like a cliff, then whirled us aloft so that we seemed about to drop upon her deck. Not one among a thousand picked men would have dared to leap. But Bob watched his chance, and, all encumbered as he was with ice, succeeded.

Once in the rigging beside the half-frozen men, his deft seaman's fingers soon rove a whip, and one by one, with infinite care and danger, ten of the crew were lowered into the boat. She was by this time loaded far past the danger mark, and the wreck showed every sign of breaking up. I called to Bob to leave her, but my voice was lost in the roar of the wind and sea. Yet, like an answer came his signal to cast off and pull ashore. But the men held to it with set teeth and I beckoned frantically for him to save himself. His only answer was to cut the whip away and lash himself beside the others in the shrouds.

There are those who have blamed me that I put the boat about and left him there to what seemed certain death. But the lives of us all were at stake, and we were many while he was but one, and he remained of his own foolhardiness. Besides, as any landsman can see, I was powerless. But I take notice that those who blamed were not of the lifeboat crew—nor did Hilda blame me a whit. That I can swear to, having it from her own lips.

Once ashore with the rescued men we turned and ran her out once more, which does not look as if we were cowards, leaving a brave man to his death. I had little hope of the wreck holding until we reached it, and less of taking the men from her, if she did; but I should have held myself no better than a cur if I had not made the attempt.

Our task this time was harder than before, the men being weary and the water even rougher. But at last we lay close in the lee of the wreck and threw a line over her at the first attempt. There were now but two men in the rigging. Bob and one other, the third having been washed away while we were gone. It was not long, therefore, before we had them in the boat, Bob coming down last.

It is a marvel that we ever came ashore. Indeed, one poor fellow was swept away, and my exhaustion was so great that I seemed to have no command of the steering, and we were once almost broached to in the trough of the sea.

But, somehow, we at last felt the keel grate on the beach, and knew that we were safe.

It was a rare sight to see those rugged fisher-folk seize Bob Finney in their arms and swing him aloft upon their shoulders! And I saw more than one woman go up to Hilda and kiss her, as if she, too, had done some great thing.

And when we were come to the nearest house, and such of us as could crowded in for shelter and food and warmth, and the hot grog was going round, it was Bob who pushed the untasted liquor from him, and going up to Hilda, kissed her heartily, full on the lips. We all knew what that meant. It was a pledge, and Bob has kept it like a man.

FREDERICK WHEELER.

Have You Tried for One of Pearson's Fivers?

If you haven't, then you should surely do so at once, for, if it should so happen your name has been selected as the recipient, you would feel pretty sad when the news came to you that one of those crisp £5 notes had been lying in the editorial safe waiting for you to apply, and that you were not going to have it after all because of your indifference.

Pearson's Fivers are distributed under the following conditions: Ten names are selected every week from various sources—the names not only of householders, but of lodgers and soldiers and sailors. These names are written on envelopes in each of which is placed a £5 note, and the notes are dispatched on application.

Can anything be more simple? Do not lose the opportunity of making £5 for the sake of a post-card.

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A Head for Business.

The head master of the High School heaved a sigh of relief when he knew that Allan Poynter was not to return after the holidays. Allan was one of the best scholars in school, but his great fault was a mad passion for betting, and he used such good judgment, derived from a careful consideration of all the factors, that he was enabled to spend double the allowance that his rich father gave him every month.

Many were the remonstrances that the father had given his son on the habit, but the young man would invariably try to end the argument by asking his father which he thought was the worse—betting on a horse race or wagering on the rise and fall of the wheat market, and as John Poynter was one of the most reckless (and yet most successful) members of the Stock Exchange the father would dismiss the subject with the statement that speculation on "'Change" was considered highly respectable, while wagering on sporting events was resorted to mainly by the lower element of society. This reply was considered unanswerable by the father, but was not at all convincing to Allan.

So well had the younger Poynter stood in his studies at the High School that his father had hopes of the future showing his offspring to be a very learned scholar, and young Poynter, it was decided, should be sent to a clerical training college which was presided over by the Rev. Dr. Jessup, an old boyhood chum of the London broker. The rigid rules of the college would preclude young Poynter from any large development of his ruling fault.

Allan would have preferred going into business in the city, and had entertained strong hopes that his father would introduce him to the bulls and bears on "'Change." He had even told his father of his ambition, but the elder Poynter had mapped out his next four years differently, and disappointedly the son obeyed the wishes of his father.

So when the autumn term opened Allan appeared at the college to begin work. Allan went to the sanctum of the head of the institution and gave a faint knock at the door.

"Come in," said a kind but stern voice.

Allan turned the knob and walked into the presence of about as benevolent-looking a man as he had ever laid his eyes upon and for a moment he wavered in his determination to do something that would bring about his dismissal. "I think I have run up against a hard job this time," was the thought of the young man, when he had mentally surveyed the learned scholar before him.

"Good morning. Take a seat. Wish to see me?" said the Doctor.

"Yes sir. My name is Poynter, son of John Poynter, of London. I believe he is an old friend of yours."

"What! John Poynter's son! I am certainly glad to see you. How is your father?" and the Doctor cordially shook the young man's hand.

"Very well, I thank you, sir. Here is a letter from him," and Dr. Jessup opened a sealed envelope, took out its contents, and read the following:

My Dear Old Friend Jessup,—This will introduce to you Allan, who, I have determined, shall be trained for better things than city life. I have entrusted him to you that he may be brought up in a more straight and narrow path than he has been in the habit of travelling. I warn you he has one great fault. He possesses a perfect mania for betting, and it does not make any difference whether it is on an international yacht race or a hop, skip, and a jump. I am in hopes that he will gradually wear this habit off during his course at your school. Don't let him bet, and if you hear of his staking any of his money secure the same by all means and return it to me. I will curtail his allowance to that amount. I think between us we ought to be able to teach the boy a good lesson.

Your old friend,
J. Poynter.

"So you are going to enter college?" frowned the Doctor.

"I believe that is the sentence imposed upon me," said Allan, who had been watching what effect the mysterious letter would have on the great educator.

"Well, sir, I suppose you know that our rules of government are quite strict?"

"I think that was one reason why I was sent here," said Allan, rather unconcernedly.

"Well, I assure you that while they may seem strict to a young man in the habit of roaming about a large city at his will, we exact nothing but what it will be for your own future welfare to live up to.

"Your father intimates that you are given to betting. Under no circumstances can we allow this here. You will understand that."

In the meantime Allan had moved nearer to the open window to get some of the fresh autumn air. He beheld in the grounds outside a handsome young lady of about his own age, and was paying more attention to her than to what Dr. Jessup was saying. In fact, he was making quite violent exertions to attract her attention.

"What in the world are you undergoing those contortions for?" asked the Doctor, who had noticed the desperate efforts of the boy.

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"A decidedly charming bit of femininity," said Allan, as he pointed out of the window.

The head of the institution glanced out and saw that the "charming bit of femininity" was none other than his own daughter.

"Sir," said he, the blood rushing to his face in his indignation, "do you understand that that is my daughter? How dare you talk so lightly of her? I have half a notion of sending you back to your father."

The words uttered caused an idea to flash rapidly through the brain of the young man, and he proceeded to execute it. It was a daring one, but he must take his chances to succeed in what he had undertaken. "I'll bet the old fellow has an awfully tender spot in his heart for her. I'll probe for it," he thought.

"Why," said Allan in a half-apologetic tone, "I was simply admiring the young lady. You wouldn't mind introducing me? I have taken a decided fancy to her."

"You—you have taken a fancy to my daughter! What do you mean?" almost thundered the Doctor. "If it were not for the fact that you are the son of my old friend, whom I would hate to offend or be obliged to explain to, I would have you ejected immediately from my room."

"Now, don't get excited," assured the boy. "Let us talk reasonably. I am a respectable young man—and as your daughter glanced up, I think she looked as if she would be decidedly willing to meet me. Now, don't get angry," continued the young man, as the Doctor jumped to his feet and pointed to the door.

"You are the most audacious young man I have ever seen. You certainly act more like a person fit to be sent to an insane asylum than a religious college. You are positively impudent. What's the matter? Have you been drinking?" asked the Doctor, growing more and more indignant all the time.

Then Allan played his trump card.

Said he:

"Let us talk mildly. Now, to convince you that I have made no mistake, or that I think I have not, I am willing to wager twenty pounds that if she comes in here she will acknowledge before you that she is quite enraptured with me, and is in fact willing to embrace me."

"Why, you conceited ass! you impudent young scoundrel! leave this room immediately," cried the reverend gentleman.

In the meantime Allan had taken from his pocket-book two bank-notes, but thinking it was all over with his plans started to leave the room, wondering how he could explain to his father.

Just then an idea struck the Doctor, who reasoned thus: "I will wager the amount, win the money or pretend to, return the whole of the young man's wager to his father with the recommendation that he deduct it out of his allowance. In fact, John Poynter suggested that in his letter. It may teach the young man a lesson to have to go through the year on a curtailed allowance. Surely I can trust Evelyn." And then aloud he said, just as Allan had reached the door:

"But wait a minute. Have you ever spoken to my daughter?"

"I have never seen her before in my life."

"Suppose I should make you this wager, would you swear that you would never say a word about it to anyone?"

"I give you my word."

"Remain here a minute," and the principal went to the window and called his daughter. The young lady entered the room.

"Evelyn," said her father, "have you ever seen this young man before?"

"That young man?" came a sweet and innocent young voice. "Why, never, father. Why do you ask?"

"Never mind now," and as the daughter looked about her in wonderment, the Doctor turned upon the impudent young man and said:

"I will accept your wager. I have twenty pounds in this drawer," and he proceeded to count out the correct amount. The Doctor knew he was not doing exactly right, but had faith in the ultimate result. None the less confident of the termination, as far as his plans were concerned, was Allan.

"Who will be the stake holder—your daughter?" asked Allan.

"Agreeable," asserted the other, and each handed the money to the astonished young lady.

"What in the world does all this mean, father?" she asked.

"It means, my dear Evelyn, that this young scoundrel bets that you have become so infatuated with him that you would be even willing to embrace him. Tell him that you would not."

"Why, have you both lost your senses? Surely, father, I do not know the young man, and you know I would do nothing of the sort!"

"I'll give you three minutes to change your mind," spoke up Allan, who was commencing to feel more like smiling at the situation than any time since he entered the room.

And he pulled out his watch and commenced to count off the minutes.

"One minute." (A wait). "Two minutes," said the young man. (Another wait.) "Ten seconds more. Do you still refuse?"

"Sir!" said the scornful young lady, who was holding her father's arm and wondering how her own father could allow her to be thus talked to.

"Well," said Allan, closing his watch, "you have won."

"Won it! why certainly," and Dr. Jessup bent down and kissed his daughter as tenderly as if she had just been saved from some imminent danger. "Leave me, Mr. Poynter; you have unnerved me," and the young man went out. In a few minutes Dr. Jessup had written off the following telegram:

"Have won twenty pounds from Allan. Will send it by post with explanatory letter."

In an hour the following answer came over the wire:

"Do you mean that you actually made a wager with Allan? Wire reply."

The doctor looked at the message and sent the following:

"Yes. Followed your instructions by retaining money he wagered."

Dr. Jessup then wrote a full explanation of the occurrence to John Poynter, and after a few days the following reply came back:

MY DEAR FRIEND JESSUP,—Innocently enough, you have lost eighty pounds for me by your making that bet with my son. A few days previous to his leaving home for your institution we became involved in an argument on the propriety of betting, and he bet me one hundred pounds that even you would make a bet if you thought you were sure to win. So much confidence in you did I have that I readily accepted the bet and acquiesced in his condition that I would not inform you of our own bet. I fell into his trap as easily as you did. You won me twenty pounds, but at the same time lost me one hundred. I have only myself to blame, and we will not refer to the matter again.

I think on the whole that Allan is better fitted for a business career, and I have written him to come home and go into the office with me.—Your old friend, J. POYNTER.

ARTHUR JOHNSTONE.

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The Tragedy of Eaton Square.

CHAPTER I.

A Strange Compact.

Colonel Eldridge was generally considered by society to be a prosperous man.

He was a widower, and lived with his only child, Maud, in Eaton Square. He entertained lavishly, was a director of more than one big company in the city, and was always to be seen at the most fashionable gatherings of the season.

Yet he was probably the most unprincipled scoundrel who ever walked either into a drawing-room or down Threadneedle Street.

The wonder was that he had never been found out.

He had often marvelled at his success himself; but now, as he sat in his library one chill November morning, he saw plainly that there was a strong probability of his being found guilty of misappropriation of trust funds, and of appearing at the Old Bailey in the guise of a fraudulent trustee.

His position certainly was dangerous.

His sister had married a rich country squire named Michael Crosmaduke, but had died within twelve months, after giving birth to a son.

Shortly afterwards Michael Crosmaduke broke his neck in the hunting-field.

In his will he had appointed Colonel Eldridge to be sole executor and trustee for the baby-boy, young Michael, until he should attain his majority.

Furthermore, the Colonel was to have two thousand a year for the education of his ward, and the remaining income from the Crosmaduke property, amounting to some eight thousand a year, was to be allowed to accumulate. By his will therefore, the Colonel would have the handling of ten thousand a year for twenty years, minus the expense of educating young Michael.

The will further provided that in the event of young Michael not living to attain his majority, the estates, which were entailed, and the accumulated income, should belong to Ralph Crosmaduke, a brother of old Michael's, who was sheep-farming in Australia.

The Colonel—then only a Major—greedily accepted the trust, and made his own plans for enriching himself at the young orphan's expense.

There were three difficulties in the way.

The first was that young Michael might die before he was twenty-one, in which case there would be Ralph Crosmaduke to settle with.

The second was that young Michael might be seized with a certain form of madness, which was hereditary in the Crosmaduke family, in which case awkward questions would be asked.

The third was, that young Michael himself might become aggressive.

But whatever his faults might be, Eldridge was a bold man.

He had won the V.C. by an act of reckless bravery, and by a very different act of recklessness determined to win a fortune.

On the chill November morning at which date our story commences, Colonel Eldridge was painfully conscious that his plans had not succeeded as well as he would have wished. It only wanted six months before young Michael came of age, and the boy's spirit had on several occasions been aggressive towards his uncle. He had been educated entirely by private tutors, who were the paid tools of Eldridge; but they had been unable to exercise much influence over a mind so full of contradictions.

He was a deep student, especially of the classical poetry of Rome and Athens. His chief enjoyment lay in the calm of bookland. Yet at times so great was the violence of his temper, the sure prelude to the madness which was the fatal base of his family, that people were afraid to approach him.

The Colonel had received a letter from him by the morning's post dated from Rome. The writer stated

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that he should be glad to spend Christmas in London, and to remain in England until his coming-of age, so that he might make himself acquainted with the business details of his property, "from the management of which," he observed, "he should soon have the pleasure of relieving his uncle." There was an allusion also to the accumulated incomes and interest, which the writer presumed would amount to about two hundred thousand pounds.

Now, the Colonel had seen very little of his ward. The presence of a young man who shut himself up in a room with his books, and was apt to have uncontrollable fits of passion, could hardly be acceptable in the house of the man of the world and his handsome daughter. Yet here was young Michael, actually on the way to Eaton Square, with the avowed intention of claiming the money of which his guardian had robbed him.

The Colonel was disturbed in his meditations by the entrance of his daughter, a handsome brunette of twenty-four, with commanding figure and faultless features.

Many people wondered that she had not married; but the truth was that, though men admired her, yet they were, at the same time, rather frightened of her. Her character may be best judged of by the fact that she had been for some years the constant companion and associate of her father.

She read attentively the letter which Colonel Eldridge handed to her.

"So we are to have this young bear with us for six months."

"I am afraid it can't be helped, Maud, but it is the end of the six months I am looking forward to."

The woman gazed searchingly at her father.

"Yes, Maud," he continued, "there is no doubt about it. For the last twenty years we have been living on Michael's money. Now it will be in his power to have me arrested."

"Surely there must be some way out of it?"

"There are two ways. One is to leave the country. In other words, to become an absconding trustee, before any suspicion is aroused, which means comparative poverty for the rest of our lives. The other is to make him marry you."

"Fancy having Michael Crosmaduke as a husband."

"Fancy being mistress of Crosmaduke Park and ten thousand a year."

"With a madman for a husband."

"Exactly, Maud. But remember that you can have the madman locked up in an asylum. When I play a deep game, like the one I have been playing for the last twenty years, I calculate beforehand every move on the board. Now, if what Poole tells me is correct, Michael's reason won't last for more than a year; you can then have him put away quietly in an asylum, remain the mistress of Crosmaduke Park and its ten thousand a year, and also gain the sympathy of society."

"Suppose Michael does not choose to marry me?"

"I cannot imagine anything of the sort. I cannot suppose that *you* can't make a young hobbledehoy fall in love with you."

"Well, when will my work commence?"

"Poole writes to me that they hope to be in London within ten days."

"Will Mr. Poole stay here?"

"Yes, if he wants to. Besides, he may be useful."

"And will insist on being well paid for his utility. However, it is too late to retreat now."

The expression on the woman's face was hard as she uttered the words. There might have been an excuse for Maud Eldridge if she had consented to ruin Michael Crosmaduke, and drive him into a madhouse, in order to save her father; but her action was dictated solely by love of self. She lived merely for enjoyment, and for obtaining the means for enjoyment. It would have been impossible to have found a more unscrupulous and more unwomanly character than that of Maud Eldridge.

CHAPTER II.

Tutor and Pupil.

There is no greater sight in the world than that of the Coliseum at Rome, as seen by moonlight.

But Mr. Arthur Poole, bear-leader in ordinary to Michael Crosmaduke, was not influenced by it.

He was smoking a cigar, as listlessly as he would have done in the smoking-room of his London club, while he waited for his pupil, who—as he, the tutor, would have expressed it—was engaged in acting an affecting and affectionate parting scene with his lady-love, amongst a lot of damp and mouldering ruins.

"I wonder what old Eldridge will think of this affair?" he thought to himself. "The lad must marry, and I suppose Nina Perugia will do as well as anybody else. The Colonel will want my assistance to help him to make terms about those back rents, and I shall be able to charge my own price. Finally, I gain the gratitude of Nina, Michael, and Eldridge. Ah, here come my turtle doves!"

Nina Perugia was a perfect type of Italian beauty; her figure and her graceful carriage betrayed the native of a southern climate. No wonder that the boy by her side had fallen madly in love with her, with all the ardour of his poetical mind.

He had seen her first at La Scala, in Milan, the birthplace of musicians. He had heard her sing, and her notes had thrilled his soul. An introduction soon followed, and *l'affaire d'amour* between the beautiful soprano and the rich young Englishman became a matter of public gossip. He followed her to Rome, wrote passionate odes to her, and beneath the shadows of the Coliseum had just implored her to become his wife. She, in return, had promised to love him for ever.

The tutor and the pupil sat up late that evening. Michael, who had always been averse to taking advice on any subject from anybody, now beseeched Poole to tell him how to act.

Should he ask Nina, and her brother, who was her only relation, to come with him to England?

Should he delay his departure, and marry her at once in Rome?

What should he do?

Poole, in spite of his sagacity, had grave doubts as to what course he should advise Michael to adopt, for the simple reason that he was entirely in the dark in regard to Colonel Eldridge's plans.

Was he in the position to attack the Colonel, presuming that that crafty diplomatist chose to quarrel with him?

Was his influence over Michael sufficiently strong to enable him to dictate whether the Colonel should be pardoned or prosecuted?

On the other hand, it was certain that, sooner or later, Michael would marry Nina, and therefore it would be better for him to accept the post of mentor to the young couple at once, rather than to give anybody else the chance of ousting him.

"Let us see the lady's brother in the morning,

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Michael. When we have learnt their wishes we shall be able to judge better."

"Nina's wishes are my wishes," the boy answered impetuously. "Why should I care for anybody else?"

"For no reason in the world that I can see, my dear boy. I only thought that you might like to tell your uncle of your intentions."

"If you mean Uncle Eldridge, I shan't bother about him for a moment. You know how shabbily he behaved to me. If it had not been for you putting me in the way of borrowing money, I wonder how we should have lived."

This was perfectly true.

Poole, considering that the Colonel's allowance was not so liberal as it might be, had introduced his ward to a certain solicitor, whose practice, though sharp, was highly respectable, since his clients belonged mostly to the upper classes. This "gentleman by act of Parliament," whose name was Nock, was only too pleased to lend Michael Crosmaduke money, while Poole thus provided himself with a weapon, with which, if necessary, he could assail Colonel Eldridge.

"Just as you like, Michael; just as you like," replied Poole, who understood his companion's temper. "I only thought it proper to mention it to you; though as you say, there is no reason why you should study your uncle's feelings in a matter which concerns your life-long happiness. No," he added, as if to himself, "it is for your uncle to seek your friendship rather than for you to seek his."

"Yes, and he may not get it when he does seek it, He has the upper hand now, but in six months. he will have no more control over me than his own valet has. With all his cunning he has been a fool, as he will find to his cost when Nock examines his accounts."

"Then you have determined to employ Nock as your family solicitor?" Poole asked quickly.

"Yes. In fact, I half promised to do so at the last interview I had with him."

Poole said nothing, but he immediately decided to take the part of his pupil, in the event of a quarrel between him and the Colonel. He also decided to see Nock directly he arrived in London.

Luigi Perugia, Nina's brother, like his sister, sang at the opera. Like her, too, he possessed the beauty of his race. His careless gaiety made him a universal favourite. For his sister he had the deepest affection, and perhaps her welfare was the only thing that he ever thought seriously about. He was smoking his morning cigarette as he pondered over Michael's offer to Nina, of which she had just told him, when Poole was announced. The two men shook hands cordially, when Poole plunged at once into the object of his visit, namely, to propose that if Nina was willing, she should marry Michael as soon as possible, and that then the four of them should go to England, where Luigi could have the satisfaction of seeing her established in her new home.

Luigi answered that his sister's wish would be law to him, but as her brother and only relative he must be pardoned if he asked about Signor Crosmaduke's position.

Poole was willing to give him every information. The only reason for hurry was the necessity of Michael and himself to return to England before Christmas.

But whatever doubt Luigi might possess. was now dispelled by the entrance of Nina and Michael. A single glance told Poole that Nina had consented to a hasty marriage. All that remained to be done was for Luigi to make his inquiries as quickly as he could.

CHAPTER III.

A Deed of Darkness.

373, Chancery Lane.

To Colonel Eldridge, Eaton Square.

Dear Sir,—I beg to inform you that my client, Mr. Michael Crosmaduke, of Crosmaduke Park, has lately been married to an Italian lady, whose maiden name was Nina Perugia. As I understand that Mr. Crosmaduke is mainly dependent upon you for the next six months, I should be glad if you would favour me with your views in regard to his financial position during that period.—Yours truly,

Richard Nock.

Grand Hotel.

My Dear Uncle,—I have just returned here from Italy. You may be surprised to hear that I am married to the loveliest creature in the world. I hope to have an early opportunity of introducing her to you and my cousin Maud. I have instructed my solicitor Mr. Nock, to write to you on business matters.—Your affectionate nephew,

Michael Crosmaduke.

Such were the two letters which Colonel Eldridge received one December morning. They contained the first intimation he had had either of his nephew's return or of his marriage.

The Colonel had certainly not provided against this contingency. He felt himself to be checkmated. He knew Mr. Nock by reputation, and was fully aware that there was no mercy to be gained from that quarter. He knew, too, from his silence, that Poole must be against him. Worst of all, he was suspected. Even that last resource of the swindler—namely, flight—was denied to him, for he guessed that he was being watched by private detectives.

Maud seldom appeared at her father's breakfast-table. His hours were too early for her. She was astonished, therefore, when her maid informed her that he wished to see her immediately in his study.

"Read there," he said, as he handed her the fatal two letters.

She took them, and read them. She understood their meaning only too clearly.

"Is there any chance of forgiveness?" she asked abruptly.

"None whatever. Poole has betrayed me. I confess that I did not think him clever enough to do so, but it appears that I was mistaken. Then there is Nock to deal with."

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"In the first place I shall try to get rid of the suspicion which already exists against me. I shall see Nock this afternoon, and instruct him to draw against me to the extent of five thousand pounds. You must call at the Grand Hotel, and invite Michael and his wife to stay here for Christmas, and for as long afterwards as they like to remain. You know how to act the affectionate cousin without my teaching you. For the rest we must trust to chance, or, rather, to our own skill."

Colonel Eldridge's visit to Mr. Nock was satisfactory so far as it went. The solicitor knew that he could not insist on inspecting the trust accounts until the coming of age of Michael Crosmaduke, and, therefore, was fain to be content with five thousand pounds. The Colonel, on his part, pretended to be angry at the conduct of his ward. He dwelt on the fact that he was trustee for the residuary legatee, Mr. Ralph Crosmaduke, and could not exceed the powers of his trust. Of this, of course, Mr. Nock was aware; but the Colonel told him one thing which he did not know, namely, the hereditary madness in the Crosmaduke family. The solicitor did not feel so cer-

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tain as he had been about being repaid the money which he had lent.

The Crosmadukes were out when Maud called at the Grand Hotel, so she left cards and a cousinly note of invitation to dinner for the following evening.

The invitation was accepted. Colonel Eldridge was agreeably surprised when he was introduced to Nina. Her beauty was undeniable; the vivacity of her manner was as charming as it is rare in London society. But when he heard her sing in the drawing-room those notes which had held breathless the audiences in La Scala, his admiration was as great as his astonishment. The Colonel determined to win the confidence of his nephew and his beautiful wife. Perhaps, after all, it might not be too late.

He managed to get a few words in confidence with Michael before he left.

"My dear boy, it hurts me very much that you should be staying at an hotel when this house is virtually your own. Now, why not come here to-morrow? We can give you a private sitting-room, and you must treat the place as Liberty Hall. Say 'yes,' at once, for I don't mean to take any denial."

"It is very good of you, uncle; but I have my brother-in-law staying with me."

"Bring him with you. We have plenty of house room. Ah, Nina!" he added, as Mrs. Crosmaduke came on the scene, "for I shall take the privilege of an uncle and call you by your Christian name, I have just persuaded Michael to bring you and your brother here, instead of your staying at an hotel. We shall expect you, to-morrow, shan't we, Maud?"

Maud seconded the invitation, and so it was arranged that Michael, his wife, and Luigi Perugia should take up their abode in Eaton Square on the morrow.

Mrs. Crosmaduke came on the scene.

The Colonel's manner changed immediately his guests had gone. He beckoned to his daughter to follow him into his study.

"The girl is superb," he said brusquely. "It remains to be seen whether she is as clever as she is beautiful. I suppose this brother will be a thorn in our sides. What did you think of Michael?"

"He is less of a cub and more of a madman than since I last saw him."

"What do you mean? Don't speak in riddles."

"I mean what I say. There was a curious sparkle in his eyes, and an unnatural ring in his laughter, a nervous twitching in his fingers as he handled his knife, which made me shudder. Now that I have seen him again, I swear to you that I could never marry him. I would not be in Nina's place for all the wealth of the Indies."

There was a ring like the ring of a hammer upon steel in the voice of Maud Eldridge, as she uttered the last words.

The Crosmadukes and Luigi Perugia arrived on the following day on their visit of indefinite length. Christmas passed, and the bells rang the old year out and the new year in, without anything occurring to disturb the ordinary life in Eaton Square. There was only one thing which made the Colonel uneasy, and that was that he could gain no tidings of Arthur Poole.

It was not till one evening in the second week in January that Michael betrayed any tokens of his unmanageable temper. Nina had offended him by singing a favourite song of the Colonel's instead of one which he had asked her to sing. The incident, trivial as it was, served to arouse his passion. He tore up the song, and threw the pieces in the fire. Then he abruptly left the room.

Pride alone prevented Nina from bursting into tears. With a strong effort she restrained herself, and merely saying: "I am afraid Michael is not well to-night," followed her husband.

She found him writhing on a sofa with his hands before his face. She spoke soothingly to him, but at the sound of her voice his rage was doubled in its intensity. His eyes shone like burning coals. He uttered oaths too blasphemous to be repeated. His lips were damp with a milky foam. The man was mad!

With difficulty they got him to his bedroom. A doctor came and administered sedatives, which soon sent the patient into a quiet sleep. Nina, in spite of remonstrance, insisted on staying with her husband. Shortly afterwards the household retired for the night, and the house itself was buried in darkness.

But see! What is that form shrouded in black, gliding like a ghoul of the night with muffled tread towards the chamber of curtained sleep? Look, it enters! It has a razor in its hand. Horror of horrors! What is that liquid stream?

* * * * *

"Eaton Square tragedy. Verdict. Sentence." Such is the cry of the newspaper boys, who congratulate each other on the business they are doing.

Michael Crosmaduke has been found guilty of attempting to murder his wife Nina, has been declared of unsound mind, and is sentenced to be kept in confinement during Her Majesty's pleasure. On the morning of the tragedy he was found in a raving condition, accusing himself of having murdered his wife. Evidence having been given to the effect that the unfortunate man had been subject to slight attacks of insanity, though his friends considered that this was merely the result of his being a deep student.

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CHAPTER IV.

The Madman's Story.

The ravings of my miserable mind have become less constant. I am no longer tortured with those feelings of remorse which made my brain a seething pandemonium of frantic rage, which made me an inhuman monster.

I am no longer haunted by that dread apparition which used to arise before me as an avenging angel to bear witness to my crime.

And yet now that I take up my pen in my moments of peace I am at a loss how to explain the experiences which I have gone through. How can I, a prisoner in a madhouse, expect to be believed? My words will be considered the insane ramblings of a disorganised brain.

I have suffered worse agony than was ever suffered by man. Have I atoned for my sin? Have I been forgiven?

Have you, Nina—you, the pure woman whom I murdered in my rage—vouchsafed to me your pardon? I believe you have. It is the only consolation left to me in this life; may I not be robbed of it!

I have seen Nina. I have seen her constantly.

It is at night that she comes to me, when, with wasted strength and feverish brain, I lie down exhausted, yet unable to speak. Then it is that her spirit comes and gazes upon me, bringing with it an atmosphere of sacred calm.

How can I express my joy when she first came to me with pity written on her countenance? I gazed on the radiant beauty of her countenance, and I know that she is happy.

Let me now, while it is fresh in my memory, state how her beatific vision came to me.

It was in the middle of the night, and I was lying thinking of her, when a strange light appeared at the foot of my bed. At first it was indistinct, and seemed to me like the faint light of a moonbeam trying to pierce through the gloom of my bedchamber. But as I raised myself on my elbow, and gazed steadfastly at it, it assumed a more definite shape. I could see the vague outline of a woman's form gradually emerge from a halo of radiance.

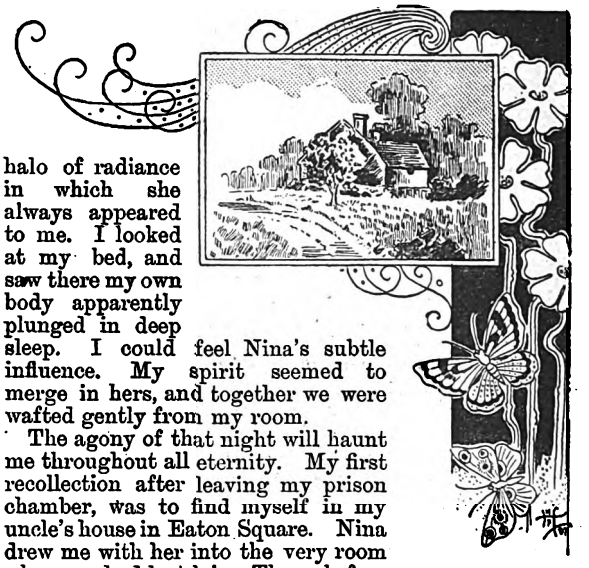
I called to her by name, and as I called her features became distinct.

She visits me now every night, and on each succeeding night her form becomes more and more distinct before my vision. As the welcome light which heralds her approach steals into my room, there now comes with it a sweet fragrance like the scent of many herbs, which fills my senses with an undefinable joy.

But I have had more wonderful experiences, experiences which I never dreamt could have happened to mortal man. The eternal part of me has left its earthly prison of clay and wandered forth in sweet unison with Nina's angelic spirit. It has been my lot to know the true communion of souls, and to journey with my own and only beloved through the realms of infinite space.

It happened thus: After appearing to me as usual, she beckoned me to her. For a moment I felt the most excruciating pain. My heart beat against my ribs with such force that I thought they would be broken. My forehead was struck as if by an electric battery. Then all power left my limbs, and I was unconscious.

How long I remained in this state I cannot tell, but when I awoke I was by Nina's side, in the midst of that



halo of radiance in which she always appeared to me. I looked at my bed, and saw there my own body apparently plunged in deep sleep. I could feel Nina's subtle influence. My spirit seemed to merge in hers, and together we were wafted gently from my room.

The agony of that night will haunt me throughout all eternity. My first recollection after leaving my prison chamber, was to find myself in my uncle's house in Eaton Square. Nina drew me with her into the very room where we had last lain. There, before my spiritual gaze, I saw our bodies buried in deep sleep.

How can I depict what followed? Yet the picture is burnt into my brain.

Look! The door opens softly, and the figure of a woman muffled in black approaches the bed. From beneath her wrapper she draws her hand, and in it a razor. Now I see her features. In her eyes there is the cruelty of the man-devouring tigress, glittering more sharply than the steel in her hand. I recognise her now.

She is my cousin Maud. She bends down. With lightning fingers she bares my angel's throat. Another second and the deed is done. The life blood spurts forth, and I see no more.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Poole Solves the Mystery.

I have been asked to put down on paper all that I know about the Eaton Square tragedy. The task is a difficult one, since the publication of my knowledge proves me to be a selfish schemer.

Some years ago I committed the egregious blunder of placing myself in the power of Colonel Eldridge. From that time I was his slave, and hated him accordingly.

Four years ago he told me he would do me a good turn. He said that he had a ward, and would make me his tutor, with a salary of five hundred a year, until he should come of age. The ward was Michael Crosmaduke, who was then seventeen. He further stated that Michael had a peculiar temper, and that there was hereditary madness of a homicidal nature in his family. My only other instructions were that we should travel on the Continent, and visit him in London once in every six months. Our expenses were limited to a thousand a year.

That was the information which I received from Colonel Eldridge. I gained some more information from Somerset House, which made me suspect that my employer was a fraudulent trustee.

From the time I was first engaged as Michael's tutor to the time of his marriage with Nina Perugia, my suspicions were so constantly confirmed that they became

convictions. Except for the short visits twice a year, the Colonel objected to our being in England, which made me conclude that he did not wish the identity of his nephew to be known. During these visits he hinted to me, with the conversational *finesse* of which he is a perfect master, that he should like me to encourage his nephew in any vices which might be latent in him.

I should mention here that during the whole time that Michael was under my charge I made it my special object to gain all the information in my power in regard to diseases of the brain, more especially those that are hereditary. I had Michael before me as a subject for practical study.

My pupil had no vices, but he had very expensive tastes, and as my own tastes are, and always have been, expensive, we were often short of money. Colonel Eldridge refused to supply us with more than he had agreed to do, so I had to seek the assistance of a shrewd and amiable gentleman named Nock. Being shrewd, he understood our position; being amiable he lent us, or rather Michael, money. I believe he has never repented either his shrewdness or his amiability.

What I have already written is only a prologue to the Eaton Square tragedy. I will come to that at once, only pausing to say that I had never discovered as yet any certain symptoms of insanity in Michael.

After the marriage I came with Michael, his bride, and Luigi Perugia to London, where I left them at the Grand Hotel, as I had to go into the country on business of my own. The next news I heard of Michael was that he was accused of attempting to murder his wife during a fit of insanity.

I was present and gave evidence at his trial, when he was sentenced to be kept in confinement during Her Majesty's pleasure.

Shortly after the trial I had an interview with Colonel Eldridge. At first he abused me, but I told him that I knew him to be a fraudulent trustee. The result of the interview was that I became his private secretary, and went to live at his house in Eaton Square.

By this time Nina had recovered from the wounds which she had received upon the night of the tragedy. Her grief for the fate of her husband was intense, and she often assured me that she was convinced that it was not by his hand the deed had been committed.

I did all I could to comfort her, partly because I was fond of her, and partly because Colonel Eldridge relied on her friendship for me to save him from any awkward questions in regard to the trusteeship.

She was living quietly with her brother in the neighbourhood of Regent's Park, and I was a constant visitor at the house. On several occasions she told me that she had seen her husband in her dreams, and asked me if I believed in the theosophical doctrine of the communion of spirits.

At the time I considered these visions to be merely the outcome of an over-excited brain. Although Colonel Eldridge was in the habit of calling to see her two or three times a week, Maud Eldridge always refused to come with him. She openly declared that she hated the sight of Nina's face.

I was exceedingly anxious to see Michael Crosmaduke at the asylum, and at last, through the medium of the Home Office, obtained a permit to see him. During my visit he told me the story of his dream, which has been already narrated, adding that, since he knew he was innocent, he was perfectly happy. He sent various messages to Nina, and in my opinion was as sane as he ever was in his life.

A fact which had already puzzled me now made me suspicious—namely, that if Michael Crosmaduke had committed the deed of which he was accused, he must have committed it after his fit of rage had subsided. After he had been put into bed, he had not spoken a word to his wife. That he should have attempted to kill her in cold blood, seemed to me to be most improbable.

Who, then, was the guilty party? According to Michael Crosmaduke's story, it must have been Maud Eldridge.

I will say nothing about any feelings of friendship that I possessed, and do still possess, for my old pupil. I will only say that it was to my interest to prove his innocence, and Maud Eldridge's guilt. From a worldly point of view, he would be a better friend to me than Colonel Eldridge.

My experience of life has taught me that, in the majority of instances, the whole truth is of more use than a half confidence. Acting on this experience, I informed my friend, solicitor, and money-lender, Mr. Nock, of my suspicions, and asked him for his advice. He could only suggest one scheme, which I immediately put into execution.

The scheme was to extort a confession from Maud Eldridge, while she was under hypnotic influence. We took into our confidence the most successful professor of hypnotism of the day, and I persuaded Colonel Eldridge to invite him to give an entertainment in Eaton Square. I also persuaded Maud to allow herself to be hypnotised.

I must ask my readers to imagine the consternation which her confession created. When she awoke, and learnt what she had said, she fled to her bedroom and poisoned herself with prussic acid, which she must have purchased with the intention of using in case of discovery by any chance.

On the following morning Colonel Eldridge left London, and has not been heard of since. I have been suitably rewarded by having the management of the Crosmaduke estates.

Michael Crosmaduke has, of course, been released. When I see the happiness of my old pupil and Nina, I wonder at the good which my own selfishness has caused.

P. North.

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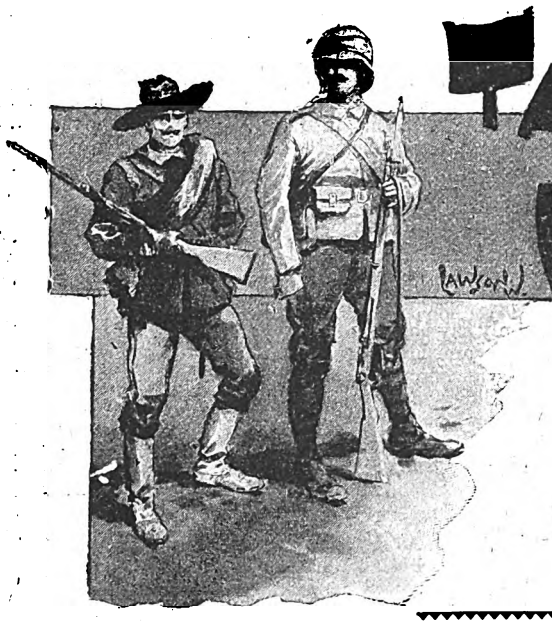

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXI. (*continued*).

BRAVE at heart and with the true instincts of a soldier, the Emperor caught at once the nature of the situation, and a fierce anger convulsed him at the spectacle of some of his own picked Berlin troops staggering so quickly beneath the blows of the enemy.

For his troops, drilled with all the art and care of martinet perfection, had for the most part never been in actual warfare. And the sudden dash of the English Reconnaissance Corps, persistent, terrible, and not to be denied, had caused one of those brief panics from which even experienced veterans are not absolutely safe.

Sword in hand and regardless of danger, the Emperor rode among his retreating soldiers, and in furious language bade them take their stand again. Then, with a sudden change of purpose, rushed to a battery stationed hard by which commanded the English advance.

"They are at your mercy!" he shouted to the major in command. "Beat them back! It is a disgrace that a handful of men should withstand the whole German army!"

Glancing round, he saw a gun which remained silent. The British fire had decimated this section of the battery, and the quartermaster lay dead upon the truck. Without hesitation or thought, but yielding to a wild impulse, he sprang off his horse, and surrounded by amazed artillery officers who rushed up, trained the twelve-pounder unaided and with his own hand and fired it into the opposing infantry already pressing hard upon the retreating Berliners.

"Your Majesty!" cried a General officer, who dashed up at this extraordinary spectacle. "For Heaven's sake, remount! You are in the most frightful danger. What shall we say if any harm befall you?"

And so saying, he literally forced the excited Emperor to remount his charger, and without a moment's delay took him off to a safer spot.

It was well he did so. Shamed and encouraged by the brave action of their Emperor, the gunners, although pelted by a fierce fire, stood with desperate courage to their guns, and, as the enemy came more clearly into vision, began to take a surer aim.

In a few minutes a deadly hail of shrapnel opened upon the British Infantry. Already was the Berlin Regiment taking heart again, and thus checked in front and commanded by a frightful fire, severe damage was inflicted upon the brave attackers.

Colonel Stewart, of the Seaforth Highlanders, turned pale for a second as he realised that the fury of victory had carried his men into too precipitate an advance, and that the battery opening upon him would possibly render retreat hideously disastrous. The mist, too, was beginning to clear, and he saw that the whole corps, as it fell back, as arranged, upon the British lines, would be followed by a fire which might reduce the force to rags.

His plan of action was speedily formed.

Rising in his stirrups he yelled to the regiment in ringing tones which could be heard loud above the rattle of musketry: "The Mackenzies have got their chance. We must take these guns. Fix swords! Charge!"

His final order broke into a veritable shriek. He was answered by a wild Scottish cheer, and, without a moment's hesitation, the brave Highlanders rushed full pelt upon the German battery.

It was a terrible, if an heroic sight. The dauntless infantry, heedless of the fierce fire that played on them, closed up again and again as their ranks became thinned, and dashed imperturbable and resistless up the slight slope towards the deadly guns.

It was one of these rare acts which lift and ennoble War, and make it sublime. The Seaforth Highlanders knew well that they were giving their lives for their fellows. If they reached the guns and silenced their fire, it would be probably only by their own self-destruction. And they did not pause to heed this terrible thought, but with devoted heroism bore down upon the foe.

Step by step they pursued their way, falling in dozens as they advanced; but their fierce persistence had its effect. Mere courage could not withstand the grim, awful determination of men who knew they were doomed, and cared not for their safety. Bursting through the wavering ranks of a German infantry regiment which sprang forward to the support of the artillery, the noble remnant of the famous regiment cut their way to the battery, and in a second one of the guns was spiked.

It seemed unlikely that more than this could be effected. Dashing up from all sides, reinforcements from the foe arrived and threatened to surround them, and make of the battery a deadly carnage heap. The Highlanders held

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their ground nobly, and with superb defiance withstood a wild attack before which almost any regiment might be pardoned for staggering.

But now, in what seemed the last moments of a deed seldom parallelled, there came a new and welcome shout.

Fired it into the opposing infantry.

"Old England for ever!" was the cry borne upon their ears.

Amid the confusion it was difficult at first to realise what had happened.

Stationed some distance away, and engaged in assisting in the retreat and covering the retiring infantry, the 1st Dragoons had witnessed from afar the heroic effort of the Seaforth Highlanders.

Nor did Colonel Tomkinson wait to consider.

Forming his men, he bade them charge. Along the enemy's lines swept this magnificent regiment of cavalry, impetuous and terrible.

Tearing through opposing obstacles, and by sheer weight and valour beating aside the press of opposition, the Dragoons dashed like a whirlwind up the slope and cut into the swaying mass surrounding the gallant Highlanders.

So sudden, so magnificent, so resistless was the charge, that the whole enemy yielded, half beaten back, and half magnetised. In a second the remaining guns were rudely harnessed to some of the cavalry horses by the Dragoons. The Seaforth thus cloaked were soon enabled to rapidly retire towards their lines, leaving the foe amazed and wildly wroth, not only at the escape of their quarry, but at the loss of their guns.

From his post away to the right the Emperor William had seen the magnificent charge of the British cavalry, and in pride of soldiership could not refrain from an involuntary cry of angry admiration.

Mistaking his emotion, General Krudsdel, who was at his side, observed:

"Ah, those English! They have the devil's own luck."

His amazement was unbounded when his Emperor, turning fiercely round, said in indignant tones:

"Silence, sir! What do you mean by your insinuation? Do you know that those are the 1st Dragoons? I am their Colonel."

And turning his back upon his astounded General, he rode off.

Within two hours the masterly skill of General Fraser had carried the Reconnaissance Corps to safety. It had effected his mission.

Thousands of Germans lay dead upon the field. But this was not the worst.

For the enemy had commenced to know and to fear the might of the British Tommy.

The Emperor's precept had been terribly borne out in practice.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Unexpected Happens.

When Admiral Mahan quitted the shores of the United States he was fully convinced that the American nation and their political leaders held widely different views on the struggle in Europe. The sympathies of nearly every class of the community were entirely with the Mother Country, whilst the Washington bureaucrats thought they were playing at high politics by adopting a cautious and neutral attitude.

The Admiral also knew that as soon as the Sovereign People had made its opinions clearly known the politicians would "climb down."

Individually he was strongly on the side of Great Britain. Not only was her quarrel just—thus claiming his support as an upright and conscientious man of the world—but there was also a personal phase. As a sailor he quivered with the hope that when the United States navy came into action it might be to aid the flag of Nelson against any assailant, however powerful or ambitious.

Yet, he had his definite orders, and these must be obeyed against all quixotic inclinations, even though the performance of his duty should lead to the destruction of the ideals of his whole active life.

As a non-combatant, however, he was in no way prevented from offering his best wishes to Vice-Admiral James E. Erskine when he encountered the British North-American fleet on its way to the English Channel.

The two fleets sighted each other in mid-ocean on the fifth morning after Admiral Mahan had left New York, and when they came more closely together the American commander accepted the British Admiral's invitation to lunch, the two being, of course, already well acquainted.

"Why are you returning to Europe?" inquired Admiral Mahan when they were conversing together, apart from the other officers, on the quarter-deck of the *Crescent*.

"I really don't know," said Erskine. "It seemed to me that our home forces had absolutely crumpled up all the enemy's ships except the cruisers that escaped through Gib. and reached Brest in safety, and these could easily be held tight there by a section of the Channel Fleet. Under such conditions it would surely have been better to leave me in Canadian waters. But my instructions were imperative. I was to start forthwith, and call at Queenstown for further orders, keeping an eye open on the way for any stray French or German ships which might have designs on our commerce."

"It is curious, certainly."

"Yes," was the thoughtful rejoinder, "so curious that it suggests a tremendous possibility."

"And what is that?" said the American.

"Russia may be about to join the coalition against us."

Admiral Mahan uttered a prolonged whistle to give vent to his amazement—a proceeding so unlike the regulation deportment of a British officer of similar rank that a passing marine nearly followed his example.

"Snakes!" he said at last, "I wish that little business had been fixed up before I left New York."

It was now the turn of the Englishman to be puzzled. "Why?" he inquired.

"Because," came the emphatic reply, "my people are feeling real mean as it is about France and Germany rounding on you in such an underhanded way, but if they knew that Russia was also taking a hand in the game, I should not be sailing alongside you to-day by accident, but by design."

The brave Highlanders rushed upon the German battery.

"Are you quite sure of that?" said the other eagerly. "I must say that I despaired of help from the States when I read the speeches of your prominent men and the articles of your chief newspapers."

"I guess I know the American people pretty well by this time," was Admiral Mahan's confident answer, "and you must not forget that the people pay for both the men and the papers. They can have a fresh tune whenever they like, you bet."

Under existing circumstances the two officers agreed that

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it was inadvisable they should long continue in company, and the American Commander decided upon a more southerly course, as he was in no very urgent hurry to reach his destination, which, by the way, was the British Channel, where he could coal and be out of the way of the belligerents for the time, whilst within easy call of the American Minister in London.

Before parting the crews of both fleets cheered each other heartily. The American bands played "Rule Britannia," and the British bands struck up "Hail Columbia," following on with "Yankee Doodle."

Not to be outdone, and by way of a final message, the flagship of the U.S. fleet sent across the waters the strains of "Auld Lang Syne."

Thus, with mutual good wishes, the fleets of England and the United States slowly diverged in their journey eastwards, and ere the light failed over the sea they were hull down on the horizon from each other.

Vice-Admiral Erskine had a fairly smart lot of ships under his flag. They were not heavy vessels, it is true, and unable to encounter battleships of the latest type, but still, had such put in an appearance, there would, to use the classic expression of a gunner's mate on the *Crescent*, have been "a devil of a row." In addition to four recently built first-class cruisers, the *Sutlej*, *Jumna*, *Narbudda*, and *Jhelum*, there were the usual members of the North-American fleet, namely, the *Buzzard*, *Canada*, *Cleopatra*, *Magicienne*, *Mohawk*, *Partridge*, *Pelican*, *Tartar*, and *Tourmaline*—fourteen ships, all fast and all well armed with quick-firing guns.

On the morning after they had said good-bye to Admiral Mahan, the British fleet discerned the smoke of a distant assemblage of ships slightly northward of their course, and Admiral Erskine at once took measures to be prepared for all eventualities.

It was well that he did so.

Within half-an-hour's time he had counted eighteen French and German cruisers. Evidently these were the vessels that had slipped through Gibralter and remained so long inactive in the harbour at Brest. Their mission now was to cut off all communication between Canada and England, and they regarded themselves as fully equal to the task of capturing the British North-American fleet when they encountered it.

Nevertheless Vice-Admiral von Grüdenau didn't expect to meet his opponent in mid-Atlantic.

In fact he had been caught napping in every sense of the word, and Admiral Erskine was quick to realise that he was probably far more prepared for an immediate engagement than was the enemy. Anyhow, he resolved to act upon the assumption, and whilst the French and German ships commenced to make distance for effective manœuvring the British Admiral flew this signal: "Pick out your opponent and go straight for him."

The battle commenced at 8.10 a.m., by the *Crescent* firing at the German flagship *Augusta*, and within one hour and fifteen minutes four British ships and nine of the allied fleet had sunk, whilst the remainder of the enemy had struck their colours.

A Cunard steamship, the *Lucania*, had come up just as the opposing fleets were closing together, and one of her passengers thus described the fight in a letter to a friend:

"Excitement on board was almost at the point of madness as we saw the two masses of ships quietly nearing each other, without the slightest sound being audible over the intervening stretch of water. It was a positive relief to the nerves when the British flagship sent a shell whizzing at the enemy, who promptly replied.

"From that moment we certainly could not complain of want of noise. Not only was there the banging and clashing of the big guns and the rattle of small arms, but the constant clang of the projectiles against the armoured portions of the ships reminded one for all the world of the hammering and clattering in a shipbuilding yard.

"This, however, was not ship-making, but ship-breaking. In a little while we saw a vessel pitch on to her nose and go straight down. We believed her colours were French, but could not be sure.

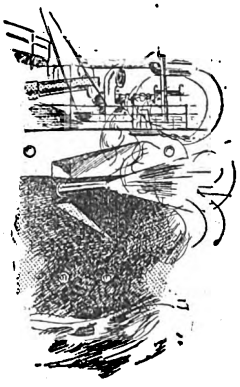
"Someone appealed to the Captain, a Scotchman, and asked him which side was winning. The Captain glared awfully at him and said; 'Are ye daft, man, tae ask sic a drivelling idiot's question'? Of course, the Captain, like the rest of us, hoped there would be only one end to it.

"At last it was all over. The noise ceased, the smoke rolled away from the face of the water, and we could see the Union Jack floating proudly, whilst not another flag was in sight.

"Then we cheered like mad, and the women began to cry for sheer relief. Captain Macpherson nearly burst the foghorn and steamwhistle before he gave the order to resume our course to New York."

The victory, though complete, had been dearly purchased. Several of the British ships were as badly damaged as those of the enemy which still floated, and nearly all were rendered so unseaworthy that a moderate gale would have endangered their existence.

Admiral Erskine found that over thirty per cent. of his men were killed or wounded, whilst on board the French and German ships the carnage had been terrible, and he had to send one half of his available medical staff to their assistance.



The British flagship sent a shell whizzing at the enemy.

Three at least of the enemy were quite disabled, and the *Crescent*, *Narbudda*, and *Magicienne* had to take them in tow.

By nightfall, the weather fortunately remaining calm, the British commander had succeeded in securing something in the disposition of his crippled fleet, which now commenced to move quietly eastwards, with the prospect of reaching Queenstown in about four days' time.

The night was clear, and the lights of the great company of vessels could consequently be distinguished at a considerable distance.

When, therefore, Commander James E. Tully, of the fast dispatch vessel *Seahorse*, sighted them, he knew that he must risk signalling an enemy and trust to his heels afterwards if the fleet should turn out to be hostile.

He sent up four white rockets followed by a red one and waited anxiously for the reply, with his hand on the engine-room indicator. It came, four red rockets and one white, and he knew to his exceeding joy, that he had fallen in with Erskine's force.

As speedily as possible he was conveyed to the flagship. He handed an Admiralty dispatch to his superior officer, and then, with the quick, comprehensive glance of a sailor, took in the details of the day's proceedings.

Admiral Erskine paled as he read the instructions he had just received.

"Great Heavens!" he cried, "my victory has been as disastrous as a defeat. I suppose you guess the contents of this dispatch, Commander Tully?"

"I am afraid I do, sir," was the answer. "When I left Portsmouth the newspapers stated that although Russia had not definitely declared war the Government feared treachery on her part. A strong Russian fleet had slipped through the Baltic and was last sighted, the day before yesterday, off the north-west of Scotland. The *Surprise* is also looking for you on the southern route, and I might have missed you if I had not fallen in with the American——"

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"Ha," interrupted the Admiral. "Did you tell Mahan your news?"

"It was the first question he asked me after giving me the fullest information with regard to your possible location. He at once inquired if Russia had declared war."

"And what did you say?"

"I thought I was justified, sir, in giving him such news as I possessed."

"Perfectly justified. What did he do then?"

"He informed me of the chance of your meeting the allied fleets, which I see you have done, sir, with splendid effect, and at once, judging by his smoke-stacks, he started for England full speed ahead."

The Admiral gazed hopelessly at the papers in his hands before he said in a broken voice: "My orders are to proceed with all possible haste to the Bristol Channel to intercept a possible Russian attack upon our coal supply, and here I am, in mid-Atlantic, with a practically disabled fleet, hardly making five knots an hour and utterly unfitted to fight half-a-dozen well-handled colliers. Oh, it is cruel, cruel!"

But Erskine was not the man to flinch before difficulties, however insurmountable they might appear.

"Commander Tully," he said with his wonted calm tones of subdued energy, "you must return at once to Valentia and telegraph the facts of the case thence to London. Say that five of my ships can make ten knots, and at that rate we will reach the Bristol Channel. The others are useless, save to act as broken-down convoy to the nine ships I have captured. The other nine French and German cruisers are at the bottom of the Atlantic. If Providence so decrees, the rest of the fleet will in due course reach Queenstown. As a final word—every minute lost in conveying this news to the Admiralty renders the case of England more desperate."

Commander Tully saluted, swung himself over the side of the *Crescent* without waiting for the formality of a ladder, and said as he reached his boat: "Bend to it, my lads. 'Sharp's' the word with the davits, as the ship starts the moment I reach deck."

During four weary days did Admiral Erskine pace the deck of the *Crescent*, whilst his now tiny force crept along at what appeared to be a snail's pace over the vast expanse of the Atlantic.

More than ten knots he did not dare to ask his engineers to make, and it was only by almost superhuman efforts on the part of those devoted officers that even this moderate rate of speed was attained without the ever-threatened breakdown.

During this miserable period of inaction not a vessel was seen save one or two belated cargo-boats travelling eastwards, and from the absence of all outward-bound traffic, the British commander argued the fulfilment of his worst fears—namely, an expected or actual attack upon England by the Russians.

It was an ill task asking the Admiral any questions at this time, yet he achieved wonders in the way of repairs to his damaged ships as they progressed, and by the time they sighted Lundy Island they presented a highly creditable appearance. No one would ever judge by their superficial semblance that they had recently passed the ordeal of a terrific naval engagement.

It was midday on Thursday, May 25th, that the British fleet passed north of Lundy, and it was with a wildly beating heart that Erskine slowly deciphered the message signalled by the lighthouse keeper, who was telephonically connected with the mainland.

And this is what the fluttering little flags tediously spelled out:

"American fleet anchored off Cardiff last night. At daybreak strong Russian fleet passed up Channel to attack Cardiff. Negotiations took place between America and Russian Admirals, and it is believed that American Admiral insists upon delay in Russian attack. Reason not known. Channel Fleet now off Land's End on way from Havre."

Erskine smiled for the first time for four days. In fact, his accustomed good humour returned with avidity to make up for his previous anxiety.

"Mahan is a brick!" he exclaimed. "I might have known he would work off some dodge upon them. Played them up strong, I expect, upon the protection of commerce idea." And he stamped about the quarter-deck with such joyful eagerness the men knew all was right so far, and the wounded turned more comfortably in their berths as the good news permeated through the ship.

Embraced by his sister and his fiancee.

Three hours later the five ships were abreast of the Nash Lights. When the broad reach of the Channel between the Steep Holm Island and Barry began to open up, the British fleet suddenly saw three battleships and four cruisers, flying the Russian colours, coming down Channel, and Erskine at once threw his vessels in line across their path.

Preparations were speedily made for a fight, but when the Russians were some two miles distant they were seen, to the amazement of the British, in view of the disparity of the forces, to stop dead and strike their colours.

This token of unconditional surrender was immediately followed by a signal from the leading battleship: "To avoid useless bloodshed I yield.—Michaelovitch, Grand Duke and Commander-in-Chief."

Such an astounding piece of good luck could hardly be credited by the British Admiral, but by this time his officers were beginning to note through their glasses that the Russians showed many signs of recent severe handling.

It was indeed true that they were wholly unfitted to struggle against an apparently fully equipped foe, although vastly superior in class of ship and weight of armament; yet the wonder of the British officers now became absolute bewilderment. How had this thing happened?

In a few minutes the Russian Grand Duke was tendering his sword to Admiral Erskine.

"We could not fight against a fresh fleet," he said in excellent English. "My ships are practically disabled, and mere floating hospitals."

"Well we are mostly paint and bandages ourselves," said the Englishman.

Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, stamped his foot with rage upon the deck as he glanced round and saw that he had surrendered prematurely to a foe almost as crippled as himself and of such infinitely less relative power.

"You must not take it too much to heart," continued Admiral Erskine, in kindly tones. "You could not have escaped. The Channel Fleet is only six hours behind me."

The Russian tried to find comfort in the fact, but he was nevertheless furious at his own precipitation.

"Who fought you, anyway?" said Erskine.

"That irrepressible Yankee," growled the other. "He first tried to delay my operations and when I refused to fall in with his views formed up his ships between me and the port. I had no alternative but to attack him—with this result."

The agony of the Russian Admiral was such that Erskine could not seek to comfort him.

The Russian ships then put about and the whole compact moved slowly on towards Cardiff.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

Cheap Steam Coal.

"Oh, Irene, what awful news is this!"

"What?" cried Lady Irene Vyne, starting to her feet with passionate intensity.

"Russia has declared war. The paper says that the information is authorised by the Foreign Office, so it must be true."

The Russian delegate found himself confronted by the Harbour-Master.

"Is that all? My dear Ethel, I thought something had happened to Teddy," and the pale-faced but imperious young beauty sank back into her chair with an expression of absolute relief at the insignificance of the intelligence.

"But, Irene, surely this is serious enough! They say here that an attack in force may be expected anywhere on the coast at any moment. Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Liverpool, are all anxious, as a Russian fleet has entered the North Sea, and its whereabouts is unknown, whilst the Russian Ambassador is leaving at once. The Channel Fleet is at Havre, and is ordered back for the defence of the South Coast. The two special squadrons are recalled from Kiel and Stralsund. It is awfully dangerous for the troops, is it not?" and Ethel Harington pensively dropped the fatal news-sheet and gazed affrightedly at her friend.

"Dearest, how can you think so? Have not our armies beaten the French and Germans every time they have met them? Are they not strongly entrenched with their bases on the sea, upon which no enemy's ship floats save this new ally? If we must face the world in arms let us do it with the same spirit we have displayed so far. Let the Russians send their ships. We will repair them and re-christen them in our dock-yards." Irene's colour came as she spoke, and a fearless light leaped into her sweet blue eyes.

"I wish I had your courage," said the other. "But then, you know, I never hear from Frank, whilst you have news from Teddy so often."

Irene went and knelt by the side of her companion and tenderly put her arms about her. "Ethel," she said. "If I were told that Teddy was killed, which God forbid should His merciful wisdom so decree, it would break my heart, but I should still rejoice that my country had received the sacrifice. Neither men nor women must think of fear whilst England is in danger."

Tears rose unbidden to the eyes of both girls, and they were silent for a moment. The door was flung open and Major Harington entered, to be impulsively flown at and embraced by his sister and his *fiancée*.

"Oh, Teddy, how did you come?" cried one.

"And when did you come?" said the other.

"But we're so glad you're here."

"We were just crying about your imaginary funeral."

"And Irene said——"

"I'm sure I didn't. You began about the Russians."

Then both together—"Do sit down and tell us all about it."

Major Harington, looking browner and thinner than when they had last met, did sit down, but promptly jumped up and kissed them both again. He seemed inclined to repeat the process, but they seized him and held him in an easy chair, while Irene said:

"If you don't tell us the news at once, you will get no tea."

Thus coerced, he explained that Lord Roberts had sent General Massy back to see hurriedly to some final details concerning the forwarding of the Third French Expedition, and that he, Harington, had accompanied the General as his A.D.C.

Great excitement and uncertainty prevailed at the War Office owing to the expected Russian attack. Lord Wolseley had delayed the departure of the first detachment of the Third Army Corps until it was known whether or not their services would be required to repel an invasion. It was not certain that transports accompanied the Russian fleet—that remained to be seen.

"As for me," concluded Harington, "I have exactly forty minutes' leave, and here I am."

"You're looking splendid," cried his sister.

"I must tell my father and mother you are here," said Irene. "They will be delighted to see you. But before they come I want to give you something." She leant over him, took his face between her hands, and kissed him.

This action, simple enough though it was, yet had an element of strangeness in its manner.

"That is very nice of you," said Harington. "But may I ask the reason of this special sign of favour?"

"Because I am proud of you, Teddy. If you had been killed whilst taking those guns, I should have worn a wedding-ring all my life as a lasting token of my faithfulness to the memory of the man who was to have been my husband."

Lady Irene Vyne was thoroughbred right through.

* * * *

On the morning of May 25th the early risers among the people of Cardiff were eating their breakfast and discussing the possible whereabouts of the Russian fleet, when a thrill of pleasureable excitement passed rapidly from the pier-head to the town at the news that a strong American flotilla of six battleships and eleven cruisers had anchored in the roads.

Councillor Ramsdale was the Mayor for that year, and notwithstanding the anxieties and duties entailed by the war, he never forgot the hospitable traditions of his dignified position.

He was soon astir and hastily convened a meeting of the General Purposes Committee to provide for the due entertainment of the officers of a friendly Power, as the hourly increasing sympathy of the United States had caused a keen sentiment of grateful kindliness to spring forth in all parts of the kingdom.

As it transpired, the committee, which met at ten o'clock, had a very different question for consideration.

"Steam coal will be cheap to-morrow."

Admiral Mahan at once sent the first lieutenant of the *Minneapolis* ashore to ascertain if there were any United State vessels in dock and preparing for a voyage.

There were two bound for New York and Philadelphia and loading with tin-plates in the Roath Dock.

"When will you be ready for sea?" said the naval officer to the two captains, whom he found at the shipping-office of the Board of Trade.

"To-night's tide," said one.

"Midday to-morrow," replied the other.

"I guess you'd better sail in company to-morrow," said the officer. "You'd feel kinder lonesome otherwise. The United States want those tin-plates particular bad?" he went on.

"Particular," assented one captain.

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"It'll be a cruel thing for Philadelphia if that white metal ain't delivered by June 6th," said his companion.

"And I suppose that six-inch shells and shrapnel won't hurry up the loading?"

"You can stand on me, Admiral; my ship won't take any more tin under them unfavourable conditions."

"Commodore, there'll be a scarcity of tinplates in Philadelphia for a considerable period."

The lieutenant carefully noted the names of the vessels, the captains, and the owners, with the details of their charter-parties, and returned to the flagship.

Meanwhile Cardiff, and in a brief space the rest of the country, became strangely convulsed by the arrival of successive telegrams and telephonic messages announcing the passing of an unknown fleet of warships—flying no colours, but believed to be Russian—by Lundy Island, by the Mumbles Lighthouse, by Nash point, and, finally, by Barry.

At 10.30 a.m. the sound of cannon boomed over the sea.

Twenty Russian ships—at last their ensigns were hoisted—were rapidly steaming between the Steep and Flat Holm Islands and Lavernock Point on the mainland, and the miserable little batteries at those places were feebly thundering forth defiance to the enemy.

But the Russians knew that the weapons, mostly dating from the Crimean war, did not even cover the few intervening miles of the Channel, dropping their projectiles harmlessly into the sea, and leaving a broad central passage untouched. They did not even trouble to reply.

At eleven o'clock they hove to opposite the town, but somewhat to one side of, and farther away than the American ships.

The Mayor, and several members of the Corporation hurried to the pier office in order to learn the fate of the port at the earliest moment, and the local volunteers—such few as were left after the drafts for foreign service had been met—and some companies of the auxiliary army, formed up in the same locality.

Lord Wolseley telegraphed that Sir Richard Harrison and staff were travelling by special train to Cardiff, and that 100,000 men with 200 guns, would be in the town by four o'clock. The Channel Fleet, too, had started under forced draught from Portsmouth, where it had arrived from Havre.

The Russians had barely halted before a steam launch rapidly left the *Kronstadt*, and, flying a flag of truce, throbbed its way up the entrance of the channel, finally depositing a magnificent-looking officer and two juniors, attended by a small guard of marines, on the steps at the pierhead.

The Russian delegate found himself confronted by the Harbour-Master when he reached the quay.

"I would have the honour to see the Governor of the city," he smilingly explained, recognising the official by his uniform.

"This way," was the stern answer, and the party marched into the Pier Offices, which were close at hand.

The Mayor stepped forward at once to meet them.

He was pale with emotion, but furious at the thought of the pending horrors for his town and people.

"Well, sir," he said, with all the calmness he could muster, "what is your business?"

The Russian still smiled, and explained, speaking carefully, but most politely:

"The Grand Duke Michaelovitch, admiral in command of the fleet of His Majesty the Tsar, being instructed of destroying your docks and railways, is about to give them the dynamite. Also will he sink all ships in the harbour of you. He desires no evil to unarmed people, and women, and the child, but if any resist he will cannonade the city."

"Tell him, sir," said the Mayor, "that we fear neither him, nor his cannon, nor his master. Armed or unarmed, we defy him. And let me tell you, sir," he went on, with increasing vehemence, "that if you land here again with your men we will improve your English and add a lesson in Welsh!"

The envoy understood sufficient of this forcible speech for his purpose. He bowed most ceremoniously, and was escorted back to his launch by the Harbour-Master, amid the dead silence of the onlookers.

Admiral Mahan.

The Major was the first to break the spell cast upon the assembled leaders of the community by the dread presence of the enemy at the very threshold of the town.

"Come!" he cried. "Let us arm ourselves as best we may. We must, if need be, die in our streets to keep back the enemy until help is at hand."

A German coal-shipper, naturalised by long residence in South Wales, who had joined the group round the Mayor, sneered at the folly of the proceedings.

"Steam coal vill be cheap to-morrow," he said.

The Mayor heard him and turned fiercely upon him.

"Have you any to sell, sauerkraut?" he inquired.

The German was nettled at the nick-name.

"More dan you can buy," he snapped.

"How much, and what's your price?"

"Ten tausend tons at five shillings," cried the Teuton, who knew in the event of bombardment the port would be ruined.

"Here's a cheque for £2,500," said the Mayor, seizing a pen and ink. "Give me in return an undertaking to supply the coal or its market price, whichever you choose, to me or my heirs to-morrow at noon."

The German did not hesitate, the documents were exchanged, and next day at the appointed hour, the shipper, almost on his knees, besought the Mayor to take £5,000, and let him off his contract, as the market price of steam coal, f.o.b., was 16s. per ton.

Admiral Mahan had not been a disinterested spectator of the passage of the Russian launch up the fairway of the channel, and its subsequent return.

He forthwith dispatched to the *Kronstadt* the same officer who had landed at Cardiff in the earlier hours of the day.

When the lieutenant was brought before the Russian commander-in-chief he was laconic.

"Admiral Mahan, of the United States Navy," he said, "instructs me to ask your purpose in visiting British shores."

"I am delighted to explain to such a distinguished officer, who so ably represents a friendly country, that my mission is to destroy this and other ports in Great Britain," was the Grand Duke's answer.

"Russia having declared war against England?"

"Exactly." Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, urbane though he was, resented the interrogator's manner.

"Has notice been given to the United States of your attitude?" went on the lieutenant, quite regardless of the change of tone in the superior person with whom he was conversing.

"I presume so. That is a matter of diplomatic detail to which I have paid no attention."

"There are two American ships in dock here, and they cannot complete loading until to-morrow. They could not arrange otherwise, having received no warning of the outbreak of hostilities between England and Russia. Against a French or German fleet they take their own risk, of course, but in your case and under the circumstances, Admiral Mahan has directed me to ask you to delay your bombardment until these two vessels have loaded and sailed."

The Grand Duke laughed with angry surprise. "Preposterous!" he shouted. "Did anyone ever hear of such

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a childish request?" and he turned to his staff to volubly explain in Russian.

Every man guffawed loudly, but the American sailor surveyed them stolidly, though a slight flush came to his face.

"I have the greatest respect for your famous commander, in whom, as a seaman, I recognise a master, but I fear I cannot extend the same regard for his opinions on international law," said the Russian, who had now recovered his wonted complaisance.

"Admiral Mahan did not send me to seek your opinion of his acquirements," was the calm answer. "I am here to state his unalterable wishes."

"Unalterable wishes!" growled the Grand Duke, again astounded at the language used to him. "You must have misunderstood your commander, sir. Have the goodness to return to him and ask him to send a more intelligent representative—after I have finished my work. I am busy now."

For the first time during the interval the American officer smiled. "I am using my commander's exact words," he said.

"And if I refuse this mad demand," cried the Russian prince, now thoroughly aroused, "what is the alternative?"

"You must first pass through the United States fleet," was the quiet and measured response.

The officer spoke as though he were uttering the merest triviality, but his heart bounded tumultuously as he uttered the fateful words.

"Holy Nicholas! This is too much," shouted Michaelovitch. "Quit my ship, sir, and tell your admiral from me that I give your two ships half-an-hour to clear out of dock, and your fleet the same time to shift its moorings. In thirty minutes I open fire."

The lieutenant saluted and tripped lightly down the gangway to his launch.

When Admiral Mahan heard the result of the interview, his gleaming eyes alone showed the fire that flamed in his soul.

He turned to his flag-lieutenant and said:

"Have all preparations been made according to my directions?"

"All, sir. Every ship noted them and signified their completion."

"Then signal 'Prepare for action.' Ships will follow the flagship at six cable length and take station accordingly."

The United States fleet moved slowly off in the wake of the *Minneapolis*, and when they halted in line in the fairway of the channel they were interposed between the town of Cardiff and the Russian armament.

At one o'clock precisely the Russians deployed for the attack, and the *Kronstadt* signalled:

"I am about to open fire."

"Better wait twenty-four hours," came the reply from the *Minneapolis*.

The answer to this was a shell, which whizzed through the centre of the American line of ships and finally destroyed the remnants of the low-water pier.

Admiral Mahan was equally punctilious. A six-inch shell was sent shrieking past the bows of the *Kronstadt*.

Before it had dropped harmlessly into the sea far away towards the blue coast of Devon, so charmingly silhouetted against the bright summer sky, the two fleets were furiously engaged.

Admiral Mahan shouted to the captain of his ship, for an ordinary tone of voice would have been inaudible amidst the roar of the guns:

"If I've got to be hanged on my own quarter-deck I'll have a jolly good fight here first!"

(To be continued.)

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
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THERE MAY BE ONE FOR YOU!

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☛ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

In many cases sovereigns must have been awarded to people who are not readers of our paper.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 2 distribution must reach us by October 17th, addressed to

The 2nd Sovereign Editor,
"Short Stories" Office,
Henrietta Street,
London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately. You may not apply in more than one competition on the same post-card.

NOTE.—A similar, but independent, competition in which 50 sovereigns are given away is appearing weekly in HOME NOTES and THE ATHLETIC RECORD.

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THE WONDERFUL METAL POLISHER

The Lustre Lasts!

Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.

Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

TRILENE TABLETS THE ONLY CURE for STOUTNESS Registered by GOVERNMENT Price 2/6

ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Miss HEYWOOD, 77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, Lancs., says: "I am 21lb. lighter, and my rheumatism also seems cured."

MRS. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Station Road, Ross, Hereford, says: "Am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st."

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LADY CONSTANCE CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with the Tablets."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent Tablets directly."

COUNTESS G. FURSTENBERG, Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone.

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Pinsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

NOSE MACHINE.

This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price **10/6**, sent free for stamps.

ALEX. ROSS,

62, Theobald's Road, London.

Opposite Bedford Row. (Est. 1850.)

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THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

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WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

When you can get a real safe remedy like KAPUTINE?

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vescicle tissues generally."

NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.

All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.

The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

From Rev. J. H. BURN.

DEER RECTORY, MINTLAW, ABERDEEN, NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.

Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.

Nothing Similar. Nothing as Good. **KAPUTINE CURES HEADACHE IN 10 MINUTES.**

If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.

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Your Esteemed Inquiry Duly to Hand.

D. S.—About a quarter of the inhabitants of Paris live in apartments.

Yankee-Doodle.—The total length of railways in Great Britain is rather more than 21,000 miles. A very good proportion, when you remember that the total area of Great Britain is only 121,000 square miles.

G. G. puts the question: "Who is the greatest Royal traveller?"————I should say the Emperor William of Germany excels in this matter, while the King of the Belgians and the Prince of Wales might come next.

P. P.—Portugal is the ancient Lusitania. Its present name is derived from Porto Callo, the original appellation of Oporto. The latter name is the English rendering of O Porto, "The Port."

E. D. W. asks: "What is a 'rote of waves'?"————It is a favourite idea of the fishing and seafaring people of the north-east of Scotland, that in a storm three waves are strong and violent, while the fourth is comparatively weak and less dangerous. This succession they call a "rote of waves."

W. G. S.—Your friend is quite right; there is no mikado. The Emperor of Japan is known as "Tenno Hei-Ka," which means "His Imperial Majesty." Thus the people of Japan address their sovereign in exactly the same manner as do the subjects of the Kaiser. It is true, "Mikado" used at one time to be the title. It has, however, fallen into abeyance for several generations.

D. E. S.—True, the Tsar has some very large estates, one covering over one hundred million of acres, which is, in fact, more than three times the size of England. You must remember, however, that one acre of ground in London is worth more than a hundred million acres in the Russian steppes. The Tsar's biggest estate only brings him in £95,000 a year, while land in London has been sold for as much as £1,000 a square yard.

Tom Tucker is about to start on an ocean voyage for the first time in his life. He writes to ask me if I can tell him of any way by which he can find out whether he is likely to suffer from sea-sickness or not.————An easy way to put the matter to a test is to stand before an ordinary mirror that turns in its frame, and to let someone move it slowly and slightly at first, and gradually growing faster while you look at your own reflection. If you feel no effect whatever from it, the chances are that you will be able to stand an ordinary sea-voyage without any qualm.

T.—Probably the most ancient pulpit in England still in use is that in Lutterworth Church, in which Wycliff preached. It remains intact.

Doc.—The highest death rate seems to be one of Russia's records. At Krasnovarsk it reaches the appalling figure of 100 per 1,000, that is, one in every ten. It is 70 per 1,000 in several districts, and even in Moscow, among the lower classes, it occasionally reaches 44 per 1,000. These figures refer to a week when the death rate in London was 14·5 per 1,000.

B. B.—Boiling alive, as a punishment, is hardly dead yet, if we may believe the statement that came on good authority from Persia in the early part of the present decade. A tax-collector, who had been found guilty of appropriating State funds, was done to death in that manner. This was for the double purpose of punishing him and encouraging the others to be honest.

Schoolboy writes to ask if such a person as "John Gilpin of 'credit and renown' ever really existed."————Certainly he did, and he lived in a cottage at Thornton Heath, near Croydon, which is still standing, although, of course, it is in a very dilapidated condition, the roof being thickly covered with stout ivy roots, and a rich crop of weeds grows on the soil which a period of three hundred years has deposited on the tiles.

A cycling friend gave me a useful little tip the other day, which I now repeat for the benefit of my cycling readers. It is this. If you are unfortunate enough to get a punctured tyre when riding in the country miles away from anywhere, and find yourself out of rubber solution, an effective cement for repairing can be made with a teaspoonful of glycerine and a gill of glue, both of which ingredients can be purchased at any village shop.

B. V.—Of the rulers of great states who have been done to death during the past thirty years or so, three were Presidents. The United States have lost two—Lincoln, shot in a theatre by Booth in 1865, and Garfield, mortally wounded by Guiteau in 1881. The assassination of President Carnot of France is still fresh in our memories. Other rulers were the following: In 1874 the Sultan Abdul Aziz of Turkey "died suddenly"; it is generally understood that his journey to the Mohammedan paradise was accelerated by the application of a pair of scissors to a vein, but details are, of course, wanting. In 1881, the Tsar Alexander of Russia, grandfather of the present ruler, was horribly mutilated by the explosion of a bomb. The Empress of Austria does not, strictly speaking, come under the head of "ruler."

S. L.—The London Spas had a national reputation at one time. There is only one left now; it is not far from High Street, Streatham. It belongs to a firm of dairy farmers, who sell the water at one penny a glass. The water has a slight taste of sulphur, and is strongly impregnated with iron.

Sub.—What may fairly be termed a subterranean city exists in Galicia, in Austrian Poland. It is called the City of the Salt Mines, has a population of more than a thousand men, women, and children, many of whom have never seen the light of day, and possesses a town hall, a church, and a theatre. In the church are several statues, carved from rock salt.

H. E.—The Jewish congregation of Worms, in Germany, is of extreme antiquity. It is claimed that the community was established before the destruction of the Second Temple. On one occasion the members of this ancient body, when petitioning their monarch for more liberal treatment, pleaded that their ancestors took no part in the Crucifixion, as they had been settled in Worms long before the birth of Christ.

E M. writes: "I am pining to make a record of some kind—easily. I am going out to Tongaland, in the Western Pacific, and I shall take my bicycle; in that way I shall make a record—I shall be the first to introduce the wheel there."————You are a little late, E. M. The first bicycle was introduced into Tonga last year; this was followed by several others, and on the occasion of the king's birthday there was actually a bicycle race. Some of the natives are taking very kindly to it.

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NO COMPETITION!

£200

IN CASH PRIZES!!!

SEND NO MONEY. NO ENTRANCE FEES.

This large sum will be absolutely given away in order to introduce our **New Season's Price Lists of Linen and Fancy Novelties** to the Public throughout the Kingdom. You may **win a Sovereign** and obtain the Price Lists **post free** by sending us a post-card with your name and address written thereon. Nothing could be simpler.

The Cash will be distributed thus:—Every **Monday** Price Lists will be posted to all who sent post-cards during the previous week, and the first twenty directed will be entitled to

ONE POUND EACH!

Everyone will be informed of the results with the Lists, the only condition being that all Prize winners must send us an order and P.O. for any goods selected to the value of 5s. or over within seven days.

Value of Prizes already distributed this year—**£437.**

In addition to the above Cash Prizes we will each week send a free Silk Handkerchief to the next 100, and we are sure these beautiful Prizes will also greatly advertise our Handkerchief Department.

Last season we received 4,118 **repeat orders** and thousands of Testimonials from our Customers, which conclusively prove the sterling value of our Goods.

Remember there are 200 Sovereign Prizes to be sent out before December 19th. Would one be useful to you? Then send a post-card at once to

JAMES ROBERTSON & CO.

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LINEN MERCHANTS,

63 HIGH HOLBORN, LONDON

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KOKO
FOR THE HAIR

NOTE. We make no extravagant and foolish assertions respecting "KOKO," as to its being "the best in the world," and that kind of nonsense. We point to our testimonials in proof of the value of "KOKO" for the Hair. The high social standing of the writers is a guarantee of the genuineness and undoubted excellence of our preparation.

Royal Testimonial.

"Alsenstrasse, Berlin.
"KOKO" is the BEST DRESSING I KNOW. IT KEEPS the head cool, promotes growth, and is in every way EXCELLENT.
"PRINCESS HOHENLOHE."

A Doctor writes:

(The original can be seen at the Company's Offices.)

Gentlemen,—After using your "Koko" for over six months, I must acknowledge its superiority over any other dressings for the hair which I have tried. It keeps the head perfectly cool, and it *does* eradicate dandriff, and gives the hair a fine, glossy appearance. The medical treatment of dandriff may be summed up in six words—viz., "Keep the head saturated with oil." No doubt this is efficient; but if we adopt this method, the head becomes dirty, for the simple reason that all moving particles are caught and retained by the oil; and, again, bed linen is rendered disgusting by being stained. Now, your "Koko" possesses none of these disadvantages, and it is equally, if not more, effectual. It is for this reason that I prefer it to any other dressing. Since first trying it, I have used no other, and have great pleasure in recommending it to my friends and patients. I send you this little note merely to let you know how well pleased I am with your preparation.

The Late Mrs. E. Lynn Linton,

The Celebrated Authoress, writes:

Broughton House, Malvern. Dear Sirs,—I have used your "Koko" now since June last, and I have not only stopped the falling out, which had been excessive after a severe illness, but I have an entirely new growth of hair, while the old hair is longer. As I am not a young woman, but an old one, I think this is a convincing test of the value of your preparation."

ROYAL TESTIMONIAL.

Berlin
Alsenstrasse
Feb 25th 1896.

"Koko" for the hair, is the best dressing I know. It keeps the head cool, promotes growth, and is in every way excellent.

Princess Hohenlohe
Oehringen

SPECIAL OFFER TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET TRIED "KOKO."

A 4/6 TRIAL BOTTLE FOR 2/-

Any person forwarding this Coupon and P.O. for Two Shillings and Five Stamps to pay postage, package, &c., will receive immediately for trial, by Parcel Post, under cover, prepaid, **One regular 12-oz. Bottle of KOKO for the Hair**, the price of which is 4/6, provided it is ordered **within ten days from the date of this offer.** In no case will more than one bottle be sent for the use of the same person on this coupon, as we make the offer solely for trial, knowing it creates a demand when once used; and this large bottle gives it a fair trial. We find it better to thus practically **give away** one bottle to make a customer than to spend large amounts in advertising. **Any person into whose hands this offer comes may avail themselves of it.** Address all orders with Coupon to:

KOKO-MARICOPAS CO. Ltd., 16 Bevis Marks, London.

Orders may be sent with this Coupon after the expiration of date, provided we are then issuing these trial bottle Coupons, and if we are not, the money will be returned. This Coupon will be received at 16 Bevis Marks, E.C., or 233 Regent Street, London, W., and 2s. only will be required when presented personally.

Koko is sold by all Chemists and Stores at 2/6 and 4/6 per Bottle.

THE NOVEL MAGAZINE IS NOW ON SALE!

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 512. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 22ND, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

Stomach Disorders.

MR. ROBERT SPROT, of 51 Orchard Street, Galston, Ayrshire, writes on June 10th, 1898:

"Guy's Tonic is the best Medicine my Wife has ever "taken for Stomach Disorders. She has been ailing more "or less for the last Twenty Years, and Guy's Tonic is the "finest Digestive Medicine that she has ever obtained."

Guy's Tonic: A Few Points

1. Its delicious flavour. It is pleasant to take.
2. Its freedom from Quinine and Iron; it therefore does not cause Constipation.
3. Its skilful and accurate preparation by qualified Pharmacists.
4. Its cheapness in price. Six ounces for 1s. 1½d.
5. Its approval by Medical Men.
6. Its employment in Hospital Practice.
7. The entire absence of harmful ingredients.
8. The universal good repute Guy's Tonic enjoys among those who have tried it.

There is no magic or haphazard arrangement in the virtues of Guy's Tonic. These things were studied with careful watchfulness for many years by a Doctor in a large West End Practice in London, and after years of practical experiment the formula from which Guy's Tonic is now prepared by skilled and qualified Pharmacists was that adopted as the best to attain the Digestive, Creative, and Invigorating power required.

In cases of Weakness, Debility, and in Convalescence after all Diseases, Guy's Tonic has a wonderful restorative power in building up the Health and Strength.

A new size (Six Ounce) Bottle of Guy's Tonic, price 1s. 1½d., is now on sale at all Chemists and Stores. This great concession in price is the result of vast sales of Guy's Tonic.

Try a 1s. 1½d. Bottle, and notice the improvement Guy's Tonic speedily effects in your Appetite. Energy, Strength and Vigour. Watch how it brightens the Spirits, and gives freedom from Indigestion and Debility.

10/6 — 10/6

Allen Foster & Co

SOLE MAKERS OF

THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

The "Alfosco" Half-Guinea Costumes are recommended by thousands of delighted customers, who acknowledge them to be GREATLY SUPERIOR in MAKE, STYLE, and VALUE, to any costumes they have ever seen at anything approaching the same prices.

Design No. 545. 10/6

Design No. 545. 10/6.

Design No. 69. 7/6

Design No. 69. 7/6.

A Great Bargain. The Cape for the Million. Price only 7s. 6d., made in an excellent **Beaver** Cloth, with collar trimmed with extra wide real Mohair Chinchilla. Colours—Fawn, Brown, Green, Navy, and Black. Send for one. Securely packed, sent Parcel Post, 6d. extra. Our New Illustrated Sketch Book contains a number of the latest designs of Jackets and Capes. Sent post free on application.

Design No. 545. Half-a-Guinea.

In a fashionable Costume for the Winter season. A wonderful costume for Half-a-Guinea. Made in the Allen Foster Specialite Serge. It consists of the stylish Reefer Jacket, with fashionably-made skirt. Velvet collar and tailor stitching. Costume Complete, **10/6.** Skirt only, 5/6. Carriage paid, 6d. extra.

PATTERNS AND SKETCHES POST FREE.

Regular Stock Sizes of Costumes are 34, 36, and 38 inches round bust (under arms), the Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 inches long in front. Large or Special sizes made to measure, 1/6 extra. Each Costume securely packed, and sent by Parcel Post carriage paid, 6d. extra; skirt only, 6d. extra. Please mention *Short Stories.*

NEW SKETCH BOOK OF FASHIONS, ORDER FORMS AND PATTERNS, POST FREE.

A Large Variety of Styles in our Famous Half-Guinea Indoor Costumes.

ALLEN FOSTER & CO., THE LONDON MANUFACTURERS,

17 ROSCOE ST., GOLDEN LANE, LONDON, E.C.

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Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

PURE, HARMLESS, AND NON-APERIENT.

Do not be persuaded to take a substitute, there is nothing as good as ZOX.

Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

ZOX Co., 11 HATTON GARDEN, E.C.

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This is a contrivance by which the short cartilage of the nose is pressed into shape by wearing the instrument an hour daily for a short time. Price 10/6, sent free for stamps.

ALEX. ROSS,
62, Theobald's Road, London.

Opposite Bedford Row. (Est. 1850.)

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THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

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Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

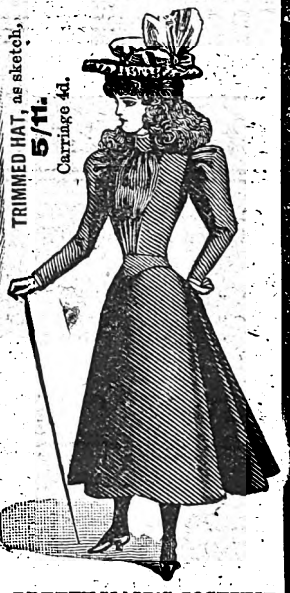
GOOD FELT HAT, as sketch, 2/6. All colours. Carriage 4d.

THE John Noble

HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

are promptly sent by Parcel Post, safely packed, direct from the Largest Firm of Costumiers in the World, and are made to look smart and yield faithful service.

TRIMMED HAT, as sketch, 5/11. Carriage 4d.



Model 934.

Exceedingly well-made and carefully finished Chesterfield Coat, and full-wide **10/6** Tailor Skirt. Price complete Costume, 10/6; carriage 6d. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage 5d. Good quality.

Stylish blouse bodice and neat skirt. Bodice lined through, and made with pretily gathered front and shaped belt, **6/11** *as sketch.* Lengths and Prices:

35	38	42	46 in.	Car.
6/11	7/11	8/11	9/11 ea.	6d.

Lengths are from top of neck-band to bottom of skirt in front.

PRETTY MAID'S COSTUME No. 1016.

These Costumes are supplied in the following two good durable Cloths:
I. John Noble Cheviot Serge, weighty and weather-resisting.
H. John Noble Costume Coating, smooth-surfaced and of lighter weight.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE,

together with the new 84-page Illustrated Fashion Book for Ladies and Children. Please mention *Short Stories* when writing.

A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloth (6yd. 52in. wide) for 7/6. Carriage 8d. **7/6**

COLOURS of all Costumes are Black, Navy, Electric, Brown, Ruby, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, Moss, Sage Green, and Purple.

THE THREE SIZES IN STOCK are 34, 36, and 38 in. round bust (under arms). Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front.

Any other size can be specially made to measure 1/6 extra.

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NIXEY'S BLACK LEAD.

Maker to the Queen.

World-wide reputation.

SHORT STORIES

No. 512. ONE PENNY.

For the Week Ending
October 22nd, 1898.

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 4.—Baggara Horseman.

An Arab Sweetheart

I REALLY do not think that a man who has seen a little fighting was ever so much bothered to tell all he knew about that little as I have been of late. It was my luck to be in some of the earlier fighting in the Soudan in the eighties, and the way I have been harassed for stories of gallant deeds performed by myself, would have tempted many a less truthful man to become a second Baron Munchausen.

I have made up my mind to say no more about my own doings, so I cannot gratify you this time; but as you are so pressing I will tell you what someone else did, if that will do. It will? Very good; here you are, and you may take my word for it that it's true, although—but you know the old saying about truth and fiction.

Towards the end of 1883, Colonel Hicks, or Hicks Pasha, was going strong against the Mahdi with a force of Egyptian troops and one or two British officers. After some successful fighting, Hicks reached Duem on his way to Kordofan.

About five weeks later, the force was decoyed into ambush at El-Obeid and annihilated. My story concerns a gallant attempt to warn Hicks Pasha.

At the very time that the force was moving from the Nile, an inkling of the plot came to Dick Farrar, a young Englishman of barely twenty, who was with the Arabs at a point several miles from Duem.

Dick was the son of a man who had spent many years of his life in wandering among these and certain Asiatic peoples, studying their languages and customs. On his last journey, Dick being then fifteen and motherless, Professor Farrar decided that his son should accompany him.

Less than a year later, Farrar died in the Soudan, and Dick was kept by the people, and became almost one of them.

When the Mahdist revolt broke out, Dick Farrar did not trouble himself about it; he was happy and contented, he knew but little about it, and he cared still less.

As time wore on, he fancied that his movements were watched, and then, suddenly, there came to him the

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intelligence that aroused him to take an active part in the historical events of the period.

He was seated on a stone outside a small structure that served as a dwelling for the old man and woman with whom he lived, when he heard a voice behind him:

"Dick, do you still love your own people?"

Farrar started as the sweet tones struck his ear, and sprang up to greet the new-comer.

"Zelfa! I did not know that you were so near," he exclaimed, as he took her by both hands and gazed tenderly into her eyes, which dropped before his admiring look. "But why do you ask me that question?"

"Let us walk farther away and talk in the tongue which you have taught me," she replied in fairly good English. "We shall not be heard."

Wondering somewhat at her manner, Dick walked quietly by her side into the open. It was no new thing for those two to be seen together, and they both knew it, although they were scarcely conscious of the significance of the fact to others.

When they had gone beyond the chance of being overheard, Zelfa spoke.

"You have told me that you lived among a race of people who are brave and good, Dick," she said. "I know that your father was like that—and you——"

She paused in pretty confusion, while Dick whispered words that made her blush beneath her dark skin.

"My people are brave and good also," she went on in troubled tones, "and they are fighting to conquer this land for the great Mahdi. Oh, Dick, I am in trouble! I know not what to do!"

"Dear Zelfa, tell me all," exclaimed Farrar in perplexity. "What is this trouble that is making you so sad? What mean these strange words?"

"My people have already been defeated by the Egyptians led by men from your country. One of those Egyptian armies has reached Duem, and our spies tell us that the soldiers will march to kill the Mahdi beyond El-Obeid. Our people have planned that the army shall be deceived and led into a defile at El-Obeid and every man killed, including your brave countrymen."

"They do, eh?" muttered Dick, speaking more to himself than to the lovely girl by his side. He had not cared much which way the conflict went, but now he was aroused. All is fair in war, perhaps, but the thought that British officers were to be led into ambush and struck down without a fair chance of selling their lives dearly, set his blood throbbing in his veins.

"You have told me," continued Zelfa, "that you lived with an uncle named White, whose son, who was older than you, helped you. He was going to be a soldier. I have heard that one of the Englishmen with this army is a young man of that name."

"What, Tommy here, and going to be led into a trap! Not if I know it! Anyhow, not without my trying to save him! Zelfa," turning again eagerly to her, "I must save them; how can I do it? Can you help me?"

"That is my trouble," returned Zelfa, wringing her hands. "If I help you to save them, I am betraying my own race, and yet if I leave your cousin to die without warning, I am false to you—my love!"

For the first time Dick realised that the girl was passionately in love with him, and that he returned her affection. Unconsciously they had drifted from friendship into love, and the awakening had come to them, as to so many others, through trial and the conflict of love and duty. Unmindful of everything, Dick clasped Zelfa in his arms and kissed her.

But the thought of impending events soon came back to them and aroused them from their ecstasy.

"Something must be done to save them," said Dick as he released her from his embrace. "No, you will not be acting falsely to your people by helping me to warn mine, Zelfa. I shall be saving mine from butchery, so that the two armies may fight it out fairly; and if the Mahdi's troops see that the Egyptians are on their guard, they will prepare for a good battle. No, there is nothing wrong in it, Zelfa. And then," he continued tenderly, "my people will be yours also one day, because I shall take you away with me to live in England. Do you understand?"

With these and other arguments—perfectly sincere, though not quite logical—Dick persuaded his Arab sweetheart to complete her work by assisting him to warn the army under Hicks of the danger that menaced it. They conversed earnestly together, and finally evolved a plan which Dick was to carry out that night.

Just as they were about to retrace their steps to the village, a sudden thought occurred to Farrar that made him stop and turn hot and cold.

"Zelfa, if I do this, what will become of you? They will be certain that you have helped me and——"

He stopped in dread.

"I have thought of that," returned Zelfa quietly. "I know how to act, and when you are gone and danger is past, I will follow you in some way and meet you at Duem or another place. I shall find you. My love will guide me," she concluded simply.

"You must come with me," he began impetuously, but he stopped as he remembered that that was practically impossible.

Zelfa smiled, somewhat sadly, and they returned to the village without exchanging another word.

That night when Dick thought that the people about him were at rest, he stole out and made his way towards a boulder in the desert beyond.

Hidden within a recess there, he would find a camel which the loving Zelfa would have led thither ready for his ride to Duem on the Nile.

Stealthily he walked across the intervening space, keeping his rifle hidden as much as possible by holding it vertically and close to his body.

He had dressed himself exactly like the Arabs, having discarded the half-European, half-Arab costume he always wore.

His heart beat more quickly than usual, but he was not excited to any degree at this juncture, for he felt that he was scarcely likely to be stopped or challenged. The trouble would come when he was nearer the Nile, according to Zelfa's information.

The moon had not risen, and Dick hoped to get some distance away before it did. He reached the boulder and walked with a light step round it. He had just turned it, and sighted the ship of the desert, when a click caught his ear. He threw himself on his knees instinctively, and the next instant there was a report and the whizz of a bullet over his head.

Discovered! There must be no hesitation now; his own life was at stake. He sprang to his feet and rushed at the figure he saw in the dim light.

There was a short wrestling bout between them. Dick was a strong fellow, and he had not forgotten what he had learnt at school. The Arab went down with a thud and Dick did what he could not help calling a cowardly action—he struck the fallen man on the head with his rifle and stunned him.

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There was no time to be lost. The whole force of the men would be upon him now. Already he heard the noise. He mounted the camel, and turning the creature's head in the direction of Duem, lashed it with the end of the long rawhide halter. The camel pitched and rolled like a veritable ship on the ocean, but it was not the first occasion on which Dick had ridden a camel and he took no heed of that.

The chief thing for him was that he had got a good start, and he felt no doubt that Zelfa had made the best selection.

Bullets now whizzed near him at intervals, and he could see that he was being pursued. At first the thought of firing back at them flashed across his mind; but he dismissed the notion at once. What chance would he have of hitting any of them, from the back of a jolting camel? Moreover, he was reluctant to fire at those who had been kind to him.

Then for a short space the firing ceased, and nothing was to be heard save the pad, pad of the hoofs on the sand

From an occasional glance backwards Farrar ascertained that the pursuers were not gaining, and he hoped that they would drop off and let him go; but the danger from stray bodies of dervishes was all the greater.

Several miles were covered and his pursuers were out-distanced. But now the moon had risen and he was a conspicuous object. He allowed his mount to slacken into an ordinary trotting pace. Another two or three miles were covered without incident, and then he reached a spot which he deemed to be a fairly safe place to rest for an hour or two.

He considered that he was now safe from pursuit by his old friends, and it was certainly advisable to give his beast a rest.

He fully expected to encounter some dervishes during the remainder of his journey, and although he relied upon his knowledge of the language and customs of the people, aided by his tact, to pull him through, he might have to depend upon the fleetness of his camel.

So he dismounted, and, hidden by one of the natural corrugations of the desert, passed the remaining hours of night in watchful repose.

In the early morning he resumed his journey. He went on steadily; it might arouse suspicion if he were seen racing over the desert, and, moreover, it would be better to reserve his camel's strength for emergencies.

He acted wisely. He had not been half an hour on his journey when he came in sight of a small body of dervishes. He decided to approach them without altering his gait; it would be better to do that than to attempt to escape them by making a detour and trusting to his camel to out-distance them—for he knew that they would come after him when they saw him going off in another direction, however slowly he might jog along.

Dick's heart seemed to thump against his ribs as he drew near to the dervishes. Suppose among that group there was one who knew him? In that case suspicion would probably be aroused. Those who knew him were, of course, aware that he was a European and they might well conclude, as he was now not many miles from Duem, that he was on his way to the Egyptian camp for some purpose inimical to the Mahdi's cause.

When he came up to them, Dick saluted them and eagerly scanned all the faces he could see. He could recognise none of them, and fervently hoped that he had fallen in with strangers.

He began the conversation by boldly asking them whither they were bound, and whether they had fallen in with any of the enemy. They replied that they were endeavouring, with other small bodies, to harass the Egyptions and hinder their march. Then they began to question him.

Farrar replied with assumed fervour that he too, was on the watch to have a shot at any venturesome Egyptian soldier or English officer—especially the latter—who might stray from the camp. The leader, a man about forty, shook his head warningly.

"You are over-bold," he said. "Our warriors must be brave, but caution must not be absent or our bravery is of little worth. These men rarely come out in ones or twos, but in small bodies to find out our position. Alone you can do nothing; come with us."

Dick bowed humbly, but repeated that he wished to get as near to the camp as he could; adding that he believed he could attain that object better by himself as he would not be so conspicuous as a troop of thirty.

After a little more talk, in a vain endeavour to dissuade him from his reckless purpose, they allowed him to pass on, with exhortations and good wishes. As he had no spear they gave him one; at close quarters—if it came to that—he would find it valuable.

Dick ambled away with a sigh of relief. Safe so far; if he could deceive others in the same way!

Another hour passed. The sun was rising and Dick began to hope that he was not far from Duem. It was quite possible that he might fall in with some reconnoitring party from the camp, in which case his mission would be accomplished far more easily than he had dared to hope. His spirits rose; he began to whistle a tune he had sung at school, and his mind wandered once again to Zelfa.

He had been troubled about her. How had she fared at the hands of her people? Who had betrayed them? It was not Ahmed, the young Arab whose suit had been rejected, for he was away. And what had Zelfa done to escape the punishment that would surely be meted out to her for her complicity in the plot? He had worried over this while he himself had been in danger, but now that success seemed within his grasp, he was disposed to regard this, also, in less sombre colours. She would have found a way of escape, he felt confident of that now.

How, and when, would they meet again? When he had warned Hicks he would return and seek the brave and devoted girl; that was settled in his mind. He was in the midst of plans for seeking her, when he heard his name called. Quite forgetting, in the half-dreamy state into which he had lapsed, where he was, he looked up and answered.

Then he looked in the direction of the voice and saw—Ahmed!

"You have ventured a long way, my friend," cried Ahmed as he pulled up his camel at a distance of three or four yards. There was something in his voice that made Dick watch him carefully.

"True," replied Farrar, who had also pulled up. "But what of that?"

"Why do you leave us—and the beautiful Zelfa—to rejoin those who may be able to send you back to your own country? Are not Zelfa's charms, even, enough to keep you with us?"

"How dare you talk of her in that way?" cried Dick in a rage. "What right have you to address such questions to me? Stand aside and let me pass!"

Touching his camel, Dick made an attempt to pass

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Ahmed, but the latter quickly moved to the left and intercepted him again.

Dick saw now that a fight was inevitable; without more ado he gripped his spear and rode straight at Ahmed.

By a dexterous movement of his camel, Ahmed avoided the onslaught and made a thrust that Dick parried.

It was a singular duel. Both were young and active, both knew how to handle the camel and the spear. But Ahmed was the more skilful of the two, and Dick knew that he must be wary.

Again and again they wheeled and thrust at each other, but without any advantage on either side. Not until five minutes had passed was the fight attended with the least success; then Ahmed thrust his spear through Dick's shoulder and slipped off his camel to avoid the return lunge.

Quick as thought, despite the pain of the wound, Farrar struck Ahmed's mount a severe blow, making the creature cry with pain and rush off, and at the same time urged his own camel forward to escape the attack which he felt that his enemy would make with a view to maiming the beast.

This manœuvre had outwitted Ahmed, who—without his steed and armed with only his spear—was at the mercy of his antagonist armed with a rifle. That rifle was now levelled at his head.

"You have won," said Ahmed, calmly throwing down his spear and awaiting the death that seemed inevitable.

But Dick felt that he could not kill his adversary in cold blood, for the heat of the combat was over. He thought of "winging" him, so that he could not do any mischief, but the idea of a man lying wounded on the sand during the heat of the day was too terrible. He must try some other way.

"Will you promise me to turn back and go homewards if I spare your life?" he asked. "Will you swear it by the beard of the Prophet?"

Ahmed was silent. He revolved the chances swiftly in his mind. Then he swore an oath that Dick felt convinced that he would not break.

"You may go," said Dick, lowering his rifle a little. And without a word Ahmed faced about and strode away.

Dick now urged his camel forward towards Duem at a quicker pace. His wound now pained him terribly, and he felt that he was growing weak through loss of blood. He tried to staunch the wound by binding it up roughly, but he felt that he must go forward with all speed.

On, on, he raced. If he dismounted and rested, he could do no more and he might faint by the way. It was a race against physical infirmity, and he must win—he must win, for so much depended upon it.

On—on! He felt himself getting weaker and his head sinking on his breast. Half unconsciously he struck the camel with the end of the halter. Then he heard, as though in the distance, the report of a rifle. His camel fell forward, and he was thrown over the creature's head and fell with a thud to the ground.

* * * * *

When Dick Farrar came to his senses, he found himself on a rough bed, being tended by an Irish doctor and an Arab woman.

He learnt to his horror that he had been suffering from an attack of brain fever, and that this was his first lucid interval since he had been picked up in the desert some little distance from Duem, after he had been shot at by some dervishes.

He had raved a great deal about the destruction of the Egyptian army that had left Duem shortly before he had been found, and about "Zelfa" and other things.

How long had he been ill and where was he?

"A fortnight," was the answer to his first question.

"Near Berber," was the reply to the second inquiry.

Dick groaned in agony and tried to make them understand the position; but they soothed him and said he must be quiet and that he was showing signs of another attack of delirium.

And so it came to pass that Dick Farrar's attempt to save Hicks resulted in failure.

They were surprised that he spoke English and were ready to believe that he had lived in the Soudan; but when he endeavoured to make them believe the rest of his story they shook their heads warningly, or did their best to sooth him by pretending to believe him and carry out his desires. They did not believe him till the news of the disaster arrived.

It would serve no useful purpose to dwell upon Dick's sufferings, mental and physical.

He was hurried back to Egypt with others, and it was quite three months before he was about again.

Did he ever meet Zelfa again? Yes. It was fourteen months afterwards, when Dick was taking part in the memorable expedition to Khartoum—which he did as one of the series of efforts to find her—that he came face to face with her just after the battle of Abu Klea. She, too, had tried to find him, and had kept near the Mahdi's troops—occupied in tending the wounded—because she thought that he might be with the gallant little band.

But they came together too late; he found her wounded and dying.

The meeting was one of joy at seeing each other once more, and finding that they had been faithful to one another. And it was one of sorrow at parting for ever.

Zelfa died in his arms with a smile of content. She had escaped punishment by leaving her people and tramping about in search of him.

Dick Farrar mourned long for his Arab sweetheart, and it was thought that he would never marry. But constant intercourse with the women of his own race had its effect, and in the summer of 1890, when he was nearing his twenth-seventh birthday, he led a pretty English girl to the altar.

George Day.

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THE MARKED CARDS.

THEY had been many days over the sea, the young man and the girl. He had forgotten whether this were the Pacific or the sea that sweeps the shore of Elysium.

Now, on the twenty-fifth day, they were on deck, and talking som what in this way:

"You must walk with me," she called from her chair.

"It's a delightful punishment."

"Thanks; I believe that's a compliment."

"Truth's a compliment, eh?" he said, miling.

"The best compliments, I suppose, are those that pretend to be truths, but are not."

"I am afraid this is getting rather too fast for me," he said. "Wait until I think about it."

"To carry out what you have begun, you should say to me, 'I can't think about it, for I have to think about you.'"

"Is it necessary to say that?" he said, looking down at the girl. "How beautiful you are!"

By the rules of conventional conversation it was an utterly inane remark, and the girl's laughter rolled out, full and delightful, but her voice was low.

"I am glad you think so."

A deeper red tinged his bronzed cheeks as he realised his temerity.

"You know I do," he said.

"Oh, do I? Our acquaintance is not of very long standing. A few days will see the end of our voyage."

He drew a long breath, and his voice was earnest. To land meant work, and to see her no more.

Two elderly persons were watching the two young people.

"What a remarkable girl Nellie Wolverton is!" one was saying.

"She's certainly carrying on a remarkable flirtation with that young man. Who is he?" said the other, with the severity of position gained by effort.

"Some sort of engineer in the employ of the Winfield company. Mary Winfield introduced him to Nellie."

"That girl would flirt with anybody. She seems to find all men infinitely amusing. Isn't she handsome? Now, you would suppose she was somebody or other. But the Wolvertons—oh, you know!" quoth the other lady.

"Her mother was one of the most pushing women I ever knew," assented her companion.

"Of the dead *nihil nisi bonum*," said the imposing one. "She was an extraordinarily ambitious woman. With pluck and a fortune, and a daughter like that, an ambitious woman can do anything in Australia. The Wolverton money is said to be incalculable now. Oh, dear, how many men have been after that girl! She flirts and laughs with them all, just as she does with that young man."

Mary Winfield was watching the two with much the same thoughts. This poor young man didn't understand sophisticated young women; it was abominable of Nellie Wolverton; she was sorry she had introduced them; she might have known that Nellie would play with any man as she would with a cat or a dog. Oh, dear, this Melville was so out of it; so busy and capable, and such an efficient servant of the Winfield company. But Nellie was Nellie, and Mary ought to have known better.

If Nellie were Nellie, she was proving it with a vengeance. She was making Melville tell her of himself, and she was giving him nothing of herself in return. They were seated now, looking out at the frothing white and green in the ship's wake. She was glancing at him again and again with mildly interested eyes. He was forgetting himself, and was telling how his father had left him only money enough for school and college, which he had increased by some tutoring; of how he had worked and won a position in a machine shop of the Winfield company; of how he had progressed farther, and now was near the head of his department, and had been sent to London on an important mission, and——

A young man came lightly across the deck, and bowed and exchanged some remarks with Miss Wolverton, and nodded at Melville with a "who-the-dickens-are-you" air and passed on after a moment. Melville's confidences, suddenly chilled. This youngster represented what he never had known. The girl by his side understood.

"Don't mind Bertie; he's just Bertie."

"Oh, you know," Melville began, "I'm so out of that set."

"Of that particular set you mean," she said graciously, as if she would imply politely that there were many others which he doubtless frequented. "The men are very stupid in it. It's all very stupid. It's just sport and gossip. For my part, give me men that do things."

"I think," said the young-man-making-his-way, "that I prefer other men to do things, and leave them to me already done. Now my father——"

He paused, wondering whether he had better tell her, and then it seemed to him, now that he remembered it, that this put him on a sort of equality with Miss Wolverton, as though the inequality that stood between them was suddenly swept away by the thought of this story. But had he a right to tell her? No, she wouldn't, couldn't know; that was so long ago and forgotten.

"And your father? Go on—I am interested."

"He might have had the things, the money, to have put me in your friend Bertie's position, if luck had been his way, and if he hadn't been cheated——"

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"I never can think of you as a man like Bertie," Miss Wolverton said decisively, with that calm confidence in her eyes; the eyes may have been rather more expressive because this was the last day of all, and he would slip out of her life so soon. She was fair to look upon, clever, accomplished, charming; this fence of the sexes was her delight; she could no more avoid it than she could breathing. Our unsophisticated young man failed to understand her. Later, common sense was to reach out from the grim, matter-of-fact depths of his nature, and grasp his sentimentality until it hurt him.

"Oh it's a little story of what might have been years ago in Damp Flats in Queensland. My father was out there after gold, and he fell in with a man with whom he entered into partnership in a general store. Sometimes in exchange for goods, they took claims. At first they made a lot of money, and then they lost nearly every penny in trying to develop a claim that failed.

"Well, each blamed the other, and they decided to separate. They could decide on no other way than to cut the cards. So they sat down one day and cut, and some things fell to my father, and some to his partner. And the papers were drawn up, and the division made.

"A week after that a claim which had gone to my father's partner began to develop. It proved a find: my father's partner made the beginning of a great fortune that way."

"Well?" said the girl.

"Now, the shanty that served for the store had fallen to my father, not the stock, which went to pay the firm's debts. Three weeks after this my father sat talking with a mining expert, who spoke of the big find on my father's former partner's lucky claim; and he stated boastfully, to show his value as an expert probably that he had told my father's partner—we will call him Smith—that the claim was extremely valuable.

"This set my father thinking; Smith had believed the claim to be valuable. But my father could but acknowledge that the man had given him a chance, even if he had dishonestly hidden his notion of the claim. That day my father happened to be in the abandoned store. On the table were the two packs of dirty cards, just as they had been left the day of the division. They had cut in the bare inner room, which hadn't been disturbed since. My father picked up these instruments of his bad luck, and he saw that the pack Smith had used had been marked."

"How awful!" the listener said. "And you might have had the money, if it hadn't been——"

"If it hadn't been for Smith's dishonesty, yes, Miss Wolverton. But to return to the story, my father went to Smith, whom he accused, but Smith looked him in the face and laughed. 'You are crazy, man. And you haven't any proof. Who'd believe you?'"

"Was that the end of it?" the girl asked gently.

"No, not the end of it. My father could prove nothing, indeed. His affairs went from bad to worse. He left Queensland penniless. Later on, he accumulated the little money he was able to leave me. But it was always a hard struggle for him and my mother, who died shortly after I was born."

"And Smith? that's not the name."

Melville hesitated.

"No, that's not the name. It's a well-known name, but we will let it remain Smith. Everything Smith touched became money; he was accused of dishonesty many times in the course of his career, but nothing ever was proven; he succeeded, and is to-day one of the powerful men in Victoria."

They were silent, the girl grave.

"And that's the reason you think you are not in the class of Bertie Townley. Well, I don't want you to be in that class."

"If you would care that much!" said he, half lightly, half earnestly.

"Oh, I like you," she said cheerily, as she might have said she liked a fox-terrier.

"And the man's dishonesty was really your blessing; it made you do things."

He smiled.

"I must be going below. Oh, I have been so much interested!"

And she went away brightly smiling, and he felt, suddenly, just the least like a fool. This feeling was increased when he found in the bustle of landing that she had only a cool shake of the hand and a distant "So glad to have met you," and no acknowledgment of the fact that he had asked to call, which she had plainly evaded. He felt revengeful and a bit of an anarchist.

And the next morning when he was reporting to Mr. Winfield his success in London, and being complimented by the company's head, his success seemed cheap; he had a picture before him of a bright, high-bred looking, exquisitely-dressed young woman, surrounded by flippantly gay persons whose world was not his, and never could be; for when one is making his way ploddingly, with no particular capital, he can't reasonably expect that way to be made before he may be grey and all the desire for pleasure, life's good things, quite gone.

It may be supposed that Miss Wolverton put the young man of the voyage out of her mind. Perhaps she had some thoughts of him or else she never would have repeated the story he had told her at a dinner where her father was, most unusually, her escort. At a dinner one owes it as a duty to do his part. Nellie did not care to be lacking, and wanted her story to be as spirited as anyone else's. For she waged a little strife to make the world she knew hold her clever. Now she couldn't, try as she would, think of another story than the one Melville had told her.

"Mary Winfield introduced me to a very entertaining man on the boat, a man who does things, you know——"

"What does he do, horses or yachts?" said Bertie Townley. "Oh, I say, Nellie, you don't mean that serious-faced chap you were mooning about with so much?"

"The very man," Miss Wolverton said, without changing colour.

And she told Melville's story.

"How extraordinary!" gasped Mrs. Pemberton. "You do meet such strange people at sea."

"Business methods are oftentimes dishonest," said a legal luminary pompously. "Yet——"

"Your story isn't funny enough," criticised Bertie Townley.

Samuel Wolverton, I should say Sam, the great Sam, held his nose in his port. He's a thin, sharp-featured, silent man, and, looking at him, one always wonders how he succeeded in possessing such a daughter.

Driving home, he said to Nellie:

"If I were you I don't think I'd try to tell stories at dinner."

"Why, papa?"

"It's undignified."

"Do you think so?" she said petulantly. She usually had him well in hand.

"What did you say that man's name is?" he asked after a moment.

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"Frank Melville."

Suddenly she turned.

"Papa, you were in Queensland?"

"Yes; what of it?"

"Did you ever hear a story like that?"

"I have heard a lot of stories; the diggings are full of them. As for your acquaintance, he was probably yarning."

"No, no, he wasn't."

"What makes you think that?"

"He isn't that kind of man."

"Nellie, I think that you can take care of yourself, but I don't believe you can judge men."

"Oh, trust me for that," she said airily; and at the moment she was indeed trying to judge no less a person than her father. She had thought that she understood him. Had she? He was fond of her; he denied her nothing, and she loved him. But—there were depths she could not fathom; and she knew no more of his real life, even less, than an outsider.

But now a sudden fear possessed her. She rushed upstairs to a little room which she used for her writing-table and her books, and eagerly she looked for a paper in a certain English magazine: "Modern Millionaires. No. X, Samuel Wolverton." Had she been mistaken? And then she read:

"The beginning of this extraordinary fortune was in '66, in the Damp Flat Mines of Queensland. Melville and Wolverton were storekeepers who exchanged a supposedly bad debt for the now-famed Bulfinch Mine. Wolverton bought out his partner."

For a minute the room seemed to swim.

"Oh, if mamma were only here!" the girl said moaningly. "It's true—true. This is all his, and not mine, every penny of it. And he knew when he told me; he knew."

And she stole down to her father.

She went towards him, the magazine in hand, and held it before him.

Wolverton started. He had never seen her like this; and her pallor frightened him. And then he saw to what she pointed.

"Was the story he told me true?"

"What if it were?"

"What if it were?" she said mockingly. "You can't understand, 'what if it were.'"

But the father said quietly, with a mastery of himself:

"If it were true, Melville couldn't have succeeded. He hadn't it in him. He would have failed at anything. I cut loose from him."

"But you haven't told me whether the story is true."

"I won't acknowledge nor deny it," he said at last. "What of it? You ought not to find fault. My money has made you a position as fine as any girl's."

"Good-night," said the girl.

At the door he called to her:

"Nellie, you haven't kissed me good-night."

"I can't—to-night."

And she was gone.

"A woman can't understand business. She'll get over it."

But he failed to sleep well that night.

She was not at breakfast. He went to her room. She was sleeping with a look that frightened him. On his way to his office he stopped at his doctor's.

"I wish you would see my daughter. I am worried about her."

He kept himself busied until about three o'clock, and then drove through the park, a tired-faced man people pointed out.

As he entered the house he heard Nellie's voice. He paused in the hall and listened.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Melville," she was saying.

"I had your note, and came here promptly, I think."

"Yes, promptly."

"I have passed you several times since we landed at Melbourne, but I don't believe you saw me," Melville said rather bitterly.

He was thinking how charming she appeared here in her own house.

He was blaming himself for all that he had thought of her, when her world, of which he had that brief glimpse had been shut out.

"I sent for you," Nellie went on, "to ask you why you told me that story when—when you knew that your father's partner then—was—my father."

The listener started, and moved towards the door, and drew back.

At last he heard:

"Miss Wolverton—yes, it was so, it is so, and I was a coward to tell you."

"I am glad you told me," Nellie said humbly, for this was no longer the proud Miss Wolverton, she wondered at herself, tears were in her eyes, and self-control was far away.

"I don't know what made me tell you, and yet I do know. I have lied; I do know now. You seemed so far out of my reach, and I wanted you to be in my reach. Do you understand?"

"I don't know that I understand," the girl said. "I can't seem to understand."

"And—oh, you are crying. I have hurt you. I wouldn't hurt you for the world."

"Don't," she said, "please don't."

But he was saying:

"I know the reason now. It was—don't you see—didn't you see?"

After a moment the listener heard Nellie's voice.

"It's best so. If you do, it rights itself. And—I see it clearly. I know now why I didn't want you to be of Bertie Townley's class. You are a man who does things—and will—a man for a woman to be proud of, and—yes—it's all clear to me—I thought I was just flirting with you. But since that night I know it was more."

Presently the *portière* was pushed aside.

Wolverton was possessed of a certain grim humour, and instinct for the management of the quick crises was the measure of his success in affairs.

"I'm Samuel Wolverton, and you are Frank Melville," he said. "I listened to your conversation. I won't apologise; I am glad I did it. It seems to me, Mr. Melville, that your father's son has it back at me now. It seems to me that you hold the marked cards."

He stopped and looked at the two and then went on:

"Mr. Melville, what's it the ministers say? I am not much at going to church. But don't they say that when a man has wronged another the best amends he can make is confession of his fault?"

But, although a moment after the young man extended his hand, Wolverton was conscious that his daughter, whom he held his dearest possession, never would be the same to him, that distrust lay between them; that, at the height of his success, Melville's son had turned the marked cards against him.

M. Wood.

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Love after Death.

"WELL, I never did take much notice of that kind of thing, but when something comes to the certain knowledge of a man, and that something he can neither explain nor reason out, then I say there must be *something* in it; and I don't believe in laughing at any one who does have faith in such things!"

And Tom Wardwell struck a match and relighted his cigar.

In the Club they had been discussing the "occult," and had turned to Tom Wardwell for his opinion.

The answer at once aroused interest and evoked a request for further information.

There were some moments of expectant silence, and then Wardwell, tossing away the stub of his cigar, leant back his head, and closing his eyes, said, at last:

"Yes, I do know something about this thing; that is, I know enough about it to know that I know nothing about it, except that such things are. If you care to listen, I'll tell you what I know, and you can make your own explanations—if you can!"

"All right, Tom, let's have it!"

"Some years back," began Wardwell, "I held a position in a large import house as head bookkeeper, with some six or eight fellows to look after. They were ordinary fellows, but there was one among them who would have attracted anyone's attention had they only caught his eye.

"He was a light-hearted fellow, near his thirties. He was not handsome, for his features were not regular, although great strength of character was denoted in every feature; but it was when you looked full into his eyes that you discovered the source whence came the light that fell upon his countenance. An irresistible influence fell upon you, and at once visions of all that was good and pure would flood your mind.

"You wouldn't wonder," continued Tom, as the others looked incredulous, "if you could have known him as I did. He was none of your 'goody boys,' but just a pure, upright man.

"Well, for some reason he took to me, as I did to him, and after a time I said to him one day: 'Fred, how is it you are always so happy? Don't you ever get discouraged, or have the "blues," or things go wrong with you, as they do with the rest of us fellows?'

"For an instant he looked at me with a look of surprise and a shade of pity in his glorious eyes, and then he said, 'Come home with me Tom, and I will show you as far as I can what it is that keeps me happy.'

"And then he told me of his home, and of his wife; he had been married six years, but no young fellow, having just won a bride, could go into more raptures than he did over his wife, and then he said, while the tears stood in his eyes, 'but I can only half tell it, Tom; no one can ever know what that woman is to me. I could not tell to anyone the heart-love and life we have and live.'

"I was awed by his emotion, and I said to him, 'Fred, that must be Heaven on earth to live such a life as that, and yet it is an awful thing for one human being to be so wrapt up in another, for life is short at the best, and —if—one should be called——'

"And here I hesitated, for he had turned to me again, and taking both my hands within his own said, while such a gladness rang in his tones, 'why, Tom, old fellow, that's the very best part of it! We are *never* going to be separated. We shall *always* have each other, right to the end of eternity!' And here he laughed a laugh that came from the very depths of his heart.

"I stood and looked at him in amazement, and the doubt just flashed across my mind if this man's brain was quite sound. 'But anyhow,' he broke in, 'come up to the house and see my wife at home.' I did go with him, and saw this happy couple in their new Eden of a home.

"Often he would ask me, yes, urge me, to go home with him; I was glad enough to go then, but since I have sometimes thought that it was because they pitied my loneliness out of the abundance of their love and love's surroundings, and oftentimes sacrificed the pleasure of evenings spent by themselves, in order to give me pleasure. And pleasure it was! That was the brightest time of all my life.

"Once, and once only, they touched upon the subject of their belief, that they were never to be separated! And it was clear that both firmly believed in that.

"Of course it was impossible for me to have any such faith, and not for the world would I have attempted to discuss this subject with them; and as I felt some hesitancy in asking questions, I did not gain as much information upon the subject as I should have then liked. I found they had made a long and careful study of this matter, and although they were by no means what is generally known as Spiritualists, yet they firmly believed that by pure and holy living here in the body, it would be granted to the one called first to the after life, to dwell in spirit near to the one on earth, until the time when they should once again join hands in the Spirit Land.

"It was a very comforting thought, but I could not help the shudder that would come over me when I thought of the blackness of despair which would surely come over my friend should he lose this idol of his life, and find that all his hopes were vain!

"But of these thoughts I said nothing, and the couple lived on, and loved each other more and more, and nothing eventful occurred to mar the happiness of their lives, until one morning I went to the office, and found Fred's desk unoccupied.

"As he had been there as usual the day before, I tried to think nothing of it, but as the day wore on and I heard nothing from him, I began to grow uneasy, and was about to send a messenger to him, when the door opened, and a boy came to me with a note; my fingers

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trembled in spite of all I could do as I unfolded it, and read just the one line:

"'COME UP AS USUAL TO-NIGHT.—FRED.'

"I tried to feel relieved as I read this, yet I had a strange foreboding of some ill to come which I could not throw off.

"When I came in view of the house, the first sight which met my eye was a large and most beautiful wreath of white and crimson roses hanging upon the bell! That was just like Fred and his wife; no mourning, nothing sombre, nothing sad for them when that journey was taken, for I knew at once that the idol of his life had been 'glorified,' as they always expressed it. 'There *is no death!*' was the strong point of their belief.

"I was now at the door, and I longed and yet dreaded to see Fred. What could I say to him? Should I encourage him with these false hopes, only to see him plunged in deep despair, or should I from the very first try to dissuade him from such false hopes, and tell him —tell him what?

"Just then Fred came in sight, and one glance into his face told me how cruel it would be to try to shake his faith in the belief that was so wondrously holding him up at such a time and under such circumstances as would have crushed most men. His eyes were heavy and swollen, and his face had a look of much physical suffering. For he had held the loved one in his arms from the first of it, until she had given him the last kiss, as he told me afterwards, and said with the fluttering breath: 'Don't be lonely, Fred, darling; I'll come to you as soon as I can; I know it won't be long'—and then——

"Well, that's all he told me, but I knew from his face that the shock was great, and that the great loving heart was even now longing and aching for just one responsive look and touch from the dear one who had never before remained unmoved by even the slightest look or word from him she loved so passionately.

"I could find no words to say to him, so I simply took his arm and he led me to where she lay.

"I won't weary you with details, but pass over the next few days.

"After it was all over Fred came back to the office, and I alone realised the terrible strain under which he did his work. It pained me to the heart to see him hasten as it came towards night, so that he should lose no time in returning to the little home, always expecting the return of her who had promised to come; and then each morning the eyes had a weary look, as though he had watched far into the night, and watched in vain.

"He would not allow me to stay with him during this time, for he had said when I urged the point, 'No, Tom, not yet; when she comes I want to be alone with her.'

"One morning, about a couple of weeks after he had laid his wife to rest, he came to me with such a bright look upon his face, all the weariness gone and a look of great joy and triumph shining from every feature. I was afraid the fellow's mind had indeed turned, and that which he had so longed for he imagined had come true.

"He came close to me and whispered, 'Tom, she's come at last!' I looked him steadily in the eyes for an instant, and then said the only thing I could say, 'Fred, I'm so glad for you!'

"Well, it was quite a long time before he asked me to come to the house again, but finally he did invite me, and I went. Then he told me how his wife administered to all his wants and comforts, just as she had always done before she left this early life.

"'I cannot see her. I hear her voice; I don't think you will be able to, but I can hear it, although she never talks of where she is, nor the conditions, and I dare not question her. I am content to wait until she tells me I may come, as she has already told me that time is not far distant.'

"Those were his words.

"By this time we had reached the house, and just as in the days gone by the light streamed cheerily out from all the windows.

"It was with a thrill of awe, and something of fear, that I entered with him, fear lest I should indeed find that his mind was turned, and awe, lest that not being the case, I was about to be a witness to a mystery no mortal man had ever witnessed before.

"We found the little table laid for two, with all the care and daintiness I had always seen in his home.

"After going home with him several times, the strangeness wore away somewhat, and we would chat about the affairs of the day, or discuss some subject as in the old days, but always in a subdued manner.

"And so she cared for him, and kept his home, and they held sweet communion together for as much as a year, and many a time, in the meanwhile, I have sat in a shady corner of the room, and listened to the sweet sound of melody, played by spirit fingers.

"One morning he came to me again, and said, 'Be sure you are with me to-morrow night, Tom, for then I am going Home!' I turned to him quickly, and knew what he said would come true, for it seemed even then that the light from the other world was shining upon his countenance.

"Being a practical kind of man, I did not like the idea of spending the night alone with him, especially as in the morning he would be found dead, so I sent a note round to a friend of mine, a doctor, a man upon whom I knew I could depend, and simply told him to come to Fred's house that night at eleven o'clock. I knew I could let him in at that hour, unknown to Fred, and I also knew he would do as I asked, and wait for any information I chose to give him.

"He did not fail me, and as I met him in the hall after Fred was in a deep sleep, I told him in a few words that Fred was sure he was going to die sometime during the night, and if such should be the case, I wanted a third party in the house. He nodded his head and accepted the explanation, although I knew the shrewd old fellow knew there must be something more to it. I showed him to a room, and after a few moments conversation I left him and returned to Fred's room.

"As I entered his room in the dim light, I saw a shadowy form flitting near the bedside. I saw the smile hover about Fred's mouth as he stirred uneasily in his sleep, and then I saw the shadowy form distinctly, and the sweet face of his wife bent over him. I saw her white arms clasp his form, I saw a spirit form arise from his body, and heard a soft whisper say, 'Come, my darling,' and his voice faint and far off reply, 'My wife,' and when the mist had cleared before my eyes, I saw Fred, with the smile still on his lips, dead!

"I called to the doctor; he came and looked at him, and simply said, 'Dead!'

"Death was ascribed to heart disease."

Wardwell arose hastily, the tears rolling down his cheeks, and said, "Good night!" and left the room. The others sat silent for a few moments, while some incredulous ones slowly shook their heads; but one of the others remarked, as they all prepared to depart:

"I believe that was true. I never knew Tom Wardwell to lie."

E. THORPE.

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HOMESPUN YARNS.

By Levin Carnac.

VI.—THE SQUATTER'S WIFE.

TOWARDS the end of last summer, I was coming back from Dublin to London by one of the Irish boats, and as far as Falmouth I hardly exchanged a dozen words with any of my score or so of fellow passengers.

At Falmouth, however, the tedium of the voyage was finally banished by my making the acquaintance of a bronzed and g izzled globe-trotter, who came on board there, looking about as bored and lonely as I felt myself.

Coming along the gangway a porter stumbled and dropped a small handbag of his into the water, and the new arrival reproved him in a terse and forcible arrangement of invective which was fragrant with the aroma of the Bush. I sympathised with him, and fished up the bag with a boat-hook that happened to be handy. Half an hour later we were "talking Australia" over an introductory bottle of Bass.

My new acquaintance was a man of sixty or thereabouts, and he had apparently spent his whole life wandering about the world seeking the rest he could not find in stagnation.

As I had myself only recently returned from Australia, our conversation naturally turned on the land of wool and gold, and ere long, to my no small satisfaction, I found that my friend had been there in the fifties, those heroic times when half the adventurers of the world were hurrying to the Golden Land as fast as winds and waves could bear them, some of them to become rich in a few weeks, and poor again in as many days, and most of them to struggle through their attack of gold fever, and either die of it or recover from it pretty much as they were when they took it.

"Yes," he said, glancing with a dreamy, tired sort of look in his eyes along the beautiful bay down which we were now steaming; "those were wi.d times, and a lot happened that never got known in the outer world. There's many a rich man moving now in the best Colonial society who wouldn't care to meet himself as he was thirty or forty years ago, say on the pavement in Collins Street, or in the vestibule of Menzies' Hotel. I remember a lady who died a few years ago in Melbourne in he odour of sanctity and respectability, who—well, as we're both 'old chums,' and we've nothing better to do, I'll spin you the yarn. She's left no family behind her, and as I'll mention no names, there'll be no harm done to anyone.

"It was just as the first rushes were over, and the diggings had been glutted w th a crowd of vagabonds who had no idea of steady work at gold-digging or anything else, that I had made a decent little pile on the Burraloo Creek on Sydney side, and thought I'd have a spell and see the new country a bit. So I started down to Sydney on the stage, and after about fifty miles we got stuck up by a gang of bush-whackers. The bush was full of these blackguards along the tracks from the different diggings to the townships; most of them were men who had failed at the diggings and turned to this as an easier way of getting gold than grubbing for it at the bottom of a shaft.

"Well, we showed fight, and for half-an-hour things were pretty lively round the coach. In the end we beat the whackers off at a cost of one man killed, three wounded, and one wom n badly scared. That woman was the wife of a squatter whose station was about twenty miles farther down the road, and as I had got a bullet in my arm, which, if I hadn't stopped it, would have spoilt her beauty for ever, nothing would do but my going to spend a portion of my holiday at the station and be nursed. Of course I accepted, and by nightfall found myself comfort ible.

"In a fortnight or so my wound was nicely healed, and I had made great progress in the good graces of my host and his pretty wife. In the case of the latter, I am sorry to say, I had made more progress than was good either for her or myself. No word had ever pa sed between us that her husband might not have heard, but you know how much can be understood in such matters without any actual talking. She was young enough to be her husband's dau hter, and I was not long in discovering that, to her, married life in the Bush was nothing more or less than slavery in the wilderness.

"She had married her husband, I am afraid, for his money, and a few y-ars' 'solitary confinement,' as I have heard her call it, had suffic d to make him utterly intolerable to her. I was vain enough at the time to believe that if anything sudden were to happen to the old man I should not have much di ficulty in consoling her for his loss. My surmise proved correct as the third week of my stay was drawing to a close.

"For two or three days we had noticed a rather suspicious-looking character, half-Londoner, half-dust-fossicker, hanging about the home paddock, and one day I took it into my head to ride him down and get an explanation. I didn't get anything satisfactory, so I decided to march him up to the station for further inquiries. To this he seemed to have very strong reasons for objecting, and when I rode at him to collar him, he whipped out a six-shooter and took a pot-shot at me. He just missed me, and the next moment I had the drop on him, and he showed the white feather and went like a lamb.

"Things turned out pretty much as we expected. In those days the Knights of the Bush thought as little of sticking up an out-of-the-way station as of plundering a stage; and the loafer that I had captured was, as I had half suspected, the spy of a gang which attacked us that night, after shooting a man we had sent to the police-depôt for assistance.

"As we had caught their spy, and perhaps bribed or frightened information out of him, there was no pretence of sneaking into the house, as swagmen wanting work, or anything of that sort. They just posted half-a-dozen men with rifles to cover the two doors of the house, and sent a man to call upon us to surrender, and throw our arms out of the windows, under penalty of having the house burnt over our heads.

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"We knew too much of the doings of that sort of scoundrel to look upon this as an idle threat. There were even cases known of whole townships being stuck up and looted by the big bushwhacker gangs that infested the bush in the fifties, and if one of these had got us now, the look-out was pretty mean. Still we had no hesitation in deciding to fight, for these brutes were as treacherous as they were cruel, and surrender would probably mean only another kind of death for the men, and what would be worse than death for the women.

"There were eight of us in the station-house, five men—the squatter, myself, and three home-hands—the squatter's wife, and her maid, and the Chinese cook. We were well armed, and the part of the house we garrisoned was log-built and practically bullet-proof.

"Mr. Jones—I call him that because it was not his name—opened the ball by giving the envoy three minutes to get out of sight, and then dropping him in his tracks because he didn't move fast enough. The reply to this was a volley from some dozen rifles from behind a brush-fence that hedged one side of the home paddock, and then the row began.

"There's no need for me to describe the fight, and I'm not a good hand at painting scenes in gore. Suffice it to say that a dropping fire was kept up on both sides for hours far into the night, besiegers and besieged 'firing on the flash' wherever it betrayed the presence of an enemy. All this time Mrs. Smith moved quietly about, helping us to bind up wounds and bringing us food and liquor as we wanted them, her face white and set, but showing no sign of fear or weakness, as most women would have done under such circumstances. Only once did she betray what she really felt, and that was in a whisper which reached my ear alone.

I uttered a cry of horror as the terrible truth broke upon me.

"Towards two in the morning, she brought some bread and meat and whisky to the window where I was stationed, and, as she put them down beside me she came up close and put her hot hand on mine—I can feel the thrill of that touch now, thirty years after—and said, in a dry, half-stifled whisper:

"'Oh Jack, I can't endure this much longer! For pity's sake get me away! There are two horses I've had saddled ready all night, and—'

"What more she would have said, or how I should have answered her, I can't tell you, for, at that moment,

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we heard a crackling outside the house, and before we had grasped what was the matter the verandah was ablaze.

"There was nothing for it now but a determined attempt to break out and run the gauntlet at any risk.

"'Jack! give me a pistol. I can shoot a bit and—and I *daren't* be burnt to death. Quick. They're breaking in!'

"I gave her one of my revolvers full loaded, saw that the other was all right, and, telling her to keep near me, went towards the door that was now shaking under the blows of the blackguards outside.

"What happened during the next ten minutes or so I cannot tell you. I remember only a fierce hand-to-hand fight, a horrible medley of oaths, pistol shots, cries of pain, and the roar of the flames growing deeper and nearer every minute.

"At last Mr. Smith and I managed to get his wife out by the back way, and then we broke for the stables. When we reached them Mrs. Smith said to me:

"'Go in and get the horses out. We'll keep the door.'

"While I was loosing the animals I heard two shots fired. One was the dull bang of a smoothbore loaded with ball, and the other was the sharp, spiteful crack of my own revolver.

"I dragged the two saddled horses out, and found Mr. Smith lying on the ground, and his wife standing by the door with the smoking revolver in her hand.

"'They have shot him, and I shot back. For Heaven's sake, let us go!' she said, throwing the pistol away as she spoke.

"Without a word I lifted her into the side saddle, and turned to look at the dead man. As I did so, she cried:

"'Oh, come, Jack, come! They've seen us.'

"But as she spoke the flames of the burning house shot up, and, almost in the centre of the dead man's forehead, I saw the small clean hole made by a revolver bullet fired at close range. I uttered a cry of horror as the terrible truth broke upon me, and, as she heard it, Mrs. Smith struck her horse over the ears and went at a gallop across the home paddock and away into the dim, silent bush beyond. Two minutes later I was up and riding for my life—in an opposite direction.

"Yes, it was a narrow escape. If I hadn't turned to look at her husband's corpse and seen that hole I should have believed her, and six months afterwards I should have married a murderess."

NAMAROU.

NAMAROU used to bring us milk at the dewy dawn of morning and also in the evening, at the hour when the cattle abandoned the fields in herds, and collected in the village, within the walls of ruined huts, to sleep in safety from the panthers and hyænas.

Milk is the drink of the captive, say the blacks. But why should it be more degrading to drink milk than doka (wine made from the palm tree) or dollu (beer made from millet)? The proverb does not say.

It is one of those prejudices all the more tenacious because there is nothing to justify it. It is sufficient without explanation to mention the surprise manifested by the natives when the white people asked them to get them some milk from those superb black and white cows, which resembled those of Switzerland.

I must add that their astonishment was even mixed with amusement. At mealtime in our dining-room, in the open air, under a ficus, the good people, highly amused, form a circle round us, winking their eyes in a manner not to be misunderstood, and, in a low tone, made endless comments, interrupted by stifled laughter, when they would see us, with the white foam on our lips, replaced the calabash on the ground when our thirst was appeased.

But Namarou took no part in these childish demonstrations.

Our request, the first day, had appeared to her very natural, and without saying a word, she placed a dish, turned upside down, on her head, which gave her the appearance of an Annanite sharpshooter, and wended her way towards the pastures. An hour later she brought back the dish full to the brim, and placed it before our hut, to the astonishment of the populace, who were not sparing with their jests for her.

But our milkmaid was not to be moved by such trifles; she maintained perfect silence.

Every day, with her wooden dish balanced on her head, she came to bring us milk.

A couple of silk handkerchiefs and four strings of beads had rewarded her for her kind attentions, and doubtless the hope of other small presents contributed to keep up her obliging behaviour.

As with all people for whom life has been a hard one, the woman in Africa is willingly compassionate; her intelligence has its flashes, her heart its delicate feelings, unknown to the stronger sex.

This observation is equally true of those in other latitudes.

There was no doubt that Namarou had had misfortunes, but of what sort? at what time? No one knew. The tattooing on her cheeks and chest resembled less the marks of distinction adopted by the people who live between the Como and the Volta, than the scars seen on those living much nearer to the westward, in Diammala and Djimini. All that was known about her was that she had come to that place many months before, she and her two children, clothed with a piece of cotton round her loins, like that worn by the rest of the savages, her luggage only an earthen pot and some calabashes.

Who was she? Where did she come from? Was she an escaped prisoner, or a repudiated wife? On all these points, one could only resort to conjecture. The people of the community had admitted her willingly. She had taken up her abode in an abandoned hut, without any one dreaming of disputing possession with her. Blade

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by blade, she repaired the thatched roof, killed the lizards on the walls by striking them with a piece of hard clay, beat down the earthern floor with stones, and there she lived peacefully.

The little ones grew, mingled with other juveniles of the village, and shared in their games. Both of them, besides, made themselves useful.

The girl, already, could crush maize and millet in a wooden mortar as well as an older person. Hardly as tall as her pestle, she worked, turning it with her arm for hours at a time, only varying her task by sifting the flour through a sieve made from fibres of the palm-tree. The boy spent half his time in the blacksmith's shed, keeping up the fire by means of a bellows of goat-skin, on which he played with both hands, imitating, with evident satisfaction, the beating of the tom-tom.

Namarou was not handsome. She had a low forehead and rather hard features; her chest was better preserved than is usually the case among the blacks who have passed their twentieth year; she was tall and long-legged, with the shoulders of an athlete. To see her sitting on her heels at the threshold of her hut, all in a heap, one would never suspect her majestic figure and robust breadth of shoulders. When she arose it was like the expansion of a spring; you would look on the ground, involuntarily, for the trap from which the tall apparition had just sprung.

She had nothing really pretty about her, except her eyes; these were immense and very soft, the calm eyeballs of Juno, like those of a heifer.

Simply dressed, she wore a narrow strip of cotton cloth from Kong, but more frequently she was girded with a band of fou, a natural texture, being a sort of reddish-coloured bark.

Her only ornament was a leather necklace from which was suspended a nugget of gold about the size of a pea; on her legs and ankles large glass beads and coins were strung in rows and securely fastened.

Her *coiffure* resembled that of the Mandé woman, the natural hair being held in position by the aid of false hair, and drawn up in a knot, with two little locks or curls falling over her temples.

The house of Namarou was particularly clean and well-kept, and might formerly have served as shelter for a tribe.

It was a round hut, in the form of a beehive, but of unusual breadth—it could accommodate twenty persons. The summary of the furniture was this: three straw mats rolled up, and about ten calabashes arranged in a row according to their size—that was all.

There were, however, fastened to the perches which supported the roof, a quantity of gri-gris, bones, cows tails, bunches of dried grass, feathers of the guinea-fowl and the paroquet, as well as a doll-fetish, a hideous little figure, carved out of a log.

In one of the calabashes, which was as large as a cauldron, was a heap of cotton, the crop of several months, which Namarou spun, and which she coloured with a little chalky earth crushed between her thumb and finger. Thus were her mornings passed.

Evening found her still busy, after sunset, when the kitchen fires were lighted all round in the neighbourhood, and in the stillness of the short twilight, when the blue smoke was soaring towards the paling heavens.

One morning our friend did not appear at camp as usual. Our "boys," who had gone to seek information concerning her, reported that she was in her hut, that there was a crowd of people gathered about the door, but she could not come; Namarou was dead!

There was, indeed, a crowd round the hut; a throng attracted by the cries of the children, who, on awaking had found their mother already cold, with stiffened limbs. In the interior, some old men and the principal persons of the village, among whom was the fetish-prophet, discussed her death in a very animated manner close to the corpse.

There she lay on her straw mat, her shrivelled hands lying on the strip of covering, which was pulled up to her chin, her head thrown over on one side, and her large eyes wide open.

It has been said that she would go as she came, mysteriously. Her country is accustomed to short agonies, dreadful fits, and, moreover, subtle poisons thrown by the hand of an enemy or a creditor. To end a dispute, or to balance an unsettled account, there is nothing more expeditious than a decoction of strophanthus. But Namarou had no enemies, and, still further, the poor creature had no creditors. A few handfuls of coins and a little nugget of gold that she wore round her neck, were all her fortune. Someone had given her a blow, perhaps. One does not die like that naturally, and the blacks know it.

From whence came the blow? From sorcerer or a demon?

Sakarabrou has his rages, and woe betide his victims! He pursues them even in death, stifling the mourning of their relatives, and exacting silence from friendly voices.

He carries desolation to the very corpse, which shall never know the repose of a grave in the hut, or near the village, under a mound ornamented with good fetishes, tufts of feathers, wild fruits placed on wooden sticks, and calabashes filled with dew, where the birds may come to drink.

The remains of his victims must be thrown far away in the brushwood at the mercy of the panthers and vultures.

Such are the ceremonies that are granted to him who incurs the hate of Sakarabrou.

It was not difficult to find out the cause of Namarou's death.

The fetish-prophet made a sign; the curious crowd scattered, making way for two men who carried a sort of litter made on four poles torn from the roof, which they tied together. It was a very frail contrivance, only suitable for the weight of a little child; Namarou, who was so tall, could never lie on it. But it was not a question of raising the body upon it, but of tying on this litter the different effects that belonged to the deceased; her cotton garment first, then her spindles, her dishes, and several of the gri-gris which hung on the walls.

These objects, that were the witnesses of her life and death, would conduct the bearers to the one who had committed the murder. Namarou seemed to follow these movements; her eyes were fixed and her eyeballs dilated as with fear.

Now they leave her on her straw mat, alone in the empty hut. The group of old people, the fetish prophet and his acolytes carrying the litter, escorted by the crowd, go towards the dwelling of the fetishes, the temple of Sakarabrou, which is an inclosure containing a tree, half dead, whose old trunk is hollow with gaping cavities. In these receptacles fruits are deposited and dishes of "fonto" for offerings to the bad spirits. It is useless to take any trouble for the good ones, these people only flatter those whom they fear. On a low branch hang the tattered clothes that the demon wears

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when he appears among the circle of dancers by torch-light, on the evening of some great fête; also the tunic of leaves and the dragon's head with its threatening mouth. Beneath this disguise, according to the common belief, is the real presence! Sakarabrou is there!

The two men place the litter on their heads: shuddering, they wait hesitatingly. Although heretofore seeming quite indifferent, they now shiver and tremble, their faces become convulsed, and they shake their light burden. They can control themselves no longer; one single phenomenal suggestion makes them the docile instruments of the sorcerer, who, with an irresistible gesture, bends them to his will and sends them off at his command.

They scamper away, capering, running through the village in every direction, striking against the huts on this side and on that. Sometimes they lean against a door, listening, and then set off again at a mad pace.

From the spot where we are, an eminence at the entrance to Sapiase, the land slopes gently, so that the eye can follow all the particulars of the scene. There are cries and angry protestations when the runners, striking against a cabin, panting and streaming with perspiration, halt for a moment to take breath. The owner of the hut, fearful of being considered guilty of witchcraft, defends himself with vehemence, and calls upon the others as witnesses. They all know him. Is he capable of doing any harm to any one? Why, then, should he have made fetish against Namarou? He had no fault to find with her. They were friends. But the runners have gone away, and he is appeased.

This lasts for hours, while I think of poor forgotten Namarou, who is lying over there in her hut, still waiting, with her eyes wide open.

It is past noon, when, for the twentieth time, the two demoniacs return to the sacred inclosure, where they stop at last, panting for breath, with froth on their lips.

They lean stubbornly, with their backs against the fence, from which it is impossible to get them away. The crime has not been committed by a human being, consequently it is the fetishes who struck Namarou last night.

She is condemned now; her body shall not repose in the ground.

Then bursts forth a ferocious clamour, a concert of imprecations, and the troop hurls itself towards the quarry.

They bring to the middle of the place some gigantic tom-toms, hollowed out of the trunk of a tree, and the orchestra commences, making little taps as a prelude. Then the cadence becomes quicker, and the noise swells like the grumbling of a storm.

Namarou has been rolled up in her straw mat, and they bring her along, or drag her, rather. In hustling her about, the impromptu coffin breaks, and her head hangs down, raking the ground with its high knot of hair.

Then, throwing the body on the ground, another round is begun.

At first, they stand pressed one against another, marking their steps, with their backs bent and their arms dangling by their sides; then the dancers straighten themselves up and go off at a dizzy gallop.

In a cloud of red dust, the whole village whirls, a thousand persons, men, women and children; the young mothers with their children hanging to them in a sort of stirrup, like a soldier's cartridge pouch.

The fetish prophet and his men keep up the excitement with blows of the cat-o'-nine-tails, whose thongs clap on the greasy epidermis with a noise like that of wet linen.

The uproar has put all the domestic animals to flight The sheep and goats have run to the underbrush, the frightened chickens are perched on the roofs, and the cows, huddled together on the prairie, stop their grazing, and look on anxiously, with their necks outstretched.

When the tumult is at its loudest, some of the men, with a rush, take possession of the corpse, and carry it off at a run towards the woods.

For an hour more the dances and songs keep up with redoubled fury. Then, suddenly, the beating of the tom-tom ceases. Three blows are given, at long intervals, and all is silent.

The charm is broken; slowly and quietly the crowd disperses and the people go home calmly, feeling that they have done their duty.

Evening comes on, and the village has returned to its accustomed tasks. The housewives go to draw water, the pestles resound in the mortars, pounding the maize and millet.

The blacksmith in his shed, is making implements for war and tools for farming, and from the hive-shaped huts the smoke is again mounting towards the pale sky.

M. ALEXANDER.

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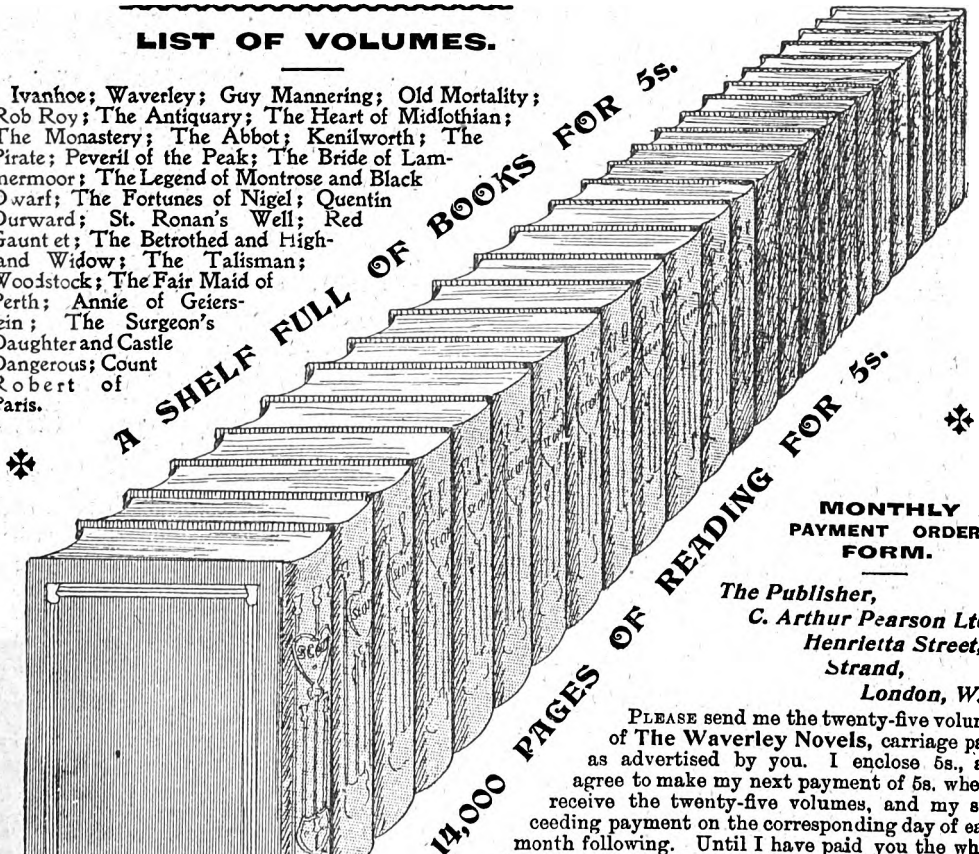

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FOR YELLOW GOLD.

A Story Told by an Old Western Miner.

WHEN the stage "went light" they ran out the small buckboard, but when there were more than four passengers the big mud waggon was "put on."

This was a buckboard day, for there was not a single passenger.

What was more to the point, as the Gold Butte Mining Company regarded it, was that under the driver's seat was a box with ten thousand dollars in the newest of tens and twenties in it.

The driver had looked very blue when he drove his four mustangs from the post-office—where he took on a very flat leather bag, which spoke loudly of the incapacity or disinclination of the Thimble Spring people for letter-writing—over to the railway station, where he was to take on the box. Things were going all wrong at home. That was why his brown face looked so haggard; that was why he held so loosely to the "lines;" that was why he chewed so hard on the bit of "plug" in his mouth.

"Such hard scratchin' I never seed afore," was what he had said as he had listlessly thrown the mail bag into the waggon: "can't git no decent job nowadays. Nothin' ter be had by prospectin'—tried thet time an' agin; ef I git anything it peters out in ide a week. I might make a strike over to Sand Gulch, but it's a long way off, an' me an' Sue an the kids hez moved so often 'at that we can't raise nothin' ter move on now. Why in Sam Hill did Sue hev ter git that rheumatiz jes now, when we're so hard up? It's a shame. Why can't Bill git someth n' ter do?—great, big, lunk-headed cuss. Ef I had a brotl er poorer'n a crow, d'ye think I'd go and live on him till thar' warn't nuthin' ter eat in the house? Shoo, Zach Springer, you're a fool. Bill hain't done that. He ain't ter blame fer gittin' his leg broke that time. Bill's all right, but he's onlucky. Been tryin' fur a month ter git a job an' can't git in nowhere. He's willin' ter work. He'd stan' cotch deep in the creek all day long washin' out tailin's if he could make his salt at it. Tried it fer six weeks and didn't get enough to buy a pair o' gum boots. Woa, Buckskin! Hang that one-eyed crow bait! he'd jam right into the station platform ef yer didn't saw his teeth eout."

And then the box was taken on, and the express agent had something to say. That "something" was not to Zach Springer's liking. He chewed harder than ever on the bit of plug, and sawed the hard mouths of the mustangs by an unnecessary yanking of the reins.

It was a positive relief to be able at last to whack his lash down upon the sides of the nervous brutes and turn them loose for a forty mile run to Gold Butte.

Why had he needed a lecture from a hireling of the Express Company, and why should that smooth-jowled agent have looked at him with such dark suspicion?

"They think 'cos I get stood up down ter Black Rocks las' time I had a big load o' gold thet I need to be preached to every time I go out now with a full box. The stoop-shouldered, desk-settin' hounds! I'd like ter see one of 'em handlin' the ribbons when thar's a Winchester lookin' at 'em with an eye as big as a bar'l head. Don't tell me they wouldn't give in! The sweet-scented, calf-skin booted young ladies! Thar ain't a man among 'em."

Zach Springer's indignation was now in more complete possession of him than had been his feeling of blueness a little earlier. What he had delivered himself of just now is not what he would have said had he voiced his true sentiments with reference to the express agent's lecture. In between the words ran the thought that "they" had suspected him of having a hand in the Black Rocks robbery. Had that been the reason the stage company had cut down his pay to "sixty" a month? The chances were that it was. It was too blamed mean for a lot of hounds, like these people, to come it so high-handedly over a poor man who only wanted his own. Wouldn't it serve them right if——

The white dust of the desert rolled up on the mustangs' hoofs in little puffs, and sprays of it, powdery fine, followed the turn of the wheels half way up, there to be caught by the breeze and drifted behind in a long cloud that followed the buckboard like a haunting spirit. Sometimes, as the light breeze shifted, it came back upon the buckboard and its driver like heavy thoughts on the conscience of a guilty man.

It would serve them just right! Besides that, only think—ten thousand! What would the people in Mexico or Guatemala, where he would fly, know or care if somebody up in the far-off Nevada had dumped a box off his buckboard and gone back and got it after a few days—may be a week? It would have to be a dark night, wouldn't it? You couldn't go and get a box like that in the daytime and take it anywhere, for the whole country would be out looking for the man who had it Maybe a month. That would be better. It would all blow over by that time. Let's see, would it? Ten thousand was a good deal. Those stage-stoppers were always striking the box on the wrong day. They never got so much as that at one haul. In two months, then—perhaps two months. But it would have to be well hidden.

And the thought stuck to him despite all attempts to keep it off, though by the time he had driven the mustangs into Red Canyon his indignation at having been suspected by the company had died down. The box at his feet had taken on a new meaning for him. It meant smart gowns for the wife; it meant a good schooling for the children. Those five little ones had had a hard "rustle" of it to get what scraps of learning they had thus far managed to clutch; and as for clothes, they were dressed like juvenile scarecrows. Yes, all the hard scratching would be over if he dared to do what many another hard-pushed man had done. Resolving the whole matter down to a plain, clear-cut proposition, it was after all, simply a question of "nerve."

Here was the place to do it. Right here, where the

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high, scraggy rocks, with the patches of sage-brush atop, come so near to the buckboard. It could be thrown over there anywhere—into the sage-brush. It would be as well concealed as though buried in six feet of earth. The buckboard had reached the top of a long down-grade. Zach put on the brake and twisted the reins about the brake-handle. As if about to take a plunge into ice-cold water, he reached down for the box. But, wait a bit. He took off his big sombrero and hung it on a projecting rock. Then, flashing out his six-shooter, he sent a bullet through the brim of the hat, which he then replaced on his head. Though it had been hot enough when he started out from Thimble Spring, there seemed to be a chill in the air just now. Would they believe the story that he would have to concoct, even though he showed them the hole in the hat-brim? What would he care whether they did or not? They already suspected him. If he had the name he might as well have the game. He looked at a spot where the sage-brush clust red thickest, and made a mental throw or two in a tentative way in order to "get the distance."

What would Bill say? Bill was an honest man. He would blush with shame every time his brother's name was mentioned after that, for, of course, he would know. She would never suspect Any kind of a story would bamboozle her. Bill was smart; he could put two and two together as quickly as any man in the country. And yet Bill himself was a little reckless sometimes. He had been acting very queer of late, and had been over to Johnson's a good deal, drinking and playing cards with the boys. That would not do. Bill must be looked after, he was only a young fellow—a mere boy even if he had been trying to raise a moustache lately.

Yes, Bill was a good deal younger than he. Why, he remembered well the day he was born, when they took him to show him his new baby brother. He used to carry Bill all round, and he was the first one to set him on his legs, and try to make him walk. He remembered how it used to hurt his own head when Bill got a knock by falling out of his high chair. Bill was just as much to him now as ever, and those knocks which fate and the weakness of his nature were giving him now, hurt him just as badly—worse, perhaps, than they did brother Bill. What would Bill say?

He laid his hands upon the box again. It would be safe enough behind the rocks, there, under the sage-brush, as safe as if . . .

"Git up, thar! Git, Buckskin! Git, old Gabe! Ye lazy critters. G'lang!" And down came the long lash upon the dust-covered backs of the mustangs, and off down the long grade they ran, making the dust fly in the canyon as it never flew before. For Zach had grasped the reins in a grip of iron, and both his big cowhide boots were planted firmly on the box.

"This 'ere is what I call goin'!" he said, ten minutes later, as they were still flying down the grade. "But I lost some time with a fool notion that I orter a ben licked for ever thinkin' on a minit. Well, the mustangs got a good rest. Makin' up fer it now, though. They'll soon be in a lather. I'll git to the half-way house in a quarter of an hour, and then I'll take a good horn. I feel kinder narvous yit. That 'ere box is a heavy load on a man's mind. I s'pose the superintendent up to Gold Batte is worryin' about it too. Never mind, ol' feller, you'll see that stuff stowed away in yer safe afore sundown.

"What's this? A hold up, sure as shootin'!"

Out from behind a tall rock a man, with a piece of dark calico over his face and a very large Winchester in his hand, had suddenly sprung, and the muzzle of the rifle looked right into Zach's big round eyes.

The brake scraped the wheels and made the sparks fly.

The mustangs came to a sudden stand.

There was no getting by that Winchester.

"I reckon you've got the drop on me, stranger," the driver coolly remarked. "Stick up my hands? In course I will, ef you insist on it, but I tell yer these 'ere mustangs is mighty skittish, an' it's on ther daown grade. So yer needn't shoot if they start up, fur it'll be yer own fault. I s'pose yer arter th s 'ere box. Throw it out? It's too heavy fer that. Ye'll hev ter give us a lift."

The man with the gun said nothing, but the subtleties of the holding-up process were not so fine but that Zach understood every wave of the stranger's hand and every shrug of his shoulders, when the waves and shrugs meant anything. Zach had been held up before.

He of the calico mask did not step forward at once. In this suggestion that he should assist in taking off the box he seemed to suspect some trick. But one of Zach's hands were held aloft and the other, with the four reins in it, was on the level of his shoulder. The man edged up to the buckboard, exchanging the weapon which he presented at Zach's head for a six-shot revolver.

"Thanks, stranger," said Zach, with forced merriment. "I never like ter hev one o' them 'ere long-barrelled things p'inted at me. They shoot too straight. Now, here ye are."

With his foot he shoved the box along until it was near the end of the waggon.

"Thar it is, help yourself: but ye'll find it a heavy load ter pack ef yer goin' far."

The robber's fingers grasped the box nervously.

"A green un at the biz," thought Zach; "mebbe that'll be an openin' here yit."

The robber pulled and hauled at the box, but it would not budge, for it was caught on a nail-head in the bottom of the waggon.

In his feverish anxiety to secure the gold, he lowered the revolver a little and grasped the box with both hands.

Swiftly Zach's right hand fell to his hip and out he whipped his bright barrelled pistol.

"Got the dead drop, stranger! It's no go!" he shouted. "Put that weepin daown, you fool!"—for the man was raising his pistol. "You won't? Then take that."

A flash, a report, and back fell the robber without a moan. His fingers clawed the dust for a moment, as if he were grasping for a hold on life. But the hold was not to be had, for he gave it up and lay there quietly in the dust.

The driver shoved his pistol into his holster and wiped the sweat from his brow. It had been a close shave for the box, and a closer shave for him.

"Taks a purty keen un ter git erway with Ol' Zach artor all," he chuckled, springing lightly from the buckboard, while a broad smile lit up his brown face. "This' ere means a big raise from ther stage comp'ny an' a hundred er two from the Gold Butte folks. I guess they'll think the ol' man's all right arter this. Hooray for hooray! my stock's riz! It's way up ter a hundred an' fifty. Whoop-e-e! Haw-haw-haw!"

He stooped down over the dead man and lifted the bit of cloth from his face.

"Good Heavens! It's Bill!" G. Hill.

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A Love - - - - in Tatters.

ELINOR RICHARDS worked in Olcott's shop. Dr. Frost was out driving with two lady friends, and they passed Olcott's.

"Oh, Dr. Frost, do let us go in here! They make everything. You can get your pockets full of all kinds of mechanical toys."

So they alighted and went in, and Dr. Frost was interested and amused, as he always was with mechanical devices, till he came to the table where sat Elinor Richards.

If Dr. Frost had been struck he could not have been more surprised. But nature and his professional training held his face in check. He stepped forward and held out his hand.

"Miss Richards! What a very unexpected pleasure! You have not forgotten me!"

Miss Richards had not forgotten. She glanced at his light gloves and at her own fingers wet with fresh paint.

"You must excuse me," putting her hands behind her. "I can't consent to ruin your gloves."

The Doctor smiled, put quite at his ease for the moment. That little wilful trick of refusal was one he knew quite well. She had put her hands behind her a great many times in the past when he had wanted to shake hands.

The little group passed on. Miss Richards sat down, drove her penknife into the table before her, snapped the blade short off, and went on with her work again.

Dr. Frost had entered on his profession without friends and in debt. And at the very outset he had said that since love and marriage lay in the natural order of things, he would choose a wife whose social standing should help and not hinder him.

He had met Elinor Richards the winter before. She had been spending some few weeks with her aunt, Mrs. Davis. Mrs. Davis did not belong to the extreme fashionable set. She lived in good style; had a good house, money, and more than the average culture and refinement. In a quiet way, Miss Richards, as her niece, became quite a celebrity.

Dr. Frost met her several times; at the opera first, and afterwards at the theatre. And then he fell into a habit of calling on Mrs. Davis informally, as his engagements would permit; and so when Miss Richards left the town he had grown to miss her.

He had settled with himself so firmly at the outset that he could not afford matrimony for years to come that he did not recognise any other sentiment than a passing interest. Elinor was not a girl to talk about herself; he had not the slightest idea of her circumstances or social standing beyond that implied by her relationship to Mrs. Davis.

But in his thoughts of that home which, by-and-by, he was to make for himself, he saw always at the head of his table a girl with grey eyes and brunette skin.

And now he had seen her again, and she was at work in a shop. Well!

Miss Richards went home from her work that night in a tumult, for which she had called herself various uncomplimentary names. If she had been more accustomed to mental analyses she would have understood that her own position was less the cause than the discovery of a very earthly streak in the man whom she had set very high among the gods. Dr. Frost had his face in very thorough control, but not so absolutely that Miss Richards did not feel the shock he had suffered.

The next day, or rather the next evening, Dr. Frost called on her. In that interview there was no trace of embarrassment on either side. Miss Richards gave him to understand quite naturally that she earned her own bread. But after he had gone she was cross and irritable, and then she cried herself to sleep.

In the next four days Dr. Frost saw her three times. What fascination drew him he could not define to himself. When he went away he coolly told himself that he was in love with her, and as coolly that it was a piece of folly from which he had better recover as soon as possible; and with a great pang at his heart set himself to make the most of the sweetness in Madeline Austin's smiles.

In October Mrs. Davis came back from some country visits she had been making with a severe cold, which developed itself into pneumonia. Straightway Miss Richards was summoned to attend her. That was the usual programme. Being the only niece in the family who had no regularly appointed home duties, all the sick people called on her for everything they wanted.

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But she did rebel a little against this call. Yet what could she do? The necessity was stringent. She went, of course.

"That man loves me, I believe, and I"—looking straight before her—"might love him."

She found Dr. Frost in attendance. He did not look in her face when they met. He had only a few words to spare; the case in the room beyond was too grave to admit of careless speech.

For a week matters went on after that fashion. Then Mrs. Davis began to mend. But the Doctor's visits did not cease.

Madeline Austin's smiles were not the less warm and sweet, but John Frost forgot them in the light of a pair of steady, cold, grey eyes. Out of Elinor Richards's presence he made resolutions innumerable, and went back again and again into the dangerous influence.

The steady, grey eyes saw it all, knew that the man rebelled, and was drawn by a power he could not help. Mrs. Davis told her niece that it was popularly reported that a marriage pended between Dr. Frost and a Miss Austin.

About the time that Miss Richards was hearing this, Dr. Frost was also being enlightened. He was attending Harry Vaughan, who had broken his leg.

"Smythe tells me that Miss Richards is back with Mrs. Davis?"

"Yes."

Then Dr. Frost heard something about Miss Richards which he refused to believe.

The next day Dr. Frost found Mrs Davis weakly weeping over a rumour that a dear friend had just been relating to her.

"Cruel, Doctor; women are so cruel to each other. Here's Mary Morris with nothing to do but to keep this cobweb of gossip afloat till it grows into something that isn't a cobweb."

"I don't understand," with a cold sinking at his heart.

"Elinor's birth was unfortunate. There were circumstances in her parents' history that were extremely painful—one of those family skeletons that nobody wants meddled with. And someone has begun rattling the dry bones, and there'll be no end to the clatter, I suppose."

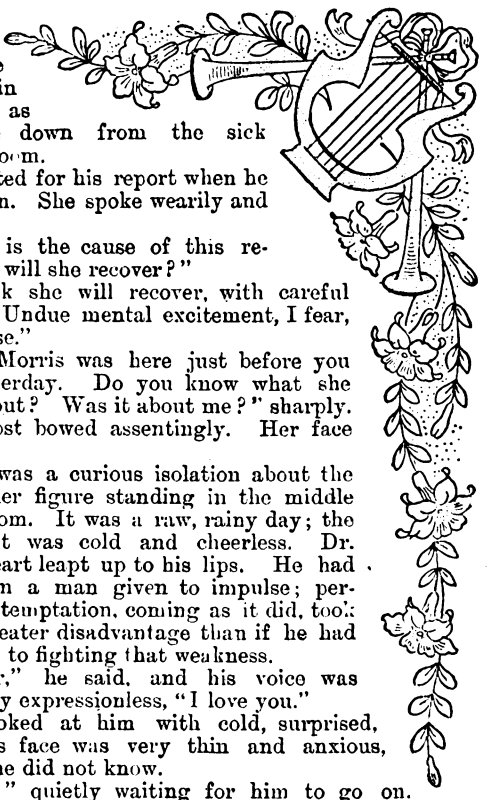
Mrs. Davis waxed hysterical, and Elinor came in, straight and tall, and sallow-faced with many nights' watching, and assisted the Doctor to minister to her aunt, their hands touching, asking and answering questions with mechanical coolness.

When the Doctor went away he shut his teeth hard to keep back an inarticulate expression—half groan, half an imprecation. Then he rode about till late at night and spent the rest of it in considering himself.

He could never marry her with this stain on her name. He moaned over that necessity of renunciation as bitterly as if he had ever had the intention of doing so. Now he thought he had. He fancied he might have faced everything else but this. He had to make his way in the world. He knew himself for a coward, and did not writhe the less bitterly for the knowledge. He did not turn, as a less generous man might have done, and accuse her of an endeavour to entrap him.

"I love her, and I shall never love anyone else. But I have not the courage to face her history, knowing that it is known."

All this was a poor preparation for meeting Miss Richards next morning when he went up to Mrs. Davis's in obedience to an early summons. He hoped she would be out of the way, but she met him in the hall as she came down from the sick woman's room.



She waited for his report when he came down. She spoke wearily and languidly.

"What is the cause of this relapse, and will she recover?"

"I think she will recover, with careful nursing. Undue mental excitement, I fear, is the cause."

"Mrs. Morris was here just before you came yesterday. Do you know what she talked about? Was it about me?" sharply.

Dr. Frost bowed assentingly. Her face hardened.

There was a curious isolation about the tall, slender figure standing in the middle of the room. It was a raw, rainy day; the grey light was cold and cheerless. Dr. Frost's heart leapt up to his lips. He had never been a man given to impulse; perhaps the temptation, coming as it did, took him at greater disadvantage than if he had been used to fighting that weakness.

"Elinor," he said, and his voice was thoroughly expressionless, "I love you."

She looked at him with cold, surprised, eyes. His face was very thin and anxious, but that he did not know.

"Well?" quietly waiting for him to go on.

"I said I love you. I am poor. I have my fortune all to make. I know your story. I can help you to bear it, or we will sink under it together."

To John Frost's alarmed eyes she seemed to grow taller and threateningly majestic. The cold eyes flashed angry lightnings; clearly Miss Richards had a temper. But save for a quiver of scorn in the clear tones, her voice was quiet enough. But before she spoke Dr. Frost's inner consciousness told him that he had not said the most felicitous thing.

"You are magnanimous. My poverty and my story. No, thank you, Dr. Frost. It would need a much stronger man than you to bear the double weight. Besides, would Miss Austin approve, I wonder, of your unequalled generosity?"

A dash of bitter red relieved the Doctor's paleness. He bowed and left her. Silence was dignified and—safe. He hated himself that he thought of that. But what could he have done, after all, if she had taken him at his word?

For two weeks more he saw Miss Richards nearly every day—saw her, and, for any emotion she betrayed, might as well have asked questions of and given directions to a skilful automaton. Then he did not see her, and Mrs. Davis confided her grievances.

"Elinor's gone home ill. She never had an illness before. And how am I to get well without her?"

Elinor came near finding this illness her last as well as her first. It was a low, nervous fever, wearing her down to skin and bone, and leaving her weaker than a baby, and irritable enough to make excusable her aunt's remark:

"Dear me, Elinor. There isn't much of you, but what there is is very trying in its quality."

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By this time it was mid-winter, and she was invited to convalesce in Mrs. Davis's house, which proposal she flatly declined, and went instead to the house of a friend, with whom she spent six delightful weeks, making the most of her invalid's privileges, and getting back strength and flesh, and something that was almost beauty.

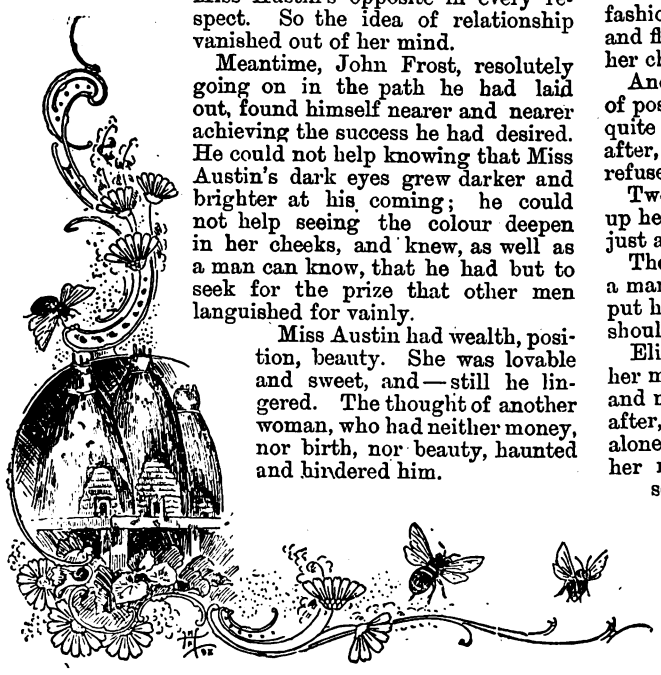
Among the men she saw was a rather elderly, artificial individual, whom she remarked chiefly because he bore the same name as herself. I am not going to make a mystery of the matter; it was her father, though she did not know that till some weeks later. He seemed in rather poor health.

In that country life, taking so much of its hurry and glitter as she chose, retiring behind the shield of her barely recovered health when she grew wearied, some latent possibilities developed themselves. No one asked if she had ever wrought for her daily bread; no one offered her pitying sympathy on account of her "story."

A well-bred, self-possessed girl, introduced sufficiently well by the friends whose guest she was, the very heterogeneous collection of elements called "society" asked nothing more. And among the rest Frank Austin fluttered about her, fitfully at first, as was his manner, and then settled down into a languid constancy of attendance, quite noticeable by those who knew the man.

Elinor did not mind much about him. She stood in no danger of falling in love. Down deep in her heart a steady pain throbbed and burned. She never mentioned John Frost's name; indeed, in these days, she had no occasion either for speaking or hearing it. When she first heard Frank Austin's name she regarded him with a quick little spasm of pain, remembering a certain Madeline Austin, whose name she had heard in quite another connection.

But Madeline Austin was slight and dark, with a flashing quickness of motion, and this young man had the build of a Hurcules; was blonde and slow — just Miss Austin's opposite in every respect. So the idea of relationship vanished out of her mind.



Meantime, John Frost, resolutely going on in the path he had laid out, found himself nearer and nearer achieving the success he had desired. He could not help knowing that Miss Austin's dark eyes grew darker and brighter at his coming; he could not help seeing the colour deepen in her cheeks, and knew, as well as a man can know, that he had but to seek for the prize that other men languished for vainly.

Miss Austin had wealth, position, beauty. She was lovable and sweet, and — still he lingered. The thought of another woman, who had neither money, nor birth, nor beauty, haunted and hindered him.

But one night, when the dance was done, he asked his question, and Madeline faltered her "yes," and Dr. Frost went home in the early dawn an engaged man; which fact Mrs. Davis wrote her niece very soon afterwards, taking a grim comfort in the telling.

Elinor was sitting with Frank Austin when her letter came. She read it, and flushed painfully. Austin was not looking at her. She laid it down, and startled herself with a bitter laugh.

"Miss Richards," a tone of alarm in his voice, "what has happened?"

"Nothing, positively. An earthquake, I believe, one of those social swallowings up that occur now and then in the best regulated circles, but nothing outside the interested parties, I assure you."

"I don't understand you at all," looking at her in a puzzled way.

"And I didn't mean you should. Dear Mr. Austin, I want you to go."

"I can do that, certainly," rearing himself aloft. "But I don't like to leave you in trouble if there's anything——" pausing wistfully.

"There isn't anything. I'm not in trouble. Oh, I can't tell you," covering her face in her hands.

Does anyone know what blundering spirit sometimes possesses a man?

"I don't want you to tell me. Oh, don't cry!" his own voice husky, and he came and stood over her; "because, Miss Richards, you see, I love you so," and he stood trembling in all his six feet of length.

Down fell Miss Richards' hands from her crimson face, and she stood staring in simple astonishment.

"Good gracious!" she said breathlessly.

Austin looked up at the sound and met her eyes.

"Is it so very preposterous?" he asked humbly.

"Yes. No, not preposterous at all, only so utterly impossible. Oh, you don't know!" breaking down again.

"I do know that I've blundered. I'll take it all back. You are not to think of it again."

"Then you don't—what was it, Mr. Austin?" woman-fashion coming all at once out of her grief and agitation, and flashing a smile into his face with the tears still on her cheeks.

And he, of course, bewildered by this sudden change of position, reiterated his assertion, to which she listened quite gravely now. And when he went away half-an-hour after, he had regularly proposed and been as regularly refused.

Two weeks after that there came a letter that broke up her established views of life as utterly as if she had just awakened from a dream.

The letter was from her father—such a letter as such a man would naturally write. He was rich—he could put his daughter at the head of an establishment that should gratify a high ambition.

Elinor had known comparatively little of the facts of her mother's history. She knew that she had left home and married clandestinely; that, little more than a year after, she had died at Elinor's birth, died neglected and alone; that the wretched little baby was taken by her mother's family, the father not caring even to see it, and making no provision for its maintenance.

So now, when the man who had caused all this misery reappeared and begged that his daughter would remember the ties that he had so long forgotten, trying to bribe her with promised splendours, she indignantly refused.

But, a little after, another letter came. Mr.

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Richards was ill, probably fatally so, and begged his daughter once more to come to him.

"He is your father, my dear," her grandmother said, and then the two went to the bedside of the sick man.

Mr. Richards did not die; but his convalescence was a long one, and he spent the time by the seaside after the summer came. Elinor was with him. "My daughter" seemed to have become the centre of the man's existence. He clothed her in splendid apparel, and flashed jewels before her undazzled eyes. She bore her changed estate with superb self-possession. She thought of those other days when she wore print dresses and soiled her fingers with a day's work, if not with a feeling of regret, at least without a sense of weariness or distaste in the memory.

Then when the summer was over they went back to town, and set up housekeeping on rather a grand scale. She met most of the people she had known before, at one time and another, all but Dr. Frost and Frank Austin. But both these meetings came about after a while.

A little while after she met Madeline Austin at a wedding reception. In the ebbing and flowing of the crowd they found themselves near each other. Miss Richards was magnificently attired in velvet and rustling silk. Miss Austin, for once, wore a dress that did not suit her. Her dark face looked swarthy by the contrast, and by Miss Richards's side she sank into insignificance. At least, that was what Frank Austin thought, looking at the two. Miss Austin's sole associations with Elinor were her few casual meetings with her in last winter's quieter life. If Elinor remembered her with a different recognition, she did not betray herself. Perhaps, when all at once the relationship between brother and sister revealed itself to her, she half wished that last winter's decision on his suit had been different. Miss Richards was wholly feminine.

Later in the evening Dr. Frost appeared. She had not seen him for more than a year. He was looking careworn, and much more than a year older. At first he did not recognise her. When he did they talked with an odd constraint on them both.

Mr. Richards came up while they stood together. Elinor presented him. There was a great deal of courtly grace in the elder man's bearing, and his demeanour to his daughter was perfect. The Doctor looked dazed and bewildered, and Elinor left him before he had recovered his wits.

Left him and cried half that night because—oh, uncertain human nature!—she did not grieve more deeply over her lost ideal.

But when John Frost called, after a few days, the old charm fell on her again. For the sake of those old days she could not help being gracious and sweet, and evidently, also, Dr. Frost could not help being swept off his feet.

"I heard of your engagement," she said at last. "It is not yet consummated, it seems."

"And may never be. Elinor, I was an idiot. I loved you better than any other human being even while I was speaking those fatal words to Madeline. Only my ambition stood in my way. I love you **now**, I swear to you."

Miss Richards was rather unprepared for this outbreak. She looked at him steadily for a moment or two.

"You must go, Dr. Frost. I think I ought to be very angry with you. Only I am sure that you cannot mean this I would never hear your voice again. How can you dare say such things to me? Go, now."

He went out silently, and met Frank Austin coming in.

"Oh, yes, Maddy gave me this for you," pulling out a slim envelope.

And Frost found himself summoned to attend his betrothed on a shopping expedition.

John Frost told Madeline Austin the truth one day. He did not mean to. It was as unpremeditated, as thorough an accident as every other event in his history had been. He told her about Elinor.

"And you love her yet?" the girl said. She was pale and trembling, but she was very brave about the matter.

"Heaven knows—I hope not! I will be as true to you as ever man was to woman; but you must know the truth in this matter. I will not begin our wedded life with a lie. I will be a good husband to you, Madeline."

"No," she said coolly, "I think that must be over between us. You are a free man, Dr. Frost. Go and tell Miss Richards, and see what she says."

He protested and urged, and in the end he went. And just about the time he left Madeline, Elinor was saying: "But before I say yes, Frank, you must understand that I used to work in Olcott's shop."

"My dear, I know all about it. I have known it ever since I first saw you. Dr. Frost was attending me at the time, and Maddy came home and told me about you."

"And there is something else I have learnt lately that Dr. Frost knew. My mother——"

"Dear, I know that, too. We will not distress ourselves with this old trouble. Your griefs are mine, too, and we will bear them together; but we will not think of them now."

"I must go and dress for Mrs. Saxton's dinner. You will be there?"

He met Dr. Frost a few yards from the steps.

"I was just coming to you and Maddy," and then he stopped in a little ineffectual mental search for dignified expression, and, failing, used the bluntest.

"Miss Richards and I are engaged to be married. She has just promised me."

Neither Miss Austin or Dr. Frost are married. I do not know what the future will do for them, though I do not believe she will ever trust him again. For a few months they thought she would die, but travel and youth and a strong constitution pulled her through. It was a hard blow for a girl of her character, and she will never again be as hopeful and trustful as before.

As for Dr. Frost, though his practice grows steadily, and wealth and assured position seem to lie in his way, he is hardly to be envied.

E. V. Hall.

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JIMMY.

"ANYTHING to-day, Mr. Brooks?"

"Nothing to-day, Jimmy."

The old man turns sadly away. He is very old. His coat is of rusty black and of ancient pattern, an old-fashioned high hat rests upon his silvery locks; but the coat and the hat are carefully brushed, and were it not for the very weary face beneath, one would not notice him so much.

Poor Jimmy! He had asked that same question at the same hour and the same theatre for many years, with always the same answer. He had been a good actor once and walked those very boards. The old walls had many a time resounded with laughter and applause of Jimmy's making.

He was a favourite then, he was watched and waited for, and no bill of the old house was deemed complete without the name of Jimmy Page. But now—well, it is different! He is old and it is a crime to be old. Everything else might have been forgiven, but that, never.

There were other actors now, young men and handsome men; then, besides, there were different people down in the front to look at them.

The old audience that used to love Jimmy is gone, no one knows where, but they are gone and have been these many years. Everything is changed—his old companions, brother actors of his other days, have faded away, and Jimmy sometimes wonders how it came that all have drifted so far and only he remains, forgotten and alone.

He replaces the old hat upon the bowed head and shuffles slowly across the stage, every nook and corner of which is rich in reminiscence to him. At the threshold of his old dressing-room he pauses for a moment—yes, it is the same looking-glass, with a face nearly as scarred as Jimmy's own. How often has it reflected his face in moments of triumph in the days of youthful power and happiness, as he looked into it; no wonder, he is far different now. Jimmy could see it. Far different. Then he was youthful, hopeful, young and full of bright thoughts for a happy future, but now—well, he is old, but that is sufficient. Jimmy understands and turns away.

He glances mechanically at the wardrobe scattered about him. It belongs to the new comedian. They say he will be a success, and above all he is young. Jimmy almost lets fall a tear as he wonders if the new one will ever be old.

He hopes not.

Down the passage he goes, where in brighter days he trod so happily, and at last he stands by the old stage door. There is his name, placed there thirty years ago. How well he remembers the night; and Fanny had written it there next to hers.

Poor, dear Fanny! She has gone with the other, and never again will cross that threshold, never again hear the creak of the old stage door. Gently, very gently, he pushes it open and goes out into the streets Some employés of the house are unloading luggage at the kerb. All speak to him as he shuffles by.

"Poor old Jimmy!" says one; "he was good once, so they say, but he is a 'has been' now."

Jimmy goes down the street, silent and alone. He does not heed the crowd that streams by him and buffets the old form here and there. He is thinking of something else. He is living in the days when so many were glad to know Jimmy Page, comedian.

As he climbs the little stairs of the house that Jimmy now lives in, he wonders how it came that the wise Providence has taken away all the other "boys and girls" and left him to grow so useless and so old.

"Ah, dear dad, how late you are!" says a cheery, girlish voice, as he enters the room.

Her nimble, kindly little fingers, the dearest in the world to Jimmy, take the old hat from the silvery locks and place it tenderly on the hook behind the door, lead the bowed figure to a comfortable armchair by the fire, and as he sits with a sweet, childish smile upon his patient face, Fanny, blithe and happy as a bird, bustles about, singing gaily as she sets the "tea-things" on the modest little table.

It is not a banquet, just a plain, simple little meal, but how they enjoy it! How merrily little Fanny prattles on the happy plans for the future! Her needle is bringing them more and more every day, and there will be no more times like the old ones when they were so poor; and then the meal is finished and he is seated once more in the armchair and she is singing merrily through her work, and it really seems for the moment Jimmy has forgotten that he is old; it seems as though there was *some* place for him after all.

Then when her work is over and she sits at the little stool at his feet he tells her of the bygone days. He has told her all before so often, but then it is all so new to her.

He speaks gently of her mother. Ah! she was a wonderful artist, none like her now, Jimmy is certain of that. Too bad, too bad she had gone. She could show them to-day what acting was, but perhaps it was better after all. She would have been old now, Jimmy would have grieved to see her so.

A brisk rap at the door and open it flies.

"Oh, Jack!" and little Fanny runs to meet him.

"What a handsome, manly young fellow he is; no wonder everyone likes him, no wonder Jack is a success," thinks old Jimmy as he cordially shakes his hand. He is a royal fellow is Jack, and Jimmy loves him—yes, even if he is the new comedian.

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What a happy evening they pass, Jack singing and joking till his humour even effects old Jimmy, who really tries to sing himself.

It is an old song; they used to laugh at it once, but something is wrong; his voice is not quite in tune, something lacking, it is not so funny as it once was, and after he has finished Jimmy laughs quietly to himself and then looks at them.

Jack is gazing sorrowfully into the fire, and Fanny is weeping very softly on Jack's shoulder.

Yes, Jimmy feels they are right; he is certainly growing old, and Fanny helps him off to the little room to rest.

When they are gone Jack rises and tiptoes across the room to where Jimmy's coat hangs on the wall and quietly slips a gold coin into the frayed pocket and tiptoes back again.

Jimmy will wonder to-morrow how he came to overlook that coin before, but he will never dream how it came there.

Dear Jack!

Little Fanny soon returns, and together they sit by the cheerful fireside and talk very quietly. Jack appears in the new piece to-morrow.

Oh! how they hope he will succeed, how much it will mean for all of them! They will be together then, and never, never leave each other again; Fanny, Jack, and poor old Jimmy—won't they be happy!

No more heartaches, that is all past now; and Jimmy need never look for an engagement again; he will not need it, poor old soul.

Ah! little do they know the artist, little do they dream in the flush of their youthful years the hopeless yearning of the old man, who, tossing on his little couch near by, brokenly murmurs:

"Old, old, old!"

It is evening again. The lights of the great theatre shine brightly upon the twinkling snowflakes falling gentl upon the merry, good-natured crowd that swarms the great thoroughfare. Carriages without number are discharging their brilliant occupants at the theatre door, and many are the bright and happy faces that crowd the entrance.

It is the first night of the new comedy, and all the "first nighters" are there ready to condemn or approve.

At the rear of the building a somewhat different scene presents itself. The snow is heaped high about the old stage door, the lonely gas lamp flickers dismally in the night wind, and the street is almost deserted.

Some happy faces pass this door too, but most of them are silent and grave. A great deal depends upon this night to them, success or ruin stares them in the face, and the little "servant girl" hums a comic song with a very serious countenance as she hurries in.

Then comes Jack. He is very hopeful, and tells his companion as they enter together that it is certain to be "the hit of his life"

Who is this old crouching figure that comes shuffling through the snow and hesitates as he reaches the door? Why, it's Jimmy. Yes, he has come to take a lesson from the younger generation.

Somehow he seems older to-night, just a little more bent, and perhaps there are a few, just a few, more lines about his dear face.

The curtain is up, the play is on. The audience is very quiet and ready at an instant to approve or to crush.

Jack's time has come; he begins; quickly the ice is broken. They are with him, and the house fairly rocks with laughter and applause. He has won them and stamped his name beside the glittering motto, "Success" upon the play.

What a happy little heart is fluttering joyfully in the dear little girl who looks at him from the front, with so many happy tears—her Jack!

The company is in ecstasies and the author rushes round the stage to greet our Jack as he leaves it.

But where is Jimmy? Ah, yes, there is, "Right proscenium entrance," squeezed in a little space where the gas man has kindly placed him and given him a little stool to sit on.

Can it be he is not laughing and cheering with the mad crowd so near him? It actually seems that there are tears in his eyes, or something very like them, and as he gazes through them it seems to Jimmy that another scene, a far different one, unrolls before him—a scene of long, long ago. The comedian is still there, but he doesn't look quite like Jack, but like someone Jimmy knew once. Why, bless me! it's Jimmy himself, and, yes, he can't be mistaken, round him are the old "boys and girls." Again comes floating on his ear the familiar strains of the old orchestra he knows so well, wafted to him from out of the realms of long ago. Again the laughter and applause are his and his alone, Fanny is with him now, how beautiful she looks; it is a great night for Jimmy, and why? because he is young. Dear, dear Fanny, how merciful, he thinks, that you will never grow old. Oh; the happiness which surrounds him, just plain Jimmy, but the greatest of them all——.

"Curtain."

Bang goes the gong and Jimmy rises with a start. Gone. All are gone. All the familiar faces he saw such a short time ago. He must have been dreaming, these are different faces that go laughing by him; but they are just as young and just as beautiful, and as Jimmy turns to go away he sees his own in the little glass nailed against the gas box, and Jimmy only says: "Old, old, old!"

Just a little more bent, just a little slower does he shuffle to the stage door. He stops a second and in the dim light of the flickering jet prints a reverent and respectful kiss on the spot where her name stands next to his, then slowly, without being missed, shuffles out, and the old stage door closes half-reluctantly upon him.

"Jack, the piece went splendidly, and it's you that did it; never saw such a hit since I've been in the business," and the manager grasps his hand.

And Jack—well Jack only sees visions of a very happy little home with a sweet girlish face ever near him, and a dear silvery-haired figure by the bright fireside. How happy they will be!

"By-the-way, old man," says the manager as he is leaving, "I'm not at all suited with the way Davis does that character old man part; think you'd better tell old Jimmy to come round at rehearsal to-morrow and I will give him a chance at the part."

Jack can only say, "God bless you!"

How happy they all are after the strain is over and they know all is well; the little "servant-girl" is laughing merrily, and they crowd about Jack as they all walk down the passageway together to the old stage door. The door swings open; they are about to step out, when something lying in the snow blocks their way. Jack stoops and lifts it.

"Jimmy!"

Yes, the curtain that has been rung down so many years has risen to the sweet strains of the old orchestra, and once again he is playing his part with the "old boys and girls."

CHARLES HARTMAN.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Eagle Strangles the Bear.

It was no part of Admiral Mahan's scheme to leave his ships as stationary targets to be battered by the superior gun-fire of his opponent.

No sooner did the action commence than he promptly echeloned the fleet to the East, thus effectually using his broadsides and compelling the enemy to change front in order to bring his full force into play. The manœuvre had another and important effect.

The tide was now rapidly moving down Channel, and the United States vessels in their new position had the benefit of a strong current for the purposes of rapid movement and easier execution of tactics. Ship for ship and gun for gun, the Grand Duke ought to have won the battle, and, indeed, he began the affair with a light heart as to its issue, though he bitterly denounced the American commander for so thoroughly upsetting his plans.

But in one respect out of many the Russian had seriously underrated his foe. He had heard of, but never seen, the dynamite gun—a fearful weapon to the development of which the United States had given particular attention.

Their artillerists had succeeded in developing to perfection not only the propelling power of this well-known explosive, but also in utilising its eccentric qualities in bursting the missile itself.

Gunpowder or gun-cotton has a direct and measurable effect in a specific locality when exploded by the impact of a shell upon the object aimed at. It also seeks the least resisting avenue of outlet. Dynamite, on the other hand, is a variable force, and most frequently attacks with the greatest fury the point of utmost resistance.

The Russian ships soon bore witness of the demoniacal energy of this unexpected assailant.

Whilst the blows of some of the American shells did little more damage than was effected by the first shock—the resultant explosion passing away harmlessly or wrenching off some obstacle many feet distant from the place struck—the majority of effective projectiles did enormous damage, crushing 9-inch plates as though they were bonnet-boxes, tearing whole sections out of a barbette, smashing big guns out of their carriages, and, at times, wrenching huge lumps from the body of a ship

Such terrific freaks of the giant explosive quickly demoralised the Russian sailors, and the battle had not long progressed before Michaelovitch, Grand Duke, ordered all efforts to be concentrated upon torpedo and ram attack.

But by this time the United States Admiral had received highly valuable professional assistance.

When the fight began, David Jenkins, master of No. 51 Cardiff pilot boat, was standing in the bows of his smart little craft near the entrance to Penarth Dock. He knew that in the then state of the tide both friend and foe were in imminent danger of stranding during the rapid and often careless course of a manœuvre.

Now, David Jenkins was not cast in particularly heroic mould. He was short and stout and sailor-like, with a small vocabulary of common words but a rich stock of expletives in two languages. He yelled to his assistants to cast off from the buoy to which the *Polly Jenkins*—his wife's namesake—was moored, and run up the mainsail and topsail and haul in the jib.

In a word, Admiral Mahan wanted a pilot, and David Jenkins was going to him.

If you can conceive what a fierce naval engagement means, if you can picture a sea torn with projectiles big and little, alive with torpedoes, and swept with torrents of bullets from Maxims and small-arms, you will realise the Inferno through which the *Polly Jenkins* passed like a pantomime fairy among the demons—smiling and untouched—during the next few minutes.

And what a roar went up from Penarth Head, from the masts of ships in the docks, from the balconies of such buildings as commanded a sea view, when the people understood David Jenkins' motive and saw him clamber up a rope thrown to him over the side of the *Minneapolis*, whilst a shell sent the smart *Polly Jenkins* to the bottom of the sea an instant later.

David coolly turned to help his mates, both of whom were saved, and then made his way to the conning-tower of the *Minneapolis*, where he found the Admiral.

When he heard the pilot's mission, Admiral Mahan gripped his hand for reply. In five minutes the effect of David Jenkins' presence was felt. Two Russian battleships were stuck in the East Mud, and a cruiser was aground on a shoal off Penarth.

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The fight lasted exactly three-quarters of an hour. At the end of that time two Russian battleships and four cruisers were sunk, their tops being only visible above the water, three were ashore, four others, mere wrecks, had struck their colours, and the seven remaining vessels, including the *Kronstadt*, were hurrying down Channel, to return that evening in the safe keeping of Admiral Erskine.

Three United States ships had gone down, and four vessels had to be rapidly beached on the West Mud to prevent them from sinking in deep water.

The American ambassador, amazed and angered beyond expression, had travelled down from London in a special train in less than three hours.

Lord Wolseley had asked the Great Western Railway authorities to expedite him even to the detriment of the movements of troops. At 4.30 p.m. he was at the pier-head; at five o'clock he stood on the quarter-deck of the *Minneapolis*.

In the first choking rush of his astounded indignation he demanded and received the Admiral's sword.

But he was a man and an American. As he gazed round and saw the havoc of the fight, with its glorious testimonies of a superb victory, his right hand instinctively tightened on the hilt of the sword, and there was a suspicious weakness, almost a tenderness, in his voice as he said: "Why have you done this thing?"

"Couldn't help it, your Excellency," replied Mahan. "Michaelovitch wouldn't allow our merchantmen to finish loading, and he was confoundedly impudent about it, too. It was a real lovely fight."

"How many did you—that is, I mean, what explanation have you for attacking a neutral power?"

"Here's the documents of the case," said the Admiral, somewhat sheepishly producing a little scrap of paper, the memorandum made by the lieutenant at the shipping office.

The Ambassador pretended to examine it carefully, but he could not help giving a comprehensive glance round as he turned to lay the sword and its slings against the breech of a grimy and blood-bespattered gun.

"How many ships have you lost?" he said after a pause.

"Three," said the admiral, "and four on shore."

"This is appalling. And the enemy—at least, I mean, of course, the Russians?"

"Six sunk, three ashore, four taken, and seven had enough. They quit."

"And—er—how—er, I suppose I am justified in asking. How did our men behave?"

"I know a bit about fighting at sea—theoretically," replied the author of the "Influence of Sea Power upon History," with the modest pride of conscious knowledge, "and I may honestly say that I have never heard of a combat in which coolness, courage, efficiency, and daring exploit were more magnificently exhibited than by the United States fleet which I have had the supreme honour to command to-day. You should have seen," he continued, warming to his subject, whilst the diplomatist's face flushed as he listened, "you should have seen the *Chicago* tackle an armoured battleship twice her size, rattle her ribs with quick-firing guns, sweep her decks with Maxims, shrapnel, and bullets, minimising the effect of the enemy's big batteries by sheer dexterity of handling, and finally sinking her with a torpedo. It was superb; it was worth living for and dying for, ten times over."

"I came here at sixty miles an hour," burst forth the Ambassador; "but you couldn't wait, I sup——" Then finding the Admiral's eye upon him, he corrected himself stiffly: "There is no use in continuing this absolutely distressing conversation. You must consider yourself a prisoner until I have communicated with Washington." He walked away to the side of the ship and murmured: "My poor friend, what will be the end of this?"

The Ambassador and the Admiral gazed at each other in silence.

Admiral Mahan, pallid but firm, glanced round at his ship and her noble consorts, as though to take leave of them for ever, when a slight commotion at the companion-ladder attracted the attention of both gentlemen.

"I tell you," said a resolute English voice, "I must see the Ambassador himself." Accompanying the words, a tall, active man in civilian attire gained the level of the quarter-deck.

Advancing to the American Minister, he bowed and explained his presence:

"I am the telegraph master at Cardiff, your Excellency, and a message has just arrived from the Embassy of such exceeding importance that I resolved to deliver it myself."

The Ambassador opened the envelope, read its inclosure through twice with growing amazement, ran the fingers of his right hand into his hair beneath his hat, and silently indicated to Mahan that he was to read the telegram.

And this is what the sailor read: "London, 4.50 p.m. Following is exact text of cable just received: 'Washington, 11.4 a.m. President yesterday received confirmation of your reported rumour that Russia was about to declare war against England. Special meetings of Cabinet and Congress were at once held, and it was unanimously resolved that the United States should demand from Russia unconditional withdrawal of declaration of war. At 10.30 this morning Russian Ambassador announced emphatic refusal of the Tsar to comply with our ultimatum. At 11 a.m., President with unanimous approval of Senate and Congress, declared war against Russia, Germany, and France, as the ally of England. Take measures accordingly. Further instructions by cable later.—OLNEY.' End of message.—WHITE, secretary."

For fully half a minute the Ambassador and the Admiral gazed at each other in silence.

The sailor was the first to partially recover his self-possession.

"This cable," he said slowly, as though thinking hard, "is timed 11.5 a.m."

"Yes," gasped the Minister.

"And the United States declared war against Russia at 11 a.m.—the time recorded here?"

"That's so."

"And I fought and whipped the Grand Duke what's-his-name, commencing at 1 p.m. sharp, winding up the ball about 1.45."

Again there was a pause.

Slowly a smile of complete happiness spread over the face of the Ambassador.

Then he went to the place where he had deposited the Admiral's sword and it's trappings, picked them up, and handed them to Mahan, and calmly remarked with a delicious yankee drawl:

"Say, I guess you'll want these."

Admiral Mahan quietly buckled the belt round his waist, for he dared not give expression to his feelings lest he should break down like a woman.

But the astute diplomat, quick to control his moods and impulses, saved the situation.

"Come," he cried, linking his arm through that of his companion. "I am simply dying to hear all about the row."

The one thing they did not discuss was the fact that Washington time is six hours behind that of Greenwich.

* * * * *

Those hundred thousand British soldiers came in useful at Cardiff after all.

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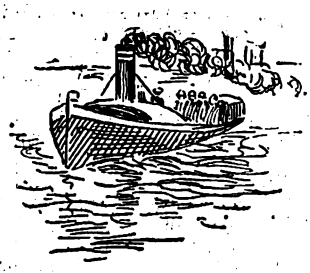


He had gone down the harbour in his fast steam-launch.

Major Ramsdale "put up" a considerable portion of the German coal-shipper's anticipated cheque in securing huge stores of champagne and bottled beer for the particular use of the army and navy that night.

But, in the first place, with thoughtful care, he called for volunteers among the householders of the town to receive and tend the wounded, irrespective of race.

It was some hours before Admiral Mahan was able to make the requisite dispositions for the safety and comfort of his shattered fleet and the captured ships. By that time Erskine had arrived in the roads, and the two commanders soon exchanged news and greetings.

Late in the evening they and their principal officers—for the American Minister was compelled to hasten back to London—attended a grand banquet in the Town Hall, whilst the British troops lined the long road leading from the Docks and chief thoroughfare, St. Mary Street, in which the Municipal buildings are situated.

The jubilant enthusiasm of the inhabitants of the Welsh metropolis manifested itself in every possible way. Hardly a living soul in Cardiff went to bed that night.

At the banquet in the Town Hall the Marquis of Bute made a brief speech, but it contained good matter. He undertook, at his own cost, to float, dry dock, and repair the stranded American ships—a truly magnificent offer—and tremendous cheering took place when the Mayor read a telegram he received from the House of Commons to the effect that Parliament had voted the thanks of the nation and a sword of honour to Admiral Mahan for his brilliant services to the United States and to England.

Next day the gallant American was handed by a Queen's messenger an autograph letter from her Majesty, conveying her personal appreciation of the victory he had achieved, and stating that her Majesty would seek the sanction of the President to her desire to confer upon the Admiral a Grand Commandership of the Order of the Bath.

Much comment had also been evoked throughout the United Kingdom by the patriotic behaviour of the Mayor during the crisis, and the national sentiment was fully expressed when he subsequently became Sir Joseph Ramsdale, K.C.B.

Throughout all this rejoicing there was but one slight note of solitary discontent, which found voice in the public utterance of a Swansea town councillor: "Whenever there is a chance of advertisement Cardiff gets it. Even the Russian fleet passed us by."

CHAPTER XXV.

Under the Southern Cross.

Whilst Canada was equipping her sons to constitute an Army Corps of 100,000 men to be forwarded in detachments of 20,000 each to the assistance of England, and South Africa was gathering 30,000 colonists for the same laudable purpose, Australia, brimful of loyalty and courage, and anxious to make even greater efforts, was cruelly doomed to doubt and uncertainty.

The cable-cutting tactics of the initial stage of the war had the effect of completely isolating the island continent and New Zealand from the rest of the world.

Great as had been the exertions of the submarine telegraph repairing ships employed by the various cable companies, they were not able to touch the South Atlantic and Pacific lines until towards the end of May, and the first news that reached this country concerning Australasia showed that whilst the lion had been using both teeth and claws, his cubs were equally ready to tear things when the time came.

Sydney had been attacked on May 17th and succeeding days by the hired Japanese fleet, strengthened by four French and German Cruisers.

As the result of several conferences, inspired by the patriotic idea that the needs of Australia as a whole must be considered, and not the requirements of a section, the territorial forces of New South Wales, Victoria, and Queensland, were admirably organised.

An efficient scheme of Federal Defence had been devised by Major-General Hutton, Major-General Sir C. H. Smith, and Brigadier-General Gunter, the respective commandants of the colonial divisions. The local fleet, such as it was, was concentrated at Melbourne, this being the point likely to be first attacked, as the naval armament was far too weak to be split up into sections.

Sydney Harbour—that superb landlocked retreat which is unequalled throughout the world for beauty and perfect design—could be adequately protected, it was felt, by modern fortifications, mines, and torpedoes. Unfortunately this was the last and incompleted item in the list of Colonial defences. The forts were not built, the mines not laid, nor the torpedoes in store.

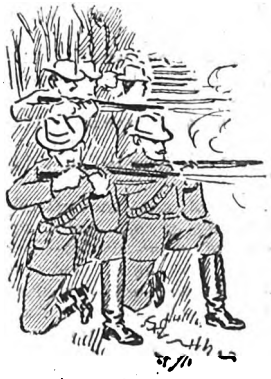
And it was the capital of New South Wales that the enemy first attacked.

Little news had reached the Colonies of the progress of events in Europe, yet such as came was terrible enough. The combatants were known, as was the failure of the attempt of the allies to invade England.

Then a fast steamer from Colombo brought tidings of the storming of Havre and Stralsund, the seafight at Gibraltar, and the heroic manner in which the Mother Country was grappling with her foes.

At once the pent-up excitement of the Australians rose to fever heat, and had there been ships enough available a strong army would have embarked for England within a week.

Preparations were immediately made with this object in view, when transports could be secured, and it was in the midst of the enthusiasm evoked by the project that the intelligence came like a thunder clap of the bombardment of Sydney by a powerful fleet of eighteen ironclads and cruisers.



A murderous fire .... rained upon the boats.

The first impulse of the Melbourne authorities was to send the local flotilla to the assistance of the sister city, but Major-General Hutton quickly wired to show the futility of this proposal.

"It would be useless," he telegraphed. "Six of these ships could blow all of ours out of the water in ten minutes. They are of the most powerful and latest type, and we would simply lose our ships to benefit the enemy. We cannot help our town being battered to pieces, but if these scoundrels, whom we believe to be Japanese for the most part, set foot on shore, we will only be too glad, as they will not require their ships again. Meanwhile we are doing our best with improvised shore batteries."

To his very considerable chagrin Rear-Admiral Cyprian A. G. Bridge, of the *Orlando*, flagship of the Australian Fleet, was compelled to admit that the soldier was right.

But the *Orlando*, *Katoomba*, *Mildur*, *Pylades*, and *Ringarooma* did visit Sydney Harbour whilst the enemy was there—a little later.

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So well had the enemy's *coup* been planned that the first man to be aware of something unusual taking place was the Collector of Customs at Sydney, Mr. James Powell. He had gone down the harbour in his fast steam-launch during the early morning of the 17th for the purpose of inspecting a new revenue cutter which was stationed at the entrance to Port Jackson, when the master of his little craft called his attention to a fleet of warships some ten miles out at sea, steaming rapidly towards the harbour.

The sailor at once assured Mr. Powell that they in no way resembled the Australasian contingent, and the Collector deemed it best to return as quickly as possible to Sydney and inform the authorities.

The hour was an awkward one, but by utilising many messengers in cabs he soon succeeded in arousing the Governor, the Premier, the Hon G. H. Reid, Major General Hutton, and the commandants of local volunteer corps.

They all hastened to the Custom-house, and by this time messages from advanced signal stations began to arrive.

At last one definite statement came to hand. "There are six battleships and twelve cruisers, some of the latter possibly large gunboats, and the leading ship has just hoisted German and French colours," reported the light-house keeper, who sent the message by telephone.

For a moment none spoke. Then Mr. Reid said solemnly: "Gentlemen, our hour of trial is at hand. Let us each and all do our duty as best we may."

Major-General Hutton turned to Mr. Powell:

"I may use your staff?" he inquired.

"Let me be the first to serve your purposes," replied the Collector.

With remarkable calmness the soldier gave definite instructions to each of the officers present, and then sent off messenger after messenger, every man having his well-defined errand to fulfil, and a clear understanding of its purport should other measures be necessary to attain it than those which the general anticipated.

By nine o'clock, when the allied fleet brought to opposite Sydney, every battery in existence in the harbour was well manned, and some 3,000 troops were under arms in the town.

A German officer, by virtue of seniority, commanded the expedition, and he promptly sent an envoy ashore to demand the unconditional surrender of the city and colony to the Emperor of Germany and the French Republic, and the immediate disarmament of all troops under the control of the Governor.

He never heard the answer, as the moment his representative reached the side of the flagship on his return, every available gun on shore poured in a galling fire upon the warships.

As the gunners had plenty of time to train their weapons and test their range calculations, the resultant execution was marvellous; indeed, during the whole war no such weight of metal inflicted similar loss upon an opponent.

But the jubilation of Sydney at this small score was brief-lived.

The comparatively feeble defences of the port were trivial in the extreme compared with the floating destroyers within short range, and although the shooting of the Japs was not improved by the salute they had received, they quickly showed what numbers and scientific direction could effect.

It was no part of the allies' programme to destroy Sydney itself. They had come to capture Australia, not to ruin its great centres of commerce, so their fire was steadily directed towards silencing the batteries on land.

This they soon effected. It was simply impossible for such a one-sided duel to continue, and in an hour's time there was no responsive cannonading from the shore. The batteries were heaps of ruins, their guns dismantled, and their occupants for the most part killed or wounded.

Nevertheless they had stung the allies. A gunboat had gone down, and a French cruiser sank during the afternoon.

The Frenchman only became more choleric.

But the aspect of affairs changed when the German Commander-in-Chief ordered a strong storming party to effect a landing. Sydney Harbour is wooded down to the water's edge, save where the docks and wharves are situated. From every point of vantage, from every little patch of cover, a murderous fire from the Lee-Metfords, with which the Colonial troops were armed, rained upon the boats and rendered it simply suicidal for them to attempt to advance.

So the landing was abandoned for the time.

A lull now occurred in the fighting, and it was at this moment that a telegram arrived from Melbourne that chased away some of the pallor from the Governor's face and caused General Hutton to proceed with his defensive operations with renewed vigour.

Throughout the afternoon the enemy contented himself with vigorously shelling every spot where troops might find cover, and at last the early darkness of winter wrapped friend and foe in impenetrable gloom.

There were no lights visible either ashore or afloat; but the English Commander had already made every disposition to crowd all available troops—they were now pouring into the town by rail from the interior—upon the localities most likely to be the scene of a night attack.

At the same time field artillery was being hastily mounted in masked batteries for the purpose of amusing the enemy at daybreak.

Shortly after midnight the search-lights of the fleet suddenly flared upon the Custom House quay and the principal ferryboat pier. At the same moment a vast flotilla of boats came shooting out of the blackness; a well-planned attempt to land was being made at both points.

It was quite useless. A detachment of French marines did manage to reach the shore, but they were cut down to a man by a volunteer company, every member of which had served in the Soudan, whilst the European officers vainly strove to induce the Japanese sailors to face the music in front.

"Chinee-man plenty run; foreign devil too much fightee," said the devotees of the lotus and the lily. This affair in no way resembled the taking of Port Arthur.

"It is like their infernal impudence," said a youthful and very swaggering mounted infantry officer, "to send a lot of beastly black fellows to tackle Australia."

"But they're not black, they're yaller," replied the man to whom he spoke.

"It's the same thing. They're all niggers together." And of such is the ethnology of the Englishman who recks not of Exeter Hall or the DAILY NEWS.

Morning dawned with clouds of mist rolling up the harbour. Nothing could have better suited the purposes of the defence.

The black hulls of the warships, looming through the uncertain light, offered a fair target, whilst the gunners afloat could not readily distinguish the hidden batteries whence there belched forth such a continuous stream of diminutive but frightfully disconcerting missiles.

There was nothing for it but a change of location, and the allied fleet moved down the harbour out of range, leaving two more gunboats resting safely on the bottom.

A strong wind sprung up towards noon. It quickly drove away the mist, and the fleet returned to take their revenge upon the batteries, but these were now silent, and it was difficult work to discover their whereabouts.

Needless to say, the German admiral was greatly per-

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plexed. He had the stronger force, but he could not bring it to bear. He could lay the town in ruins in half-an-hour, but this was simply damaging his own property, so to speak, as Australia could not hope to hold out against the united powers. He would play a waiting game, and simply blockade the port, knowing full well that the course of events would bring the Colonials to their senses.

So he anchored his ships at a safe distance from those spiteful little twelve-pounders, and strove to repair damages.

But on the fourth morning the people of Sydney began to pour forth in continuous streams towards every bluff and promontory that commanded a full view of the lowering warships, and waited patiently for some few hours for something to happen.

And something did happen, shortly after twelve o'clock, something that caused tremendous commotion and signalling, and blowing of trumpets and passing to and fro of steam launches among the allied fleet.

For at that hour there swept into the harbour, in the keen bright sunshine of a fine cold-weather day, nineteen English ships.

Admiral Fremantle was in front, with his flag flying on board the *Centurion*, and with him were H.M. ships *Edgar*, *Æolus*, *Mercury*, *Peacock*, *Pigmy*, *Pique*, *Plover*, *Porpoise*, *Rainbow*, *Redbreast*, *Redpole*, *Spartan*, *Unflaunted*, and the five vessels of the Australian fleet already mentioned.

A council of war was being held on board the *Unser Fritz* at the moment this astounding sight burst upon the gaze of the allies. Although the German Admiral promptly gave orders to prepare for action, he unhesitatingly uttered his opinion that it was their humane duty to yield, as they were wholly unable to cope with their unexpected assailants.

Sirdar Mahomed Khan.

They were short of coal, ammunition was not too plentiful, their ships were more or less damaged, they had lost a lot of men, and the majority of their crews could not be depended upon against British sailors.

"The devil is in league with England," he concluded, "and we can only recognise the fact."

But his junior French colleague strongly urged the necessity for fighting. Many of the British ships were small, luck might favour the allies, and, above all, it was dishonourable to their flags to capitulate without striking a blow.

Opinions at the board were evenly divided, irrespective of nationality, the saner men recognising the hopelessness of the situation.

The Frenchman only became more choleric.

"Messieurs," he shrieked, "this is the language of poltroons and cowards!"

Several officers angrily protested, but the Admiral took the quarrel upon himself.

"One of us two must decide," he said. "I am no coward, thank God, and I love my country more than my life; but this matter must be settled now, this instant. Bring me a loaded and an unloaded revolver," he went on, turning to a young commander near him, "and place them on the table under a covering of any sort."

The officer soon obeyed the order, whilst, amidst dead silence, those near the starboard port-holes could see the British fleet, some two miles away, deploying for attack formation.

"Here, sir," said the German to his *confrère*, with the utmost *sang froid*, "choose your weapon and fire at my heart. If I fall you will command the fleet."

The French officer, slightly unnerved by the man's stolid demeanour, but still burning with the shame of the

"Have you heard the news?"

threatened surrender, saw no solution of the difficulty other than that proposed by his superior.

He advanced to the table, hurriedly withdrew one of the weapons, placed it close to the Admiral's breast and pulled the trigger.

A sharp click showed that it was empty. He flushed, threw the revolver on the floor, smiled with rare self-possession, and stood at attention to meet his fate.

The German also smiled. "You do not exist, my friend," he said, and walked out of the cabin towards the deck to order a flag of truce to be instantly exhibited.

Admiral Fremantle said some earnest words, never, or hardly ever, used in the Queen's Navy, when he saw the signal.

He knew exactly what it portended, and it was too bad to have come here all the way from the China seas and not have a fight at the finish.

"Signal," he roared in a perfect fury, "that I will only listen to unconditional surrender."

"*Ach, Himmel!*" said the German when the message had been translated. "I accept!"

Then young Australia stood upon his head and did all sorts of ridiculous things before he packed himself on board the two fleets and started for Vancouver, whence he was sent across Canada by rail, other batches of him travelling by passenger-steamers to Cape Town and Portsmouth.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Sirdar Mahomed Khan—and Others.

Let us take a good look at the man as he walks with easy stride and erect figure across the *maidan** at Bareilly.

He carries his fifty-seven years lightly does this Mahommedan swash-buckler, for he is a hardy descendant of a race of soldiers who prayed unceasingly to Allah that they might not die in their beds. Allah, assisted by the British Government, saw to it that their petition was granted in as many cases as possible, and this particular Mahomed Khan, though he knew he should never be killed in battle—how he came by the knowledge may perhaps be told some day—yet cherished the hope that his fate might come suddenly to him on parade.

He longed to leap into the Mahommedan paradise from off a horse's back.

His full name and title are "Rissalder Major Mahomed Khan, Sirdar Bahadur," which, being interpreted, means that the first two words show him to be the chief native officer of his regiment, the next pair represent his family names, and the concluding sonorous appellations signify that twice in his life the Government of India had delighted to honour him, once they dubbed him "Bahadur," or "honourable," and again when they said he should be called "Sirdar" or "chief" among Bahadurs, these being respectively the 2nd and 1st classes of the Order of British India.

He is a remarkable man is Sirdar Mahomed Khan, and he looks it.

He is six feet in height, strong, wiry, and straight as an ash-plant, without an ounce of superfluous flesh on his bones. His firm mouth and chin, his slightly hooked but well-shaped nose, his red-black eyes that can seem so kind or

* Parade ground or plain.

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fierce, according to his mood, his long curled moustaches and small iron-grey bushy whiskers, all bespeak the Punjabi warrior, whilst many years of command and responsibility have lent a fine air of placid dignity to his expression.

The Sirdar, as he is familiarly known in the regiment, is treated with courtly respect by the Colonel commanding, and the latest joined squadron officer regards him with deferential awe.

For Mahomed Khan has a great reputation. He has six medals, mostly with clasps, and the Order of Merit, third, class, upon his breast, and it is a regimental tradition that had not both the Colonel and Major been killed at Maiwand, their personal recommendations would have converted, the last decoration into C.S.I.

In his tight-fitting blue frock coat, with its sky-blue facings, his well-cut riding breeches of Kharki cloth, his big black boots with their jingling spurs, and his gigantic turban and sash, both resembling a bright-coloured Scottish plaid in pattern, the Sirdar looked every inch a soldier. More than one lady in the station described him as a "handsome old gentleman," which was a very great compliment for a nativeto receive from an Anglo-Indian mem-sahib.

In the centre of the parade-ground Mahomed Khan met the C.O., Lieut.-Col. F.C.Burton, who was leisurely cantering his Arab pony towards the orderly-room, where he wished to transact some business before the heat of a May morning at seven o'clock rendered clerical work intolerable.

On seeing the native officer the Englishman checked his pony, and, after acknowledging Mahomed Khan's salute, said: "Good morning, Rissaldar-Major. Have you heard the news?"

"No, sahib," was the answer, both, of course, speaking Urdu, the most generally used language in Hindustan.

"Well, there is nothing quite settled yet, but we move soon."

"To Egypt again, sahib, or to Belait?" *

"No," replied the C. O. with a smile, "we won't cross the *Kala Pali* † this time."

"But, sahib," exclaimed Mahomed Khan with astonishment, "who is there to fight here? You do not use an elephant to break eggs. What is there to trouble us here but hill men?"

"What is there beyond the hills?" said the Colonel quizzically, and regarding his favourite native officer with kindly good humour.

The Sirdar became very earnestly excited at the question which met his own. Looking cautiously around he lowered his voice, and said with eager utterance and gesture.

"Can it be, sahib, that I shall live to see Penjdeh avenged —that I shall cleave the Cossack to the chin on his own desert?" And as Colonel Burton nodded the old man smote his breast and cried: "By the beard of the prophet, let me live beyond that day and I care not for anything else. I will say: 'It is finished.' They may bury me among women or say that my father—may his bones rest—was a Bengali."

"No man could lie so greatly, Rissaldar-Major," laughed the Colonel as he shook the reins upon his Arab's neck. "Meanwhile, it is soon to talk of these things in the bazaar." And with this well-understood hint to keep the information to himself Mahomed Khan was left to walk on air towards the lines.

That morning the recruits found him unusually gracious. He actually said that they would make decent sowars‡ after they had gone through a campaign.

* * * * * *

The excited elation manifested by Sirdar Mahomed Khan was typical of the feelings of the entire British and native army in India, when it became known that at last there was a prospect of active service.

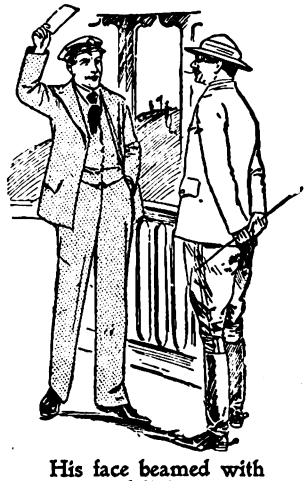
The fury and indignation of the British Tommy at being kept "stewin' and fattenin' on the bloomin' plains," as he expressed it, while his home battalion was carving up Frenchmen and Germans, nearly passed all limits.

The native troops were in a state of mild wonderment that nothing was being done, but, in their case "the sahib said so, and the sahib is always right."

Tommy Atkins, however, had no such gracious belief in infallibility of his officers to yield him philosophical comfort. He included the War Office, the Government, the Commanders-in-Chief at home and in India, and the authorities at Simla in one mighty and euphonious condemnation, and it was only his absolute inability to do anything but growl and drink more beer than usual that kept him from open insubordination.

The days came and went and passed into weeks, yet was there no sign, save tremendous activity in the departmental offices and the utmost medical solicitude for the care of the soldiers' health.

Long before the outbreak of the war the Commander-in-Chief had demanded and obtained from the Viceroy's Council the complete abrogation of stupid cantonment regulations ordained by home ministries in obedience to the threats of fanatical adherents, and the result was that the Indian Army was in a magnificent state of preparedness, and the percentage of sick had decreased to nearly vanishing point.



His face beamed with delight.

Such was the condition of British India when Lieutenant Rodney arrived at Bombay in the *Hornet*.

When he reached Aden the Political President deemed it expedient to request the chief naval officer at that station to send Rodney on special duty to Simla, in order that the Government of India might learn the fullest details concerning the state of affairs in Europe, as they had been so similarly cut off from all communications from Whitehall.

Having reported himself to Rear-Admiral Drummond, whose flag was flying on the cruiser *Bonadventure*, and received confirmation of the orders provisionally given to him at Aden, Rodney lost no time in starting upon his trying journey to Elysium, as the summer headquarters of the Indian Government is ironically termed by Anglo-India.

Here, after a conference with the Foreign Minister and the Military Member of Council, the sailor was ultimately honoured by a long conversation with the Viceroy himself.

He told his story in simple, straightforward language, and having soon narrated the absolute facts known to him, was encouraged to give his opinions as to the ultimate course of events, views which were soon to be proved remarkably sound and far-seeing when the telegraph got to work again.

Lord Elgin took a great liking for the handsome, open-hearted naval officer, who was not sufficiently aware of the tremendous importance of the Viceroy and Governor-General to be otherwise than outspoken and unaffected in his presence.

He brought with him a breezy wholesome air of belief in himself and his aspirations which was a relief to his lordship after the guarded and politic attitude of most of the high officials with whom he was surrounded, for even the boldest spirits in the Government of India are often trammelled by considerations of expediency.

* This is the general native term for England and Europe.
† Literally "black water" or sea.
‡ Troopers.

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Rodney quickly took to the manners and methods of the hills, and thoroughly enjoyed the Anglo-Indian *vie intime*.

But he was constantly harassed by the thought that after his one quick dash from Malta to the East he was apparently condemned to comparative idleness during the rest of the war, for the East-Indian squadron was mostly composed of ships vastly more dangerous to their occupants than to an enemy, even if there was a remote probability of a foe putting in an appearance at sea.

When, therefore, he was invited to dinner at Government House on the night that the rumour spread of Russia being a possible ally of the French and Germans, Rodney suddenly hated the ease and luxury and careless abandonment of S mla existence.

At the conclusion of the meal the Viceroy rallied him on account of his unusual gravity, and Frank at once owned the cause.

"It seems to me," he concluded, "that the faster I steamed through the Mediterranean the more quickly I was leaving behind me all chance of further employment."

He looked so glum that Lord Elgin smiled.

"Cheer up," he said. "I will endeavour to put things right for you."

Next day Rodney received a telegram from Rear-Admiral Drummond informing him of his appointment, with the relative rank of commander, as second in command of a small body of sailors and marines detailed for field duty with the Indian Army. He was to hold himself in readiness to join the force at Quetta when ordered.

His face beamed with delight at the message, and his hilarity was so marked at the club that a Staff Corps major asked him what was the matter. Had he bought the winner of the day's hurdle-race at the overnight lottery?

Rodney explained, and also expressed his gratitude for Lord Elgin's obvious and kindly aid.

"Do you mean to say," cried the other, "that you yourself put up the Viceroy to work the business for you?"

"Not exactly," said Rodney, "but I growled about the aspect of things, and he promised to fix them up a bit."

"Well, you are a cool chap and no mistake," said the Staff Corps man.

From that day forth he regarded the sailor as a past-master in the art of getting influence to work in the right quarter, and often told the story to youthful and envious wing officers who tremblingly hoped for a cantonment magistracy or a berth in the "politicals."

* * * * *

Karachi, with its burning sands and gaping crocodiles piled together in sacred tanks, is a cheerless place enough in the hot weather.

There as elsewhere between the Hindoo Khoosh range and Adam's Bridge, the sun suffuses the sky with its burnished copper-hued rays during twelve long hours of the day, and the 1st Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers did not like the merry month of May any better because of the news which came crowding fast over the lately restored cables.

Inaction is always bad enough during the hot weather, but inaction for the Indian Army whilst the home battalions were carving fame and promotion out of huge masses of Continental troops was one of hose things, as the Adjutant put it, which brings a well-trained regiment down to the level of the depôt.

And Lieutenant T. R. Mallock was a very smart adjutant indeed. He had many mysterious figures and letters bracketed after his name in the "Army List," showing that he was qualified to instruct other people in almost every branch of military knowledge, so when he said that this absurd hesitation on the part of the War Office to utilise the Indian Army was "demoralising," even the C.O. sighed deeply.

At last, about May 21st, when the usual wagging of heads about the anniversary of the Mutiny had ceased, and portentious prophets of native disturbances had buried their reminiscences for another year, there shot through the length and breadth of India one of those mysterious electrical thrills which so invariably forbode great events through the ordinary sources.

No man has ever discovered the why or the wherefore of this curious and indefinite foreshadowing of dramatic intelligence, but that it actually exists is a fact so patent to every Anglo-Indian, that it cannot be disputed.

Arising in native circles, it quickly travels through the Eurasian community, and thence to the English officials, to whom it is often a guide and a warning.

And now this awesome, imponderable, and immeasurable medium, made known to the people of India that stirring times were at hand.

Mad, wild, improbable stories were told to wondering natives in the bazaar; servants in European houses asked their sahibs if they had heard of the foolish sayings of the *moullahs* and *rakis*, the Mussulman priests and Hindu medicants who batten upon the credulity of their religious adherents; and the wives and families of railway officials resident in out-of-the-way places suddenly discovered that they had pressing business at the nearest station where there was a British cantonment.

On May 24th the murder was out. Russia had declared war, and the entire Indian Army, British and native, was to take the field at once.

A well set-up and bronzed veteran, with badges on his arm showing fifteen years' service, was gulping down Murree beer in the canteen of the 7th when the news arrived.

The younger men around him were wildly excited and still more wildly speculative—one, who came out from home with the January draft, was pessimistic.

"We can do nothing," he said, "with the canal blown up, unless we land in England and march through Armenia, which will be a tough job."

"What do you know about it, rooky?" interrupted the old soldier, with a glance of calm scorn at the youthful exponent of the art of war.

"Well," said the other, somewhat abashed, "we surely won't content ourselves with seizing the Pamirs!"

"The Pamirs, you Johnnie," snarled the other, who was deeply versed in the gospel according to the *Pioneer*, "a regiment of wild goats couldn't advance throug the Pamirs. They'd be eaten by the garrison at Gilgit."

"Then what shall we do?" cried the novice, forced to confess his ignorance of the situation.

The veteran took a copious draught of the beer, and drew his *kharki* sleeve across his mouth before he replied:

"There is only one way to attack Russia, and that is the road she'd follow if she attacked us. What for did we build the Sibi-Quetta Railway? If you was to fire a cannon-ball through the Khojak tunnel, and it kept its line, where would it hit?"

He gazed triumphantly round, but the Royal Fusiliers were not strong in geography.

"The North Pole," hazarded one at length.

At other times the remark would have created a laugh, but this subject was too serious for levity.

The humourist had to pay for two gallons of "booze" to avoid being held down and belted.

"Herat is the gate of India, my boys," said the veteran oracularly, "an' it's through that bloomin' gate we'll be marchin' shortly, or my name's not Billy Watson."

And Billy Watson had no reason to change the name he had received thirty-five years earlier at St. George's-in-the-East, though a good many of the Royal Fusiliers took a longer journey by another and more shadowy gate than that of Herat before the Indian Army crossed the valley of the Helmund.

(To be continued.)

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KILLCORN is sold by all Chemists, Stores, &c., in bottles at 1s. each, or sent direct on receipt of value in stamps by the Proprietor,

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SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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2 stamps for Sample to 13 Clerkenwell Road, E.C.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

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ATLAS LOCKSTITCH MACHINE.

Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine. To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for ONE MONTH'S TRIAL. Balance can be paid **5/- Monthly**. Call or write for designs and Samples of work

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Folding and Portable, Square legs. Gold bronzed, very durable.

3/- parcel post free. Two for 5/9, Three for 8/6. Carriage Paid.

Send for Catalogue A, Post Free, for Band Instruments, Fittings, Strings, &c.

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The largest and original house (50 years' reputation). Mgr., H. Myers.

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IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 8d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

Creepy-crawly writes: "We are taught that there is a use for everything, but can you tell me what use there is for wasps?"———Even wasps have their good points, for they are the most inveterate enemies of flies. One wasp has been known to kill nearly a thousand flies a day.

G. P. asks: "Has the Queen ever attended Parliament?"———Curiously enough, Queen Victoria has never seen her faithful Commons in session. Her Majesty could, indeed, be an observed spectator of the House of Commons at work if she sat behind the grill of the ladies' gallery, but this would not be consistent with the dignity of her Majesty.

F. L. H.—"The Roof of the World" is the Chang plateau, which lies north of and runs nearly parallel to the head waters of the Western Brahmapootra, or Sango.

It occurred to H. N T. the other day that it would be a good idea if we could have sea and mountain air supplied to us in our homes by means of pipes, similar to the way in which we now obtain our water and gas. He asks whether it could be carried out.———Although the idea of being able to command a delightful seabreeze or, if preferred, a blow from the mountains, as easily as we now obtain our hot and cold water, by merely turning on a tap, is a distinctly refreshing one, I am afraid there are too many difficulties in the way to make it feasible. For instance, the pipes and pumping plant would be a heavy initial expense, and, what is more, it would not be the chief difficulty to contend with. Air keeps very badly, and it would be no good having compressed reservoirs like great gasomete s, for, after a short sojourn in such a receptacle, the breezes would lose all their valuable properties.

C. E. S., a signalman on H.M.S. *Centurion* on the China Station writes: "Will you kindly tell me the quickest time a letter has taken to go from London to any port in Australia, to settle an argument?"——— I have made inquiry, and find that twenty-nine days is the shortest time, and that the port is Perth, West Australia. Melbourne comes next with thirty-one days, sixteen hours.

W. M.—Antipyrin, the well-known remedy for headaches, is a product of coal tar, and is the subject of a German patent.

M. C.—The mud volcano is a feature of the Yellowstone Park. Instead of lava, it emits liquid mud. Everything within forty feet is caked with mud. No, there is nothing exactly like it in this country, because the mud volcano is gifted with an odour stronger than that of over-ripe eggs; but omitting the odour, we have a very good imitation of the mud volcano in our large wood-paved thoroughfares on a wet day. You have only to stand on the kerb for five minutes, and your appearance will be much like that of the ground about the volcano.

L. W.—The Lord Chancellor of England, on retiring from office, has a pension of £5,000 a year, whether his term of office has been long or short.

M. L. asks: "When were the female parts in plays first acted by women in England?"———The first English actress appears to be Mrs. Coleman, who played in one of Davenant's productions in 1656. In 1662 we find these words in a license for a new theatre: "Whereas the women's parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offence, we do permit and give leave for the time to come that all women's parts be acted by women." In the time of Shakespeare the female parts were always acted by boys. Coryat, in a book published in 1611, regarding a stay in Venice, mentions that he saw women acting on the stage, "which I never saw before."

G. P. S.—From calculations made, it has been computed that, for the last ten years, the average annual expenditure in Italy of American tourists has been about seven million sterling.

Miner.—The first man who discovered gold in Australia was hanged for his pains. He was one of the first convicts transported to Botany Bay. On discovering the secret, he took a sample of the mineral to Governor Phillip to prove his statements, and, instead of getting the reward he expected, he was promptly hanged for attempted escape, and to prevent the discovery from becoming generally known.

W. M. propounds the following. "Is it true that two conflicting sounds produce silence?" ——Sir John Herschel stated that "it has been found that two conflicting sounds produce silence, as two converging rays of light produce darkness." You may, therefore, take it as a scientific truth; but it doesn't always work out like that in practice. The other day there were two conflicting sounds in Henrietta Street; one proceeded from a trombone, the other from a donkey. One performer started during a brief pause, in the music of the other, and I devoutly hoped that the two conflicting sounds would produce silence. But they didn't. Two others conflicting sounds were required for that purpose—the voices of a policeman and the owner of the donkey. I am not taking into account the voice of our mathematical editor, as that was not loud but deep.

P. S. M.—The total cost of the food consumed by the animals of the Zoological Gardens is about £4,000 a year.

Spinster.—Cats were often kept in convents in the middle ages. Perhaps that is the origin of the traditional association of old maids and cats.

A. M. asks: "What is the origin of the superstition that crooked money brings luck?"———It comes from the Middle Ages, when, if a person became ill, he would appeal to his favourite saint to use his or her influence to bring about his restoration to health, and one or more coins were held close to the sufferer's body and bent in honour of that saint. If the person recovered, the coin was sometimes sent to the church or shrine of that particular saint, but in most cases it was retained as a charm by the restored sick one.

With reference to the paragraph which appeared on this page a few weeks back concerning the climbing perch, R. H. S. writes to say that he recently came across an account of how this fish, in India, has been known to ascend cocoanut palm trees in order to drink their milk.

RESULT OF ARTISTS' COMPETITION.

The prize of two guineas offered for the best set of decorative head pieces, corner pieces, and tail pieces has been awarded to Miss E. Woolmer, 7 Cranbourne Court, Albert Bridge, S.W.

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The "Onrios" Book of Dream Interpretations is a handy publication, beautifully bound and illustrated, and will afford you a faultless definition of your future. It is an infallible adviser to your prosperity, and will surely lead you to undeniable fortune.

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See Page 568.

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No. 513. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 29TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 5.—Dervish Soldier.

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No. 513. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending Oct. 29, 1898.

The Night of the Ball.

"We shall meet at the ball."

As Ethel Hetherington stood before the long pier glass in her bedroom, putting the finishing touches to an exquisite toilette, these words passed through and through her mind. Half-abstractedly she rearranged a dainty curl, a piece of soft lace and a ribbon, then stood away, drawn to her full height, and mechanically surveyed her own picture.

And clear grey eyes looked back into clear grey eyes and knew that the picture was beautiful.

But the vision had little enough hold on her, for another form rose up before the glass, and, as she slowly drew on her gloves, her thoughts were far away.

"We shall meet at the ball," he had said, and the remembrance of a certain subdued light in his eyes brought an answering light to her own and a faint flush to her cheeks.

The "Pale Proud Princess" they called her jestingly, and there were several in the brilliantly-lighted ballroom who wondered when they saw that faint flush. It took them back to an old time when she had been the radiant belle of each county ball, a laughing girl in her teens.

She had been statuesque so long now that they had almost forgotten. It was noticeable that while the men asked her far less beautiful sister for two and three dances, few ventured to ask her for more than one, and that

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they received with a more than usually deferential bow.

It seemed that they were all a little in awe of her. All except one, and when he approached her the flush deepened a little, and her whole face softened.

"I hope I am not too late; I have been detained," he said, in a deep, mellow voice.

She gave him her programme, and he wrote his name three times on it, the two last dances being near the end and following each other.

"May I?" he asked quietly, searching her face.

She murmured an assent and he moved away, but he did not ask anyone else to dance with him. Instead he took a seat beside an old lady, who was well known as a brilliant conversationalist, and remained there until his dance came.

There was something striking about this man, and many eyes glanced towards him again and again. Evidently he was a stranger, for those who appeared most at home in the room asked who he was.

Meanwhile the object of their curiosity sat very still, quietly surveying the whole company. He was not particularly handsome, but his face was clever and attractive; one recognised in it the face of a thinker and of a man of more than ordinary character. Masked cynicism was, perhaps, one of the most predominant traits, and a quiet, veiled scorn of much that he saw and much that he knew. Many times his keen eyes sought the form of Ethel Hetherington, but the closest observer could not have divined his thoughts towards her.

And Ethel danced on with a lighter heart and lighter step than was usual to her, knowing that her name was the only one on his card.

When the turn for their two came, he asked her if she would go out into the garden. She assented, for it was a beautiful June evening, and a young moon shed a soft, silvery light over the shrubs and trees that looked very inviting after the hot glare of the ball-room.

He fetched her a wrap, and then led her to a sheltered spot beside the lake, where they sat down with that absence of formality and general speech which betokens a quiet sense of understanding.

He sat half-turned to her so that he could see her face clearly. A deep interest was manifest in his own, and those who knew him well would have been surprised at it. For Lindsay Gibson was not an admirer of women; he knew their weaknesses too well and was too cynical to believe in them. A week ago he had been thrown rather curiously into Ethel Hetherington's society, and ever since he had been drawn back to it in a way that surprised even himself.

And Ethel watched for his coming back as she had not watched for anyone's return for years.

For some minutes they talked casually, and their conversation, typical of both, was of deep subjects far removed from the atmosphere of the ball-room.

"I am so fond of the night," she remarked presently, after a brief pause, "it is so grand and serene. It makes one ashamed of one's littleness and meanness. Life seems more real at night, and one forgets the farces."

"You have felt them?" he questioned.

"Often. There seems little enough that is real, but maybe the fault lies chiefly in ourselves."

"What does that little comprise, may I ask? I am afraid I cannot offer any examples myself."

"I have been sceptical a long time," she said, "but I believe in love and friendship."

"Do you?" and his lips curled significantly.

"I have a friend who is worth everything to me," she said quietly.

"I doubt it," he replied. "Don't think me rude, but I have always doubted if women were capable of real friendship towards each other."

She regarded him for a moment with a resentful air.

"What of men?" she asked.

"Men are better friends to each other than women. At the same time I am not a lover of my sex. We are all bad, everyone of us."

"You are somewhat sweeping."

"I have been round the world with my eyes open and all my senses on the alert, and I know."

"All the same one sees through the spectacles of one's own conclusions."

"Not solely. By gathering ideas as you go, you see through other people's spectacles as well."

"And have you been round the world and seen no love?" she asked with a touch of scorn.

"I have seen a great deal, but most of it was wasted."

"I don't understand."

"The son, whose mother breaks her heart for love of him, is usually the bad son. A strong man wastes his love on a frivolous, shallow woman, and a deep-hearted woman worships a selfish, egotistical man. I don't know how it is, but this has impressed me most."

"And whose fault is it?" she asked. Her face had grown white suddenly, and she was gripping the seat-rail hard.

"Not anyone's I suppose, only women are unreasonable and men are bad!"

"You are hard on my sex. If they are unreasonable they are also true."

"A few here and there, perhaps, and then, as often as not, they are unreasonable in being true."

She seemed stung, for her lips curled scornfully as she said:

"Women are not cowards. They will suffer for the sake of their principles and ideals, whereas a man will slip out the easiest way in preference."

"It is open to doubt as to which is the wisest."

She looked at him wonderingly, at a loss to know if he were serious or not.

He met her gaze unflinchingly.

"It is possible for an ideal to be wrong," he said quietly.

She looked away from him, and the whiteness grew on her face and the tightness about her lips. He was watching her closely, and a sudden thought seemed to come to him that moved him, and brought a keen, questioning look to his eyes.

For a few moments there was a tense silence, the very earth seemed waiting. Perhaps she knew that two of her children were about to stand face to face and soul to soul, with conventionality torn aside and truth uppermost. And maybe she felt Mrs. Grundy's shudder at the horrible spectacle of two people daring to be themselves.

"Ideals are very good," he said slowly at last, "but they are not often practical. When you are older you will understand what I mean."

"I do not think I shall know any better than I do now," she replied in a strained voice. "The truest measure of age is experience, and not years."

"If experience has left you your ideals you are indeed fortunate," he said bitterly.

"It would have left you yours had you been willing to pay the cost," was the slow reply.

He looked at her as if waiting for her to go on,

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and with the strained look growing in her eyes she added:

"I have."

Then it seemed to him, as he continued watching her, that a veil was lifted from her face, revealing something he had not expected—the look of a woman who sometime has played fearlessly with high stakes in the game of life and accepted the issue.

"You interest me deeply," he said, "but I feel I may not ask you to tell me more," yet his attitude expressed waiting expectancy.

"I don't know why I should mind telling you," she said, sitting up straight and looking before her without seeing anything. "It all happened long ago, and there is nothing to be ashamed of. You doubt love and friendship, but I believe in both because I have proved both; the one in a friend, the other in myself. Eight years ago I had a lover. I was very young and very earnest, and when I gave him my heart I gave him all I had. I was never half-hearted about anything in my love; I lived up to the highest ideal I could conceive. For many reasons we could not be openly engaged, but I was not afraid to wait; I felt time could make very little difference to a love like mine.

"But it wasn't easy, for there were many hard things to bear from my people, as well as the waiting and loneliness. But I hoped on undaunted, with absolute faith in my lover and the belief in a happiness in my future that would more than atone for every hour of pain."

Her face grew grey, and she bit her lips, while his, colourless as her own, changed strangely.

"I waited five years," she went on with forced calmness, "and then a newspaper told me he had married someone else."

A long pause followed, and widely different thoughts coursed through their minds. To her the conversation had been the reopening of an old wound that had cut too deep ever to heal entirely, and had not yet lost its power to pain. To him the revelation had come like a blow from an unseen hand, and shattered a beautiful new fabrication he had but just built, and in which she was the corner-stone, leaving him with the ruins all about him.

For Lindsay Gibson was a man of strong opinions, and what he had just heard struck dead across the face of one of them.

At last he spoke.

"Supposing you met that man again," he said very quietly, "should you hate him?"

She clenched her hands and caught her breath, and again there was silence for a brief space.

"No," she said at last, "I am not his judge."

"I thought not," he answered, "yet you ought to. He behaved like a scoundrel and a cad."

"Hush!" she interrupted. "It is over now; there is no need to say it. What happened is between him and me."

"That is where you are wrong," he said. "It should be beneath you to think of him in any other way. It is the mistake good women make. They will shield their broken idols."

She bit her lips but did not reply for a few minutes. At last she said:

"Perhaps it is not possible for a man to understand a woman's love."

Again a long pause followed, and each wrestled with his own heart.

Back to the woman, as if no sad years had intervened, came the memory of her old anguish. Fresh as yesterday seemed the cruel awakening, the hopeless despair, the first crushing sense of the helplessness of womanhood.

She had smoothed it all over since, that few eyes might discern the scar; learnt to smile and be merry in spite of it. But there had been that about her ever since which withheld both men and women from being too friendly, or daring to intrude upon her reserve, though all the time her heart ached for sympathy and companionship; and this for the first time Lindsay Gibson had given her.

In the short space that she had known him she had found in his nature that which could satisfy her own. Already a new vista of happiness had been opened to her; she had stepped into the soft light of a glad possibility. But now, for a few minutes, the old anguish remained uppermost, and the past blotted out the present.

And Lindsay Gibson sat forward with his eyes on the ground, while a mental conflict waged within him. He had said he had no ideals, but he had been deceiving himself, for in reality this girl beside him embodied his highest—the ideal of how a woman could love. But it was in her past, and there for him lay a fatal barrier.

At last he turned to her, and the hush of the night grew deeper and the trees stayed their whispering.

"They say a woman never loves twice," he said with slow, questioning emphasis.

"She never does," was the low, strained answer, for the past still held her in a cruel grip, and, all-unknowing and all-unguarded, she spoke her own doom.

Then followed silence, broken only by the wind that murmured through the trees like the sound of a long-drawn sigh.

A short time afterwards they were back in the ball-room, and with a low bow he left her in the care of her next partner. But the flush had gone from her cheeks and the light from her eyes, and she moved as one dazed or in a dream.

When the ball was over she saw him once again, and his face was very grave, almost stern. She was waiting with her sister for their carriage, and he came up to her to say good-bye.

"I shall not see you again," he concluded, "as I am leaving Benly to-morrow. In a few days I shall go abroad."

She gave him her hand, and he held it a moment.

"Good-bye," he said. "I shall always be glad that I met you, and I shall not forget what you said. If at the end I have an ideal that has weathered the storms of existence I shall have to thank you for it."

"Good-bye," she answered very quietly.

Then she saw him walk away through the darkness.

GERTRUDE PAGE.

"THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM on TOP."

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HOMESPUN YARNS.

By Levin Carnac.

VII.—A FATAL MISFIT.

Two or three years ago I was making a solitary walking tour down the valley of the Weser, from the quaint little town of Bückeburg to the old-time city of Hamelin, known to all men as the home of the famous Piper who took the children with him to fairyland over the Klüt-Berg.

It was a good month before the regular tourist season began, and so I had the "Guest House"—to use the good old German word—to myself at the different villages at which I stopped on my way through the hill-country of the Deister.

At one of these halting-places, however—a big, straggling village that the Prussians had just promoted to the rank and dignity of a post-town—I met a fellow-wanderer, who, like myself, was taking his pleasure apart from the crowd.

I had just settled myself down to supper in the guest-chamber of the best-looking inn in the place, when the door opened, and a well-built, fair young fellow, clad in grey tweeds, and with knapsack on back and stick in hand, walked in and glanced round the room with that queer, half-lost look, by which you can always tell an Englishman abroad for the first time.

He was followed a moment after by the host, and at once proceeded, with an Englishman's usual disregard of the confusion of tongues, to order his supper in excellent, undiluted English, the host replying in almost equally pure German.

I, of course, took the liberty of introducing myself and disentangling the verbal muddle. This done, I invited the new-comer to sup with me, and so began a companionship which lasted till the end of my trip.

My new acquaintance was a young barrister who had started out on a walking tour with a friend who had undertaken to act as interpreter, but who had been called back to England the day before on urgent business. Hence the awkward position from which I had rescued him.

When we started on our way the next morning, having exchanged personal particulars overnight, I turned the conversation on to law and crime in the not unpardonable hope of getting something out of a lawyer for nothing. I succeeded very fairly, for my friend was still rather proud than otherwise of his profession, and therefore quite willing to talk about it.

What I wanted was a story by the wayside, and so I proposed that we should exchange yarns, he leading off with the story of his most curious legal experience.

He agreed, and this is how he kept his part of the contract:

"My own practice, such as it is, is confined to the Common Law, but I have had one criminal case, and that was about as singular an affair as any Old Bailey counsel could well have come across.

"It is about four years ago now, and briefs were few and far between with me then. I hadn't had one for nearly a month, and was sitting one afternoon in my chambers, wondering when the next was going to turn up, when a telegram came in and sent me flying off home as fast as a hansom could carry me. The wire was from an old schoolfellow, and one of the few real friends that had so far crossed my path. The words of the message were:

"'I have been arrested for murder. Come at once.'

"The address was Exeter gaol. I just caught the three forty-five from Paddington, and by half-past seven I was listening to my friend's story in the cell. The crime of which he was accused was even worse than murder, for his own father was the victim.

"The particulars he gave me were terribly bald, and to anyone but an old friend they would have been anything but conducive to a belief in his innocence.

"The night before he had gone out for a long walk according to a habit of his with which I was well acquainted, and had got home between eleven and twelve. Not feeling inclined to go to bed, he went upstairs to the library to get a book, and on his way passed the open door of his father's study. The old gentleman was sitting at his table as he passed, and wished him 'Good-night,' thinking he was going to bed.

"He remained for about an hour in the library; and as he passed the study door on his way to bed, he noticed that it was shut, and that the light was out. He had heard nothing unusual during the time he was in the library.

"The next morning the housekeeper roused him about seven and horrified him by telling him that his father had been found dead in his library chair. A doctor was at once sent for, and a very brief examination of the body convinced him that there had been foul play and that the old gentleman had been strangled from behind as he sat at his table writing. The strangling had been done with a silk handkerchief which lay beside the body when the crime was discovered, and that handkerchief bore my friend Fred's initial in the corner.

"He at once said that he remembered leaving it in the study the day before, and to him it was clear that the assassin had found it and used it as the most silent and effective weapon at hand. The police, however, had told him to keep that story with the other one about his nocturnal walk for the magistrates, and arrested him on the circumstantial evidence. He had been before the magistrate that day and the case had been adjourned for my attendance.

"I ought to add that robbery had evidently been the motive for the crime, whoever had committed it, for the murdered man's writing-table drawers had all been forced, and a small safe in the library had been opened with the key, and altogether nearly £300 in notes and gold was missing.

"The following day my friend was committed for trial, 'reserving his defence.' As a matter of fact the poor fellow had no defence to reserve. There was no clue to any other solution of the mystery than his guilt, and, worse than all, it was well-known that he had lately incurred debts which his father had refused to pay. The only link lacking in the fatally short chain of circumstantial evidence was the failure of the police to trace any of the stolen money to him. It had apparently

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His father had been found dead in his library chair.

vanished into thin air. This, however, was but small consolation either to him or to me.

"The sessions came on in about ten days, and during that time I hardly slept, so incessantly was my brain working to discover some clue that would point away from my friend, in whose innocence, in spite of appearances, I firmly believed.

"At length, on the day before the trial, a last despairing search in the library resulted in my finding a shred of fustian caught in the casement of a window opening on to a verandah. In an instant I was out on the sloping roof, examining every tile down to the water-pipe. Sticking on to this I found another larger shred of the same fustian, and in the pipe itself a horn coat button.

"This was something. Indeed it was much. But it was hardly enough to make a defence that would counteract the terribly direct evidence against the accused. I therefore kept my discoveries to myself, and thought away harder than ever.

"The case before ours was one of house-breaking. Curiously enough, on the very night of the murder, a diamond pane of glass had been removed from the window of a house occupied by an old man reputed to be a miser, and the burglar had put his hand through this, opened the window, and so entered the house.

"The accused was a big brawny fellow, his hands hung over the edge of the dock, and I was particularly struck with their immense size. To the astonishment of the court, and the disgust of the solicitor retained to defend him, he brought the case to a sudden stop by pleading guilty. He got twelve months, and as he was leaving the dock an idea struck me that brought my heart into my mouth, and in an instant I saw my way clear before me.

"Fred's case came next. The prosecuting counsel made his opening speech and called his witnesses. I cross-examined none of them, but waited anxiously for the return of a messenger I had sent to bring me the lead frame of the diamond pane at any price. The last witness had just stood down as he came and put it into my hand. When I rose to begin the defence, I astonished everybody in the court by asking that the last prisoner should be brought back and placed in the witness-box. To all objections I simply replied:

"'The life of my client and the clearing up of this crime depend upon what I ask being done.'

"At last I got my own way, and the burglar was brought back. I only asked him three questions, but they were enough. They were these:

"'How did you open the window in —— Street?'

"'By putting my hand through the pane I took out.'

"'How did you lose that button off your coat?'

"'Climbing through a hedge a fortnight ago.'

"'Did you ever fall off a verandah, and try to save yourself by catching at the waters, out?'

"At each question the man grew whiter, and more uncomfortable. At the last one, he opened his mouth to speak, but only an indistinct gurgle came forth.

"Then I produced the lead frame, and the two shreds of fustian, and the button, and addressed the Court with them in my hand. This is something like what I said:

"'The man in the witness-box has pleaded guilty to a crime that he did not commit, in order to conceal his guilt in a far graver one. He says that he opened the window in ——Street, by putting his hand through the place he had taken the pane out of. Here is the identical leaden frame. Let me see him put his hand through it.'

"It was handed up, and, as the man put out his hand to make the trial, he drew it back, and staggered with staring eyes, to the rear of the box. It was evident, at a glance, that he could not even have put all his fingers through it.

"'Now, see if this is the button you lost in the hedge. I found it in the water-pipe of the verandah outside Mr. Tressillan's library window, in the frame of which I also found this shred of stuff, which I think matches your coat.'

"As I spoke, the wretched man put his great hands to his face and sobbed out, 'Heaven forgive me! Yes, I did it. Take me away.'

"Three weeks later, one morning, at eight o'clock, Fred called me into his bedroom and pointed through the window to the black flag floating over the gaol wall. He put his hand on my shoulder, and said with a shudder:

"'But for you, old man, that flag would be flying for me.'"

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LOVED TOO WELL.

SURELY this was a dull town, if there ever was one.

The walking gentleman swore below his breath, and the low comedian got out between the acts and regaled himself with too much beer. It was raining outside, and the roof of the "opera-house" of Walapong leaked in places.

The company had been doing one-night pitches, and they wanted to know "why the advance agent had booked them for two nights in this hole."

Half of the properties and costumes had not arrived, and the leading lady walked on, in the runaway scene, with her travelling-ulster thrown over her ball-dress, instead of the white-and-gold Canton flannel imitation of a gorgeous opera-cloak which she should have worn.

She walked on, as it has been said. Properly, she should have rushed on. But, for this handful of top-booted men, who whistled and stamped, and used bad language as a regular vocabulary, what was the use of giving one's self any trouble? The audience would not know the difference.

This, on general principles, was the great fault of the leading lady. She was rather too prone not to think it worth while to take trouble. She and the manager had had words more than once. He had threatened to replace her. She had laughed in a cool and impertinent way she had.

"It would not be quite easy to replace me," she said.

For the rest, she shrugged her shoulders. What did she care?

She sauntered to the footlights now to deliver one of her speeches. Her pencilled eyes leisurely swept the audience. At one bench they became arrested.

He was there again.

"He" was a mere youth. Or, who knows?—perhaps he was not so young. He had one of those absurdly ingenuous visages that never grow old. This was the leading lady's thought of him. He had taken his seat quite in the background to-night, as if ashamed of his insistence—afraid of being caught at his post again.

This time the actress looked at him attentive y, while she went mechanically through her thrilling dialogue with the heavy villain. His eyes devoured her. He had the ecstatic mien of a devotee before a saint. The leading lady had not always been a member of a "travelling company." She had a different part behind her. It was not a new thing in her life to be looked at as this wild-looking Australian stockman was now doing, for he was probably a stockman; she did not know or care. She had only begun to notice him after his pleading, rapt eyes had encountered hers night after night, and she had awakened to a perception that he was following the company from place to place. The woman was no longer in her first youth. Much experience was hers. She recognised the look in the supposititious stockman's wide-open blue eyes as denoting that rarest thing in nature, an absolutely self-abnegating passion.

From then on she began to take a certain half-amused, half-commiserating interest in him. And to-night, if he were at his usual post when the actors went out—he usually lingered to the last, humbly in the background until she left the house, and then followed her and the rest to their hotel—it went through her mind that she would speak to him.

He was at his usual post near the door. And she spoke to him. He stood speechless before her as if the heavens had opened upon him.

"I suppose you want to know me," she said, studying him carelessly with the great worn-looking eyes, whose size was further increased by the dark lines round them. "I've noticed your fidelity. It is uncommon enough to be rather amusing. I warn you that I am not at all the sort of woman you will get any joy from knowing. But come and see me to-morrow, if you care to make the trial."

She left him standing there.

The following day he appeared at the two-storey building which constituted the hotel of the town.

Melanie—such was the name he had learnt to know her by from the bills—received him in a bare room, with the crude daylight pouring in. Hers was a face whose beauty had been ravished by something more than time. But there was still something about her that made her unlike all other women.

"What is your name?" she said to her visitor.

"Conrad Kepler."

"Well, then, Conrad Kepler, you are doing a foolish thing to fall in love with me. I see that you really do love me. And it is folly, harmful folly to you. Why

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waste your time following me from place to place? Go back to the pretty, innocent, fresh young girl who loves you. I am sure there is such a one. Marry her, settle down on your farm, and be happy. You have nothing to do with such as I am."

"I love you," said Conrad Kepler.

"You love the paint, and the powder, and the cheap finery and paste diamonds, and the poses I take, and the shrieks I give when my lover deserts me. You are unsophisticated, and you love all that."

"I love *you*," the young man insisted quietly.

"I thought it only kind to let you come here that you might see me as I am."

"I love you." This was Conrad Kepler's only answer.

* * * * *

The company had moved on to still another town. The places were so alike the name scarcely seemed to matter. And Conrad Kepler, dogged, humble, asking nothing, content with his unrequited adoration, with a chance crumb, had followed the company again.

One day the low comedian permitted himself a bibulous joke on the subject. Melanie gave him a look that silenced him. She was not liked by her associates, but she was rarely molested. It appeared tacitly agreed that she should be allowed to go her own way.

That same afternoon she said to Kepler:

"All this must cease. I was indifferent as to what you did at first. I did not care about you one way or the other. But now I have a friendship for you. To love you would be an absurdity. I shall never love any one. All that is dead and the ashes have covered it. I never had a brother. But I feel that you would not have done badly for one. I like you. I must respect your feelings. You force me to do so. And, liking you and respecting you, I tell you, once for all, to waste no more time on me. Go back to your home, to your friends, to the girl who loves you."

"I can't go back," was the reply. "I can only tell you one thing—I love you."

"Why?" she demanded impatiently.

"You are beautiful——"

She laughed.

"Not now!"

"You are beautiful to me," he went on, unabashed, "as the sun and stars. I never knew what life meant till I saw you that first night. After that it was fatal. You may say or do as you like. I must love you. I can't help it. Yes, it is fate."

She had been pacing the room all day restlessly. All day she had been restless. The ghost of the bygone past had risen out of its shallow grave. That morning as she stood at the window a man had walked by on the other side of the rough, glaring mining-town street. She had but seen the back of his shoulders—a certain turn of the neck. But how the spectral memories rushed back! It was only a chance resemblance, of course. But, oh, fool! How could she have cheated herself with the thought that she was turning to stone, becoming senseless, incapable of the old wild throb, the old wild agony? Just a chance resemblance, and it had awakened this tumult of soul.

"Soul!" she repeated to herself with a bitter, inward laugh. "I did not know I had one. That's dead, too. He had none, that's certain, and he killed mine."

Now, abruptly, she stopped before Conrad Kepler. A strange thought had flashed upon her—had taken possession of her. Her great eyes held his with a new power.

"I wonder if you really love me, and how much?" she said, more to herself than to him.

"Yes, I love you," he murmured. To him it was the simplest thing on earth.

"How much?" she repeated, a sombre fire beginning to burn in her eyes, a little tremor quivering in her thin nostril. "How much? Enough to die for me? Enough to kill—to kill for me?"

She held her breath as if suspended. Breathless, too, Conrad Kepler looked at her. What did she mean? He did not know. But, without hesitancy, he answered:

"Yes."

"You would kill a man whom I might point out to you, saying: 'That man wronged me, that man murdered me, morally and mentally: took the joy of life from me for ever. That man I hate with an undying hatred. Avenge me! Kill him!' You would do that?"

She fell back from him, her features relaxing, her fingers trembling.

"Yes."

"You are a phenomenon of devotion!" she exclaimed with a harsh, discordant laugh. "You are one of the wonders of the world. But possess your soul in peace. I shall ask no such service of you."

* * * * *

She had thought it a chance resemblance. It was not that. That same night, in the midst of the play, Melanie saw him—the only man she had ever loved; the man who, years before, had induced her to marry him, only that she might learn that he had another wife.

She had left him, asking herself what she should do with her ruined life. She had beauty; some talent. She went on the stage. But the springs of all hope, all endeavour, were broken. She did not try to rise. What use? She could live after a fashion for a few years. At the worst, life was not long. And at the end there was the peace and rest of death. Thus she had said within her own soul. And eight years had passed. And now, for the first time, across the flaring footlights, on the outskirts of civilisation, his steady eyes met hers.

Conrad Kepler's rapt, unwavering glance, from another part of the hall, followed her every motion. But Melanie, on this night, knew not even that he was there.

The following day he went to her hotel. She had gone out, he was told. The company were to move on late that night.

The young man followed the direction indicated to him, and which the actress had taken on leaving the hotel. It led him to a stony, level space on the confines of the town. Arrived there he paused abruptly, and remained rooted to the spot. Beyond the unfinished brick wall of a house, which had been hastily run up, and left uncompleted, and which now screened his own figure from view, there stood, in relief against the evening sky, two forms—Melanie and a man.

The man appeared to plead, to urge, to insist. The woman whom Conrad Kepler loved stood regarding him with folded arms; the pose of her head, the rigidity of her body, were eloquent of contempt, of speechless, quivering rage.

Then she turned, he following, and moved away, walking quickly in the direction of the unfinished building. Conrad Kepler, as they approached, drew

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further back. They did not see him. There was a look upon the woman's face that he had never seen there before. Still the man appeared to urge, to plead. He was handsome; he had the air of a man of the world. Then, quite near the screening wall, Melanie for an instant stopped. Conrad Kepler could not see her face now, but he could divine its expression by the ringing, yet trembling, tone of her voice.

"Love you! You speak of love now—now? What do you know of it? What did you know of it eight years ago? Love means truth. Do you know what truth means, even? No! Had you killed me, in the body, you would have wronged me less. My heart, my soul, all that was vital in me you did kill. Your oaths betrayed, defiled. Better death a thousand times than the hurt you did to me!"

She had hurried on again, the man still at her side; but Conrad Kepler had not moved.

After an interval of which he knew not the duration, he stirred. Night had fallen, only where the sun had set the sky still burnt dully, like a reflection of distant camp fires.

* * * * *

In the hotel there was confusion. The theatrical company were preparing to leave. No one noticed a slight, boyish-looking man pass up the stairs. He asked for no one, but in a few minutes he stood before a door and entered.

Melanie was alone in the room. She turned swiftly. Some great change had been wrought in her since Conrad Kepler had seen her last. But he observed nothing. His eyes were set and glassy.

"I am glad you came. I have something to tell you with my good-bye——"

"I, too, have something to tell you," he said, interrupting.

And now she had been struck with something strange about him.

"What?" Her lips just formed the word.

"I have killed him."

She did not shriek. She tried twice to speak.

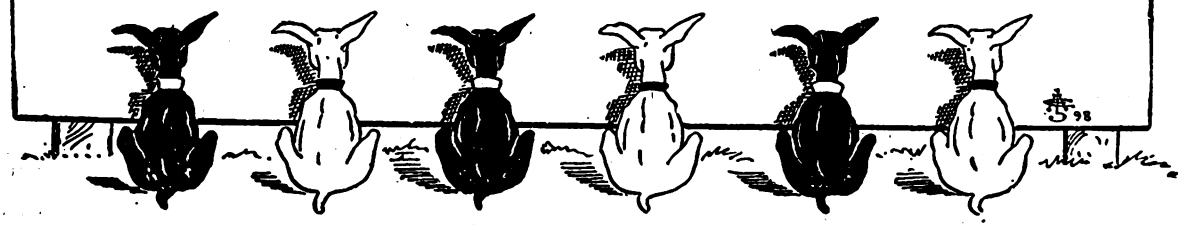
"I have killed him. I heard you this evening; then I knew what you meant yesterday. I laid in wait for him after he left you—left this house—an hour ago. I followed him. It is done now—all done."

Then words came to her, and a laugh that was worse than sobs.

"Fool! fool!" she shrieked. "I loved him in spite of all. The woman who stood between us is dead, and I promised at last, before he left me just now, to forgive all and to marry him to-morrow."

E. Thorpe.

MUCH TO FORGIVE.



The little Prussian farm was not more than six acres square. A narrow road bordered it on the west and a neighbour's meadow on the east.

The stump of a gigantic poplar crumbled to decay upon the dividing line. Round it, grey and sodden, lay the chips that had flown at its downfall, and remnants of two fences, one in fairly good repair, the other broken to splinters.

A path ran up from the road to the gate, which was white, in a row of pointed palings, and a green walk under an arbour reached the house. There was a window right and left and two doors, side by side, in the porch. One sacred to Sundays and cleaning days, the other to rare visitors during the week. As a rule, people were expected to go round to the kitchen and not make footmarks on the carpet.

Cat'rina was small and slight. There was a dull red in her face; her nose slanted upward and the corners of her thin lips drooped

She kept the rugs turned face downwards, to prevent their fading, and the table-cover wrong side out. The sewing-machine was swathed in white, and there were pieces of newspaper folded and laid between the door and the threshold to keep out the dust.

On Saturday she reversed the rugs and the cover in mute concession to Sunday, and on Sunday she opened the window and unlocked the door of the room, which had a fairly good carpet, a sofa, an easy chair with a tidy, and a centre table upon which lay the Bible and a hymn book. She put on her best frock, her earrings and an amethyst ring, and sat, as the weather permitted, on the porch or at the window to wait for Lewis Eisenoch.

She had done this for the last five years.

Conrad Grau never affected the room. Even when Eisenoch was driven to propose for Cat'rina, because the matter must be settled somehow and Cat'rina refused to follow his suggestion and ask her father herself, he went round to the kitchen.

Cat'rina watched him off the porch before she ran within and whispered to her mother.

Mrs. Grau nodded many times and smiled ecstatically.

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Both women tip-toed into the kitchen and pushed their bodies into the angle formed by the half-open door. Through the long space between the door and the lintel they could see and hear. Cat'rina dropped on her knees that her mother might peep over her head.

It was but a little way from the front to the kitchen. The path ran between the end of the house and the garden. Eisenoch stopped to look over the palings at the rows of turnips and carrots and cabbages like bouquets.

Five steps led from the kitchen porch to a paved court.

Above it a vine, heavy with fruit, made a purple stalactited ceiling. There was enough red light slanting from above the trees to enable Conrad Grau to read the paper which he held across his knees. He followed every line from right to left and from left to right with a horny forefinger.

Eisenoch said good evening.

Grau read audibly to the end of the paragraph and cleared his throat. He did not raise his eyes. He knew why the young man was there. With this end in view he had been negatively polite for a number of years.

The vision of a poplar passed before his eyes, green in June, lying shorn in November across the meadow. He remembered how twelve good men and true decided not one, but many times, that the poplar had not stood within his boundary lines; therefore must he pay to Johannes Eisenoch the value of the tree and the cost of the several suits.

Finally he remembered how he had been compelled to count out his small hoard of money and confess himself beaten.

Herein lay the gall and wormwood. Now he might cancel a portion of the debt.

Eisenoch shifted his position and made a mighty effort.

"I have been keeping company with your Cat'rina these five years," he said. "My father left me the farm. I've got two horses and a couple o' cows, with the heifer coming on, and six as fine pigs as any in the country, ready for killing. They ain't half starved either. Everything's got plenty to eat."

Grau went on with his reading.

"I held my oats back and they'll bring a pretty penny. I've got as fine a lot o' cabbages as you can see in a week's march. Nobody's can come near 'em, and cabbages'll bring a good price before the winter's over. Cabbage is scarce."

He looked down the path that zig-zagged over the hill to the dairy and waited for some evidence of approval. Finally he said:

"You know this, and never had nothing to say against my coming round these five year yet, so I thought you'd just as soon me and Cat'rina should be married about the middle of October?"

A rage seized Grau; it strained his joints and wrenched his muscles. The paper across his knees shook; but he followed with his great forefinger every line from left to right, from right to left.

He looked slowly from the extreme corners of his eyes, and said with guarded scorn that had been waiting for years for expression:

"Your father was a rascal and your mother was a fool. I shall keep my Cat'rina for a better man."

It was good to pay off the debt he owed Eisenoch to Eisenoch's son.

Left to himself he continued to read, though the shaded spot grew dim and the letters on the page became indistinguishable.

The women behind the door stole back into the room and looked at each other. Through the dusk Cat'rina saw her mother lift her hands and close her eyes; she saw her open her mouth to its widest and move her head backwards and forwards in a slow, vibratory fashion, as if she never intended to leave off.

They said not a word to each other as they closed the windows and locked the door, and Cat'rina turned all the rugs face downwards and swathed the sewing machine in its cotton cover.

Although there had been the finality of few words about Grau's decision, Eisenoch did not discontinue his visits at once. For several evenings he sat in the yellow chair on the porch while Cat'rina's father read the paper before the kitchen door.

What was the good of Eisenoch's keeping company with Cat'rina if he was never to marry her?

Cat'rina herself saw it in this light.

She mentioned the subject one last Sunday evening and made it easy for him to get away.

It had rained in the night: the clouds were still heavy. The young chestnut wood had shed its leaves until the road was yellow with them. The drops that splashed from the branches were the only sound in the stillness.

Cat'rina leant on the gate and said:

"It's no more use our going on like this. I've been thinking this morning about the other girls. I expect you have been thinking about them yourself?"

"Not particular," Eisenoch admitted.

"There's Rosa and Carolina and Maria and Louisa."

She told them off one by one upon the palings of the gate.

"They're all good girls—good, industrious girls. Maria seems to me the best for a wife."

Eisenoch took up the list:

"Rosa's a pretty girl," he said; "so's Carolina."

"They're young. You can't tell how they're going to turn out—these young girls."

"What do you think of Louisa?"

"She's got a temper. You can't get a word out of her when she's sulky."

Eisenoch was afraid of a girl with a temper.

"There's the Reizer girls."

"Neither of 'em makes good butter. Dealers tell you that Reizer's butter always fetches less in the market than other people's. They let their cream get musty. But they're nice girls. Now, there's Anna. Have you thought of Anna?"

Anna was stolid and colourless. Her hair was scant; her pale eyes were expressionless.

Eisenoch had not thought of Anna.

Cat'rina became enthusiastic. She said there wasn't a girl in the place that could compare with Anna. She had the wash out every Monday morning, rain or shine, by eight o'clock, and the Lenzes had a big family to wash for. She was a good housekeeper—her dairy was neat as as a new pin.

"Hart gets the same for her butter as he gets for mine."

Eisenoch was not interested. No man was interested in Anna.

"What do you think of Sophie?"

Cat'rina had a vision of red cheeks and redder lips, of smiles and dimples and abundant black locks.

Sophie was her dearest friend. For years she had patronised her, and told her all her plans and prospects for a wedding, and Sophie had been agreeably, acceptably jealous.

She felt a pang of mingled anger and jealousy.

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She could not say "Long live the Queen" to this successor.

Eisenoch repeated his question:

"What do you thing of Sophie?"

"Sophie?" she stammered, "Sophie?"

She moved her head from side to side.

"Don't you think about Sophie," she said.

"No?"

"No."

He persisted stupidly:

"I always understood you thought a lot of Sophie."

"Nobody can say they ever heard me say a word against Sophie Hilweg."

"But you——"

"I don't think she's the wife for you—that's all. All the others suit you better. Anna suits you best of all. Anna's a good girl."

Eisenoch went down the path and turned as if he had forgotten something.

"It's not worth while to think about Sophie?"

"No; besides——"

"What?" asked Eisenoch.

He sprang up the path and took hold of the palings.

Cat'rina hesitated.

"They say the young preacher in the next village is beginning to pay her attentions. They've taken him home to dinner twice this summer already. I don't say it's true, I only heard so. You think about Anna."

At night, Eisenoch thought so much of Sophie that he found it difficult to sleep. He hated the problematic preacher.

In the morning he went over to her father's house to buy corn, though he had plenty.

Early as it was, Sophie's tub was empty. She had pinned up her skirts and stood on tip-toe—she was not tall—to fasten a sheet upon the line. Her arms were round and white, her hair was black, she se med so altogether desirable that Eisenoch could scarcely prevent himself from taking her round the waist and telling her at once of the honour he had come to confer upon her, particularly when she turned her face over her shoulder and all her smiles and dimples appeared for him.

She said:

"When did you see Cat'rina last?"

He replied:

"I come over to see if your father had a little of last year's corn. I've got a young horse over there I don't like to feed on new corn." After a pause he said: "Cat'rina—Cat'rina, what makes you always say that same thing to me about Cat'rina?"

He made a long explanation while Sophie listened or laughed encouragingly.

They were married a month later.

Cat'rina went to the wedding in a new gown and gave the bride two glass butter dishes. She gave two because she wished to avoid any possible imputation of jealousy.

Time passed on.

Sophie's boys and girls became men and women who passed and repassed her gate co tinually.

Cat'rina grew middle-aged and grey-haired. Her father was an old man. A wordless devotion sprang up between them. Each was eager to serve the other, but gradually his tasks became her own.

One morning Cat'rina came in from milking to find his chair by the fire unoccupied and the voice of the clock like a menace in the empty room.

When she called there was no answer.

A truth she had never acknowledged took hold of her and a horror of loneliness came upon her.

As she mounted the stairs the sun came up from behind the young chestnut wood, and its rays shone red on the bare white wall.

Old Grau lay long and straight upon his bed. His hands were clasped in a knotted heap on his breast. The feeble strength of old age had gone from him.

When he saw Cat'rina at the head of the staircase his mouth quivered.

"Oh, Cat'rina," he said, "you poor girl!"

He began to talk incoherent y.

"You must be left by yourself. In the night I know it, and I think of you by yourself here, all alone. And I think about the poplar and Eisenoch's son."

For a moment, while they looked at each other, their relationship was forgotten. They were just two human creatures, and one had satisfied his enmity at the expense of the other, and learnt how bitter such satisfaction is at the last.

Cat'rina crossed the room and knelt down by the bed. She laid her hard hands over her father's.

"When I think of all I did to spite Eisenoch, and him dead already, and that it only spited you, why, then, I know you've had much to forgive, Cat'rina."

As she looked from the barrenness of the past to the loneliness of the future, Cat'rina, for the first time, knew how much she had forgiven.

ELGA DENET.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☛ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 4 distribution must reach us by October 31st, addressed to The 4th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the First Distribution appears on page 556.

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TWO GOOD MEN AND TRUE.

JOE and Jim had been partners for years. They had travelled to the gold fields together, built their little cabin among the first on Kangaroo Creek, shared the same board and luck. They had seen a few rough cabins grow into an important camp; they had seen pistols drawn and lives threatened and taken almost daily in their times, when a six-shooter was the only court of justice, and he shot best who shot first.

Life was rough at Kangaroo Creek in those days, and even now, when it was a thriving little settlement, it was often a case of "kill or be killed."

One night Joe and Jim had sat talking with a miner whose claim adjoined their own—"Piggie," they called him, and if ever he bore other name none at Kangaroo Creek knew it. "Piggie" was reputed to have been a gentleman before he came to Australia, and his talk was different from most of the boys, and his hands were smaller and whiter. "Piggie" had made his pile and was going away the next day, going home; and Jim and Joe found his body floating in the creek in the morning, with staring, half open eyes and a knife in his back. They buried him silently by the creek.

"Pity," said Jim.

"So 'tis," agreed Joe.

And Joe and Jim guarded their own little hoard a bit more carefully and kept their fire-arms in better condition.

It was almost time for Jim and Joe to leave the diggings. They had worked there six long, weary years, and had their share of luck. They had risen together with the sun, toiled side by side day after day, shared their evening meal, and drank and smoked together with little variation. They seldom spoke, yet closer friends never shared luck.

Over a bottle of liquor they talked about returning together, but after three hours' tacit and smokeful deliberation, and ten minutes' earnest discussion, they decided to hang on for another year.

"We shall have enough by then," said Joe.

"I should say so," replied Jim.

And so it was agreed.

The arrival in the village of a woman ruffled the even tenor of their companionship. Nothing could have parted Jim and Joe for one moment except an explosion or—a woman. Men may hob-nob together for a lifetime, but bring a woman on the scene and trouble begins.

She was a giggling, fair-haired thing, the first barmaid at the Palace Hotel, the one "pub" at Kangaroo Creek.

She was a woman, and it was this fact that struck the sleepy minds of Joe and Jim. Hitherto the customers of the reeking little canteen had been attended to by men like themselves—bare-armed, grimy, perspiring. The two partners began to find a vague attraction in spending their evenings there, and watching Nellie flit about through clouds of smoke.

Jim would even leave his work in the middle of the day, and Joe would ponder earnestly as to where he could be, while Joe would occasionally saunter out at odd times without even saying "Coming?" to Jim. All of which was getting very serious and unaccountable. But each man kept his secret, and talked less and smoked more than ever.

One evening, the first for many, they were passing in their own little den. It certainly was a rough night without, and the men were, as they confessed, "dog-tired"; but perhaps the real reason for their domesticity was the fact that "Nellie" had left the diggings for a few days on a visit.

They put the bottle on the table, and lighted their pipes; Joe and Jim sat as usual, gazing earnestly into the fire.

"Did well to-day," suggested Joe.

"Very well," agreed Jim.

The two puffed on in silence, each eager to unburden himself of some secret, but uneasy as to how to start.

"Nice gal, Nell," Joe remarked at length.

"So she is," agreed Jim.

"I got a kind o' surprise fer yer," said Joe after a few minutes of silent puffing.

"Oh!" was all Jim said.

Joe hesitated, but at last summoned up courage and blurted out:

"Jim, I'm going ter marry a gal."

"You is?" said Jim after a pause. "Have you made up to her and asked her, Joe?"

"Not yet; but I kissed her good-bye last night."

"So did I," said Jim looking up.

"You're a liar, Jim!"

Jim did not answer, but filled up the glasses again, and they both gazed stupidly into the fire.

"I've her portrait here somewhere," said Jim at length, producing a photograph.

"Why, so have I," replied Joe, taking out another.

Both men paused; then Joe said firmly:

"I mean ter get her, Jim!"

"Not if I know it! She is promised to me," replied Jim with equal firmness.

"So you've been sneaking after 'er, Jim?" asked Joe.

"No worse than you," replied Jim candidly.

"What do you mean, Jim?" asked Joe.

"What I says, Joe," answered Jim.

Another very serious pause.

"See here, Jim!"

"Well, Joe."

"You want that girl, I s'pose?"

"I do."

"Well, so do I—that's straight out."

"Then I s'pose we'd better settle it at once," said Jim.

"How, Jim?" asked Joe.

"Pistols," suggested Jim.

"Good," replied the other.

"Fust thing to-morrow, back o' the hill," proposed Jim, "and he best man wins."

"Right you are," acquiesced Joe.

"Good night, Joe."

"Good night, Jim."

The old partners were up at dawn as usual. Joe noticed with some concern that Jim searched for tobacco in his pouch and found none. Such a thing

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might, Joe reflected, put Jim at a disadvantage; he hastened to put the matter right.

"Hev some tobacco, Jim?"

"Thanks, Joe."

So they commenced their walk together. They were both dead shots. Neither would be likely to miss a coin at twenty yards, much less the sturdy breast that would soon be his target.

And on the way they reflected, as usual, each within his honest, slow mind.

"I could hit Jim, of course," Joe's thoughts ran; "I'd be a mug if I couldn't! But he is sure to pop me, too. That's no good to either. Besides, he's my old partner, is Jim, we've pigged in together now, how long is it? six years! No. I'll not down old Jim this time; 'tain't worth it. He's a better man than me, is Jim, and I shouldn't care to hang on alone if Jim was gone under, durn me if I should, not for all the women in the world!"

"Joe or me, one or the other; both, I spect," reflected Jim cheerily. "Poor Joe! It don't seem right somehow to stick an ounce of lead into him, after these times together, because he happens to fancy a girl, same's me. S'pose he did miss me—or only wing me—which he won't? Well—durn it—I shouldn't know who to talk to without Joe in the corner opposite, smokin' his pipe. No—I ain't goin' to murder old Joe—not just yet awhile."

They reached the place.

Joe held out his hand.

"Well, so long, Jim."

"So long, Joe."

The hand-grip was a long one—the voices were not quite as firm as usual. But Joe's eyes twinkled even now at the thought of the ingenious trick he was about to play on Jim by missing him; the corners of Jim's mouth twitched with merriment, as though he were conjuring up Joe's surprise presently at finding himself unhurt.

But each felt, with the utmost certainty, that he had only a few seconds longer to live.

They took up their positions.

Through the trees the wind whistled and snarled, the dripping of the rain on the foliage above them was the only sound.

Joe particularly noticed an irritating flapping leaf, almost over Jim's head; Jim remarked that a squirrel was playing about in the tree beneath which Joe stood.

"Say when, Jim," suggested the ever-garrulous Joe.

"No—you," replied Jim.

Joe smiled broadly as he counted evenly:

"One—two—three—fire!"

The reports rang out. The squirrel dropped headless at Joe's feet; the leaf fluttered down on to the brim of Jim's hat. The men gazed at each other for a few moments; then they gradually understood how things were. The two began to laugh outright. The laugh increased steadily in volume, and was prolonged for five minutes.

Joe began the conversation.

"Well, Jim. We're durned fools, we are."

"I should think we is, Joe," agreed Jim.

They advanced to each other, and shook hands again.

"Confound you, Jim," said Joe warmly.

"An I you, too, Joe," replied Jim.

At last accounts Joe and Jim were still together—and still unmarried.

V. Hewitt.

Result of First Distribution.

Of the fifty persons selected in the first *Short Stories* Distribution, four have applied. A sovereign has, therefore, been sent to each of the following:

W. GYDE, The Barracks, Warley, Essex.

Miss WILLIAMS, Ivy Cottage, Rowlands Castle, Havant, Hants.

J. B. WIGHTON, 26 St. Domingo Vale, Everton.

G. R. CHALMERS, R.N., H.M.S. *Worcester*, Stationed off Greenhithe, Kent.

Here is a list of those people who would have received a sovereign each had they applied for it:

John Evison, West Street, Crowland, Peterborough; Daniel Smith, Harkstead, Suffolk; Miss Frankland, 6 Church Square, Whitby; Arthur Buckle, 7 Hawthorne Villas, Queen's Road, Wimbledon; James Carter, 21 Skinner Street, Swansea, South Wales; Miss Sayer, 31 St. Peter's Street, Ipswich; James Garnett, 113 Prospect Road, Scarborough; George Sadler, 6 Union Street, Norwich; Mrs. Stanmer, 11 Alexandra Road, Broadstairs; Joseph Avery, Railway Street, Barnes, S.W.; Miss Caroline Plumridge, 3 Foxton Terrace, Friar's Stile Road, Richmond; Miss Lily Strickland, 5 Chapel Road, Stamford Hill, N.; Frederick North, 10 Bath Street, Northampton; G. A. S. Vint, 11 Carlisle Street, Belfast; Thos. Peed, The Nurseries, Norwood Road, West Norwood, S.E.; W. P. Brigstocke, 1 The Terrace, Ryde, Isle of Wight; Miss Hickman, The Cottage, Hagley, Stourbridge; J. W. Somerton, 49 London Road, Worcester; Richard Wilson, 47 Railway Road, Leigh, Lancs.; D. Bevan, 19 Glover Street, Birkenhead; J. Hindle, Strand, Exmouth: R. Douglas, 48 George Street, Perth, Scotland; R. Gilmour, 12 Brougham Street, Greenock; Miss E. Ashford, 166 Icknield Street, Birmingham; Mrs. W. Morris, 17 Harrowby Street, Bute Docks, Cardiff; Miss L. Williams, 13 Mostyn Road, Brixton; Thos. Mantle, Trewen, The Woodlands, Conway, North Wales; E. Packman, 10 Arbroath Road, Dundee; W. Waymont, 53 Tierney Road, Streatham; R. J Henderson, 33 Hollybank Road, Drumcondra, Dublin; R. S. Lord, 16 Grange Avenue, Rawtenstall; John Bray, 189 North Road, Plymouth: Joseph Mayne, Forest, Redruth; John Morris, 35 Worsfield Street, Battersea; James Matthews, "The Elms," Newbury, Berks; Thos. Drew, 480 High Road, Chiswick; Joseph Percival, 166 Oldham Road, Ashton-under-Lyne; Miss L. Higgs, Andersontown, Falls Road, Belfast; Mrs. H. Rogers, 18 Baronsfield Road, East Twickenham: H. Gillet, Gwithian, Hayle, Cornwall; Miss Emma Carter, 1 Dancer Road, Fulham, S.W.; Miss A. Sweet, 50 Portman Street, Rowbarton, Taunton; S. H. Gordon Able, Onecote School, Leek, Staffs.; D. Gilchrist, 29 West Scotland Street, Plantation, Glasgow; Harry Attree, 328 Uxbridge Road, W.

This is a very encouraging start, and readers must be commended upon their enterprise in applying in such large numbers. It may possibly so happen that those people whose names and addresses are given above as having failed to apply for the sovereign awaiting them are not readers of *Short Stories*, and it may with equal possibility happen that the list of persons selected for this week's distribution contains amongst them a good proportion of non-readers. Under these circumstances, it is to be hoped that every reader will mention the distribution to at least one friend, and put this friend in the way of making his application in the proper fashion. Who knows but what the name of your next door neighbour has been selected, and that he will fail to secure his golden sovereign simply because he is unaware of this generous offer? It behoves you, therefore, to mention the fact to everybody with whom you come in contact. It surely is not worth losing a sovereign for the sake of a post-card. Your name may not be amongst those who have been selected up to the present; on the other hand it may, and you would feel rather unhappy if on opening your *Short Stories* a week or two hence, you found that your name was down as one of those who would have received £1 had they applied for it!

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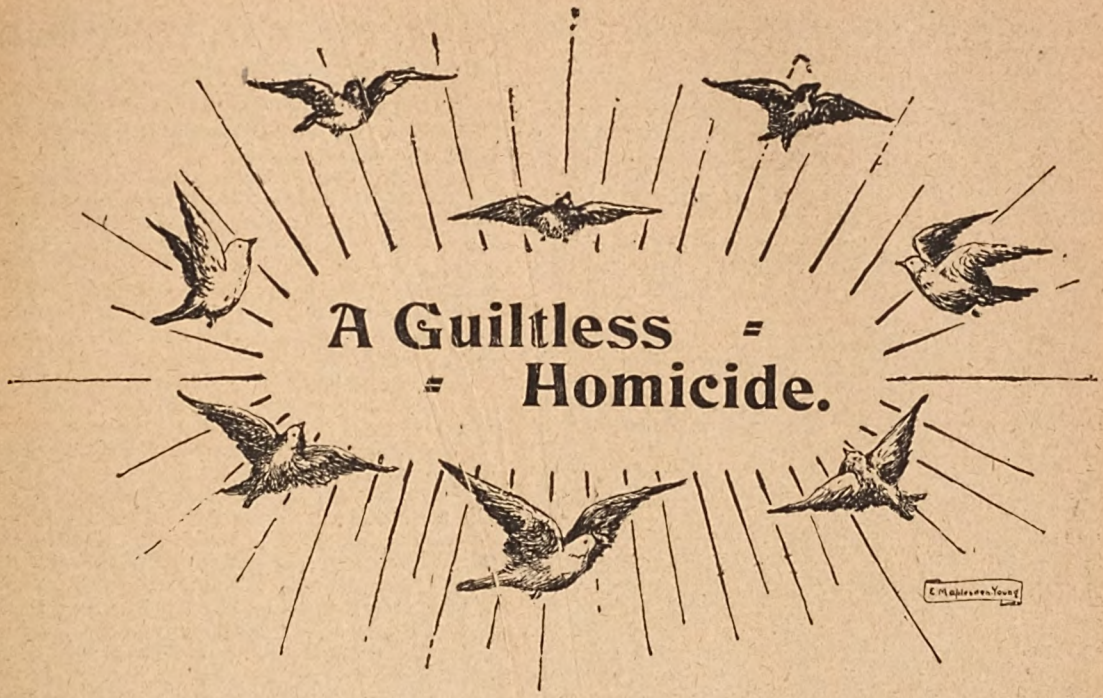

A Guiltless Homicide.

MALLORY felt himself almost slinking up the avenue. He could not escape the memories of the days when he had bounded between these trees as a boy, galloped up the hard, smooth road on horse-back, or come, later, as a young prince upon his own estate. The contrast of past and present made him feel the blood in his face, and sent a little shudder of disgust running down his spine.

There was resentment, too, against the old man that he felt had robbed him, not only of his prospects in life, but of his self-respect. Besides the droop in Mallory's shoulders, there were tears of self-pity in his eyes, which made him despise himself, and added to his anger against the old man up there in the house. Once let us get the idea that a thing is ours, by whatever chance or gift, and we consider it ours by unalienable right.

Mallory did not go to the front of the house. He hesitated for an instant at the side, and looked through the unshaded window and saw his old cousin, his only living relative, sitting as he had sat night after night for twenty years, with his books about him, reading, reading. The student lamp was old, and the shade of green paper threw a sickly light on the bony old face, with the thin lips a little drawn up at one corner, as if in a perpetual sneer. The eyes were small, with slanting, tent-like lids. How Mallory did hate the expression of that face! How many times had he given him nothing more than the most courteous and polite attention, and how he had writhed under it!

In the midst of his misery, and in the very act of turning about and going back to the gate, Mallory noticed with contempt the worn table cover, the green paper shade, and the shabby dressing gown that his cousin wore about his narrow shoulders. A man with a large fortune—more than a large fortune—to spend his life like that! And how old and pale he looked! He couldn't live long, and then that money, all the money that Mallory had been brought up to consider his very own, would go to a library that nobody would ever enter except dusty old men like this.

It seemed to him that he must prevent it. He walked rapidly round the house until he came to the back-kitchen door, which he tried. It was fastened, but there was a shuffle across the floor, and a hand on the lock.

"Who's there?" a strong voice asked.

"It's I, Grainger," Mallory said. "Let me in."

The door flew open instantly, showing a pleased and delighted face.

There was a hesitancy in the butler's look until Mallory held out his hand, and then Grainger grasped it in both of his with affection.

"I'm glad to see you home again, sir. I was just about to take a bit of supper, Mr. Mallory, and there's some as good devilled kidneys as you've seen since you were here before. You must taste 'em, sir."

Mallory was hungry, or he had been hungry, but it seemed to him that he must go in there to his cousin and say or do something to make him change his mind about leaving all that money to a stupid library. What good would libraries, or anything else, do old George Dent after he was dead? And here he was, starving, ragged, without a place to lay his head; he, a gentleman, who had been brought up to expect that one day all this would be his! It was cruel. It was wrong. His cousin must be made to see it.

Grainger went on preparing the table before him.

"The Mason family are back, sir," he said with his eye on the tin coffee-pot on the range.

With the smell of the kidneys and the coffee, and the sight of the white napkins, to which he had been unaccustomed in these last months, a sense of comfort came to Mallory to which he had been long a stranger.

But when Grainger mentioned the Masons, that ner-

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vous gnawing of impatience and protestation against fate began again in his heart.

"When?"

"Last week. I saw Miss Emily the day before yesterday. She asked me where you were, and I told her you was in France again, sir. I knew she would think it strange you would be in town and not come to see us. Wouldn't be stopping at the old place any longer, so I just told her you were in France. It seemed to me she seemed a bit disappointed."

"Don't tell her, Grainger. I rely upon you not to tell her. Do not tell anyone. I want you to promise me that no one shall ever know I am not in France. If I could go, I would go."

Mallory felt himself getting weak. He put his head down in his hands. The thought of Emily Mason added a new drop to his cup of misery. He had never been in love with her, but he had liked her, and had basked in her admiration of him. His cousin, fourteen months before, had called him in one day and told Mallory that he had given him home, education, opportunity, everything, and had found him at twenty-six only a good-for-nothing, mildly dissipated young man, as unfit as possible to manage and profitably use a great estate; that he considered his own duty discharged towards the young man by the past, and for the future his fortune would go where it would be of some service to humanity. He meant to endow a great and solid reference library for scholars like himself. And Mallory with sixty-four pounds and his large and handsome wardrobe, had been turned out into the world.

People did not know that he was not the old man's heir, and he might have made debts anywhere, but he knew that his cousin would stop that, as soon as he heard of it, in a public and humiliating fashion. He could not stand such a disgrace, so he dropped out of sight. He would not go to any of his old acquaintances for employment, and he could get none from other people. He was learned in nothing, save elegant and easy ways of spending money; and no man wanted a subordinate for that purpose.

The loss of Emily Mason had not been even a spot in his general misery. He had not thought of her till now, but now, for some reason, she seemed infinitely precious, infinitely above him, and he could not bear that she should know anything about him or his degradation.

"No danger o' my telling, Mr. Mallory," Grainger said, pouring the coffee into the cup. "I'm thinking Mr. Dent will repent, before he dies, of ever having made such an unjust will. It's only right that the estate should be your own. You ought to marry Miss Emily and settle down here in the old house, and let it be livened up again. It's no way to live, this way. Why, every night I lock Mr. Dent up in the house, and take the keys and leave him there until the morning, reading, reading. He won't let me even sleep in the house. It's no way for a Christian to live."

The odour of coffee gave Mallory a sickish sensation.

"Go and get me some brandy, Grainger. I am ill," he said, pushing away the food before him.

Grainger brought a bottle from his little bedroom.

"Here's some of the real stuff. There's only a few bottles of it left."

Mallory swallowed half a glassful, and sat for another quarter of an hour looking into the glowing face of the range. The brandy seemed to go clear into his eins, and race through them instead of the blood. He had not eaten since the night before. It had been days since he had had a respectable meal. That impelling desire to stop his cousin's determination to disinherit him before it should be made irrevocable by his death came back with redoubled force.

"I am going to see Cousin George," he said.

"That's right," Grainger replied, "that's right."

But he looked a little uneasy at the flushed face and disordered, soiled clothing.

Grainger loved Mallory, the impulsive, sweet-tempered, generous boy who had brought him all his troubles who had always been generous and generally considerate. He loved him as though he had been his son that had never been born. In the eyes of Grainger, Mallory had never been guilty of a wrong action in his life.

It only wrung the elder man's heart that he could not bear the young man's troubles—that he could not make things straight.

"Don't you think, Mr. Mallory, some clean linen—now, I've got plenty, if you'd but wear it. Mr. Dent——"

"Oh, hang his infernal ways!" Mallory cried. "I'm going in to tell him he shan't keep me out of my own. I'll spend half the estate in the courts. Do you lock him in? Where's the key?"

"Here it is. But I wouldn't go, feeling that way, Mr. Mallory, indeed I wouldn't. Wait awhile."

"I'm going now."

And taking the key, he strode across the flagged court between the outer kitchen and the house.

The wide halls were dark. There was no light in all the house, except the library. The old man slept in a room next to his books but Mallory knew every step of the way. He had lived there ever since he was ten years old.

When he reached the library door he hesitated for an instant, and then knocked.

"Come in," his cousin's voice said calmly.

The very tones of it took away all of Mallory's bravado. He opened the door and went in.

Mr. Dent looked up from the book in his delicate hands. Mallory stood, and when his cousin finally recognised him, he, too, arose and held out his hand.

"How do you do, Arthur?" he said coldly. "Will you have a chair? It seems to be a chilly evening." And he drew a light cane-chair towards the smouldering fire.

It was all so hopeless. Mallory had nothing to say. How could he sit there in his rags, a confessed failure, a man—an ablebodied man—who could not keep himself from starvation, and protest against a man who had piled scores of thousands of pounds upon each other by sheer hard work, leaving them as he chose?

Mallory felt the sneer in that face already. He knew that his cousin supposed he had come as a beggar, but hardly as such a colossal beggar.

He made up his mind that he would not ask anything of his cousin. He would explain this disordered dress by saying he had been hunting in the neighbourhood. Whatever he thought, he might think.

They went on talking of commonplaces. Mallory asked what line of study had been taken up in these months. He told of the new books he himself had seen in shop windows in the city. The old man mended the sunken fire, taking some pieces of a pine box and an old hatchet from a closet in the chimney.

As he got up, Mallory's eyes rested on the books and papers on the table. One was a legal document, long and rather narrow in its fold. Idly his eyes spelt out, upside down, the writing on the back. Little chills ran down his back. His lips were dry.

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"The last will and testament of George Mallory Dent."

This was the will that disinherited him.

All sorts of wild fancies went through Mallory's brain. What if he should steal that will, and his cousin should die before he could make another? All the vast property would be his.

He reached out his hand to take it, and then he realized how inevitable detection would be, and how it would not only be public disgrace, for his cousin cared not a whit for the world, but it would cut off hope absolutely.

Mr. Dent was bending over his fire. The hatchet lay on the hearth. Mallory's heart went like a steam hammer. "No! no!" he was saying to himself; and even as he said it, almost in his grasp he saw that great fortune —life—the world. What was life or money to this old man?

Crying to himself that he would not, he put his hand out and drew the will towards him, his face purple with emotion.

He felt as though it were some demon that moved his arm—he had nothing to do with it. He snatched the hatchet, and struck again and again, in an agony of fear that he might not do the work thoroughly, that the old man would speak again and accuse him.

Then, keeping his eyes from the body, he opened the paper which he had still kept crushed in his hand.

The fire was there, and he intended to burn it, but some impulse—some caution—caused him to open it and see that it was the document which disinherited him, and which had moved him, forced him almost against his will, to kill his cousin.

It was very short.

After a few trifling bequests to old servants and friends, and a donation to the library of a well-known college, the entire property, consisting of stocks, bonds, mortgages and land, was bequeathed "to my cousin and only living relative, Mallory Arthur Dent."

Mallory turned again and stupidly looked at the date. "April the twentieth, eighteen hundred and ninety." That was two weeks after he had left the house. His cousin had either grown sorry for his hardness, or he had always intended to leave his property in this way.

Mallory's eyes went down to the huddled figure of the old man. He started once to pick the body up, and then he drew back.

Oh, the uselessness of it! The pity of it! An impulse of sorrow for the kind old man, dead, murdered by his own cousin, his almost adopted son, brought tears to Mallory's eyes, mingled, too, with sorrow for himself. Why hadn't he been wise enough to foresee this?

He put his arm on the mantelpiece and groaned in agony of spirit. He had put a terrible crime upon his soul, and for what? Worse than nothing!

And then he shut his teeth and called himself a fool and a coward.

He had an attack of terror when he saw that blood had stained the will.

"But any murderer might have handled it," he said to himself, putting it down on the table, while a great quaking took his heart at the name he had given himself.

He went over to the blinds and drew them down, walking round the dead man's feet, blew out the lamp, and walked out.

He hesitated at the door for an instant, the coming conversation with Grainger taking form in his mind. His heart was going like a whirling ball in his bosom. Suddenly he remembered that he had left no way for the supposable burglar to enter the house. He opened the library window and went back. He could find his way about the room in the firelight. He went over to the window and opened it. He stopped by his cousin's desk. There was money there, he knew. Mallory was not a thief. He stood and reasoned the matter out in his mind. There must be some seeming motive for the murder, and robbery was the only one.

He must take the money; and then it was only taking his own. Did not the will lying there leave him his cousin's possessions?

He turned the key of the shiny old mahogany desk and rumpled the papers. He knew the money-drawer, but he purposely fumbled on his way to it, disordering everything.

Finally he turned to go. The firelight flickered on the pitiful heap that half-an-hour before had been a clever, well-bred old man. Mallory shut the door softly. He felt as though he were somebody else. He felt himself arranging a programme of life for the person who was himself and yet a stranger.

He remembered that there was a theory that all murderers were insane He went over in his mind the possible plea of insanity if he were discovered.

Discovered!

There came an awful quiver as he thought of the consequences. He determined to buy a bottle of prussic acid and carry it about with him for an emergency.

He moved heavily out into the court, closed the door that led into the house and locked it. Grainger came out of his little kitchen, letting a light fall on the damp bricks.

"What luck, sir?"

Mallory had a stupid feeling that he had learnt a part and was forgetting it, but he improvised on the moment. He seemed to himself to be standing behind this new person he had become, and directing him.

"Grainger," he said, and there was almost a note of patronage in his voice—the consciousness of being no longer a beggar was coming out—"we have done my cousin an injustice. He brought out his will and showed it to me. He has never disinherited me. That idea was the anger of a moment. He has asked me to come back home."

"I can have your room ready in five minutes, sir. It's good news you tell me. I always knew Mr. Dent had a good heart."

"I am going to-night," Mallory said hastily. "I told some friends I would meet them in the morning. Be careful, Grainger, that you tell no one that I was here. I have been in France, you know."

"Yes sir—yes sir. No danger of my telling."

Mallory had walked out into the night. The ragged clouds were scuttling across the sky, and the wind blew fresh and damp across his face. As he went down the avenue, boldly stepping out, he still had that sensation of irresponsibility, of moving a creature who was dear to him, and in his care, but not himself. There was no fighting horror of his deed in him. He wondered that more murders were not committed, it seemed so simple a thing.

Mallory in these months had lived a life of which there could be no possible trace. He had gone to a poor and cheap little hotel in the East-end, and had lived upon the proceeds of his jewels and his wardrobe and some money he had had from Grainger. When he

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emerged into life again he came up with the old greetings, in the old way. He had felt that he had always expected to do this. He went to town that night, and getting into a cab, was driven to the hotel where he had kept a room for years before his departure from his former life. The clerk was the same, and the servants about the office. They all knew him.

"Give me my old room, if you can, Harris," he said graciously, as he wrote his name down. "I'm rather seedy. I've been out in a yacht for two weeks, and my baggage is goodness only knows where."

"Been hunting, sir?"

"Something like that. Glad to get back."

The clerk laughed. He had heard that story before.

Mallory went up to his room. He wrote some letters, one to his tailor, telling him he was in his hunting clothes, and he must send him up something respectable at once. He took a pleased comfort in his bath, and in daintily arraying himself in the clothing that was sent into him. His mind lingered on the trifles of half-a-dozen suits of silk underwear that came in. They looked so soft and luxurious.

It was afternoon before he was presentable. He knew he was not likely to hear of his cousin's death until the evening, and felt that the time until then was his own to be merry in, and he meant to make the most it. He came into the dining-room at one o'clock for his luncheon, fresh and modish, and at ease. The waiter, who had received plenty of cash from him in tips, drew out the chair at his favourite table at the avenue window, and beamed an anticipatory welcome.

As he crossed the room he heard his name pronounced in a tone that was flattering.

He turned hastily to see Emily Mason, with her mother and her young brother at the table he was passing.

How daintily pretty Emily was! He had never noticed before how the hair grew about her face. And what an innocent, sweet, oval face it was.

They greeted him with frank delight. They were so glad to see him home again, and had missed him very much. They had run in for a day for shopping and the matinée—wouldn't he go with them?

He would; and he would have luncheon with them. He listened, smiling and delighted, to all the light talk of their day, that had been, and would be again, his day. He had grown tired of the theatre in the old times, but as he thought of the bright, happy crowd, and of sitting in a box at Emily Mason's side, he felt that life was sweet.

He went to the train with them after the theatre was over, and gave Emily a lingering hand clasp that brought the colour into her cheeks.

"I'll be down in a day or two," he said gaily, as the train started.

He went leisurely back to his dinner, still smiling—opened the evening paper, and faced the head-lines of his cousin's terrible murder.

The story was told with all the ghastly details which belong to that class of literature.

A mention was made of the dead man's heir, who was on his way home from France, not knowing of the disaster; and then the last line said that there was strong circumstancial evidence against John Grainger, the servant of Mr. Dent. It was also evident that the murderer had entered by the door, as the window had been opened from the inside by blood-stained fingers.

Mallory took the train that night for Middleton, the little country town where his cousin lay dead. His anxiety to get to Grainger and hear what he meant to tell of his own visit, was the paramount idea. It meant a great deal more to him now, than seeing his cousin had meant last night.

Grainger must know. How could he face him?

How could he expect Grainger not to tell? If he but mentioned his coming last night, any child could read the true story of the murder. How clumsy he had been!

And oh, how unnecessary it had all been! He drew his finger about inside his collar as though he were strangling.

Certainly Grainger would tell of his coming. Did he expect him for an instant not to? He started up. He must get off the train, go somewhere, where there was yet time. Already he saw perpetually before his eyes that black horror.

And then he thought of Emily Mason, and what she would think when she knew that he was a murderer—that he killed his cousin, the man who had taken him, an orphan lad, and treated him as a son.

And within a few hours he had leant over her chair, had eaten at the same table with her, and been light-hearted, and happy and gay.

He would offer Grainger half his fortune. There were clever lawyers. They would not let an innocent man be convicted of a crime. There must be dozens of ways of getting out of it, and he would compensate Grainger, he should not suffer.

It was a bright sunny morning when Mallory reached the little town, which was in a state of great excitement over the murder. Mr. Dent had been a prominent citizen, and to have him killed one day, and his long-absent heir come home from France the next, was a sensation that gave an excuse for almost a cessation of the ordinary routine of the day.

Mallory was surrounded with old friends and acquaintances as soon as he left the train.

He wanted to push everybody away, to cry out and ask where Grainger was, that he might get to him, but he had to stop and receive condolences and make arrangements.

He emphatically declared to everyone his belief in Grainger's innocence, and as soon as possible made his way to the county gaol where he was confined. He found him sitting on the side of his bed, sad-faced and downcast.

Mallory fairly pushed himself ahead, he so dreaded the coming reproaches. Old Grainger loved him, but he knew that there was nothing that could stifle truth when it came to a matter between man and man. The old butler had a principle which never faltered.

Mallory felt himself cringe as he went in. Grainger sprang to his feet with a laugh of joy and relief. There were tears in his eyes, and his hands trembled greatly as he put them about Mallory.

"I knew you'd come, Mr. Mallory, just as soon as you heard. To think o' them thinkin' I'd harm Mr. Dent, that I've lived with all these years, that I've been taking care of like as if he'd been a baby!"

"Of course you didn't. Nobody believes you did, Grainger. The idiots who put you in here shall be made to pay for it. I'll have you out in a few hours."

"I can't think who could a' done it," Grainger said, his brow wrinkling. "Some tramp must have come along and seen his light and the open desk."

Mallory's heart beat with relief and nervous apprehension. It was so plain, yet evidently Grainger had not yet connected him with the crime. When would he begin to do so? The instant he began to put two and two together he would see.

"They asked me if there had been anybody there that

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evening," Grainger went on, "and I told them no. There wasn't anybody there but you, sir, and there wasn't any use of bringin' that in, and telling the family troubles we'd had and that nobody had known all this time."

Mallory found that it was not so easy a matter to release Grainger as he had supposed. Murder was not a bailable charge. His spirits rose again as he found that Grainger had not suspected him, and that there was no danger of his giving the clue to others. He felt almost as though he had not done the deed. He himself, this present personality, would never have been guilty of such a dreadful thing.

He went to his cousin's funeral, although he had not looked at the dead face, and felt sorry and unhappy in almost a normal way. The letters that came to him from old friends pleased him. He had been without sympathy all these months, and was inclined to value even the most perfunctory show of it.

The little note that Emily Mason sent he read over and over, and then put away in his pocket. He saw a great deal of her in the next few weeks. He rode and drove with her constantly. He did not stay at the old house, but had the whole interior torn out and remodelled. The room where his cousin had been killed he had torn entirely away.

The great lawyers that he had brought down to attend to Grainger's case all declared that there was no doubt of a complete acquittal. A man could not be convicted upon such flimsy evidence. And Mallory went on living his life, feeling that he was two selves, one the honest, upright man, generous, kind-hearted, whom Emily Mason knew and loved, and who was working and spending money to aid the old servant whose innocence he believed in, and the other that hidden self who sat sinister, yet ashamed, and prompted the other man in his part.

Sometimes he wondered if he would ever become possessed by a demon and confess. Men had done such things. And then one day he wondered if his children would inherit the tendency that had made him a murderer.

As the trial drew near he became hollow-eyed and nervous. Under all that questioning, something must come out, he felt that would show the world the true state of affairs. Let them but get the least clue, and the whole story was inevitable.

In his grief and despair one night, hungering for sympathy, and seeing it ready for him in her eyes, he had told Emily Mason that he loved her, and she had promised to marry him within a few weeks. He felt it another safe-guard against detection. He felt he was taking a hostage from fate. A kind Providence would not allow the happiness of a true, good woman like Emily Mason to be blasted.

Grainger, conscious of innocence, reassured by his lawyers, was cheerful and almost care-free. Mallory laid plans with him that he was to take charge of their house with a staff of servants of his own choosing, during his and Emily's long stay abroad after their marriage, which was to be celebrated in a fortnight or so. When they returned Grainger was still to have the chief place as director of household affairs.

Emily often came to see him, but never without Mallory. He told her that he did not care to have her go to the prison alone. He felt a horrible fear that she would discover the truth.

The trial opened with little excitement. Mallory attended the first day but as he was not called as witness, he did not go again. Everyone knew that he considered Grainger innocent, and it seemed likely to be only a short matter.

When he reached his room, after a long ride with Emily on the third day, he found the great lawyer sitting at the table.

"Mr. Dent," he said, "I've an astonishing piece of news for you. The jury without leaving their seats, brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree."

"What!" Mallory shouted, shaking the heavy man by the shoulder. "Convict an innocent man——"

"I know he is an innocent man," the lawyer said gravely. "As innocent a man as you are."

* * * *

Mallory had gone to the prison and said good-bye to Grainger, who had begged that the wedding should not be postponed. He would die happier, knowing that Mr. Mallory and Miss Emily were together.

The church was full of friends, as Emily walked down the aisle upon her father's arm to the sound of the wedding music.

The clergyman came forward in his white robes, as Mallory, ashy, shaking, took Emily's hand in his—in a double murderer's hand he thought.

As the clergyman began in his solemn voice, he wondered if it were he who would go from here to sustain Grainger to the gallows where he was going to die for him—Grainger, the kind old man, who had made his boyhood a happy one.

The service went on:

"I require and charge you both, as ye will answer at the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be disclosed, that if either of you know any impediment why ye may not be lawfully joined together in matrimony, ye do now confess it."

Mallory gave an awful cry, and throwing Emily's hand from him, turned and ran down the aisle like a madman.

People rose in their seats, and there were startled outcries, but he ran on, out of the door, hatless, the wind blowing his hair over his forehead, the white flower in his coat swinging on its stem as it slipped down.

On, on to the prison!

He must stop it, at any cost. What was he, that he should dare do this thing?

The people were gathered round the gaol. Mallory tore through the outer court, and was stopped by the guard at the door into the yard where the gallows stood.

"Let me by," Mallory shouted. "You know me. I must get out there."

"Stop! Stop!" he shouted, waving his arms wildly. "He didn't do it. I did it! I am the murderer!"

* * * * *

"Mr. Mallory, Mr. Mallory, for Heaven's sake, wake up! You must be dreamin' something terrible. Eat some supper."

Mallory opened his eyes and stared about the little kitchen. The kidneys were covered on the range.

He stared at Grainger, not hopeless and helpless and bound, but rosy and good-natured, pressing food upon him. He rubbed his eyes and laughed foolishly.

"I think I will have some supper before I go," he said.

An hour later, as he walked down the avenue, the cold rain in his face, he stopped again at his cousin's window, and saw him there, reading—reading, the green light on his bony old face.

He looked long, as though it were a precious sight, and then he thanked God, and went on.

M. Merriton.

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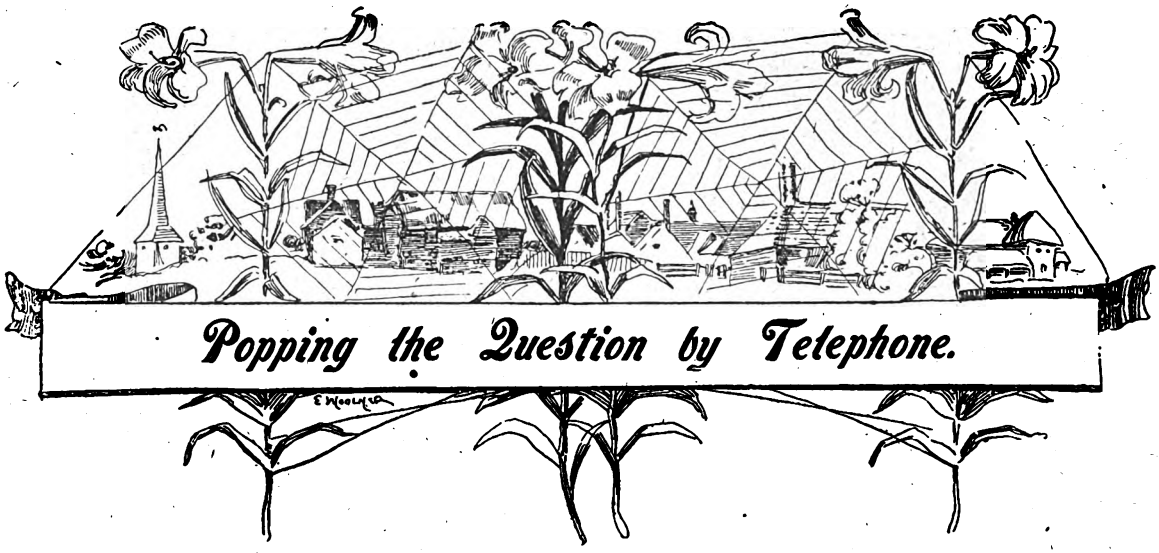

Popping the Question by Telephone.

I.

ARTHUR WINGFIELD was a very desirable young fellow from all points of view. He was in a City office; his salary was good for a youngster of twenty-four; his future prospects were bright; he enjoyed the confidence of his employers; and of five clerks he was the head. He handled the petty cash, and banked the firm's receipts. He drew out the quarterly balance-sheet of the firm, and therefore knew, as well as his employers, how matters of business stood.

Mr. Philpotts, the senior partner of Messrs. Philpotts and Leslie, merchants, Hannen Road, City, was getting on in years. His nearest living relative, Eric Philpotts, was a scapegrace nephew, an indolent, but good-looking youth of nineteen. He had been to Eton, and had had grounded in him what was in all respects a scholastic training, falling within short distance of a University education, but somehow, Eric, to use his own slang expression, "couldn't cotton to City work," and so by degrees he lost the confidence of his uncle, of the firm, until at length matters came to such a crisis that old Mr. Philpotts had perforce to dismiss him from the service of the office. Up to then he had been second clerk. But Eric was his uncle's heir, and not another living creature was there to rightly come between him and his uncle's vast wealth. But whatever Mr. Philpotts might do with the disposal of his own private property, either by leaving it to Eric, or to strangers, or to charities, it was clear that Eric's chance of succeeding to a position in the firm was now lost to him for ever.

Old Mr. Philpotts (he was known in the City as "Old Phil") was in an unusually merry mood one morning, and so after the early morning's business preliminaries were gone through and Wingfield had received instructions for the day, the head of the firm, standing with his back to the fireplace, put the question bluntly to Mr. Wingfield:

"Are you engaged to be married yet, Arthur?"

"Well, sir," stammered Arthur, "I cannot say that I am, although I am particularly friendly with a charming young lady."

"Why are you hesitating to pop the question? Are you afraid to marry on £250 a year?"

"Oh, no, sir; it isn't that at all," replied young Wingfield, colouring red in the face, for he was a bashful young man.

"Then, what is it?"

"I am afraid it is because I cannot summon up sufficient courage to ask her."

Mr. Philpotts smiled.

"I see—I see. It is only a question of time and opportunity," he said.

"I confess I have had both, but I have let them slip from me."

"Do you mean to say that she has fixed her affections elsewhere?" asked the chief with surprise.

"Oh, no! Alice Fortescue is not the kind of girl to throw me overboard. By that I mean to say that although we have often been together quite alone, I have somehow always felt a sort of repelling influence drawing me away from the main issue just when I have neared the crucial moment."

"What kind of girl is Miss Fortescue?"

"A dear, true-hearted, generous——"

"I don't mean by poetical inference," interrupted the chief, with a smile curling about his lips. "I can, of course, quite understand that you think her the brightest and best in the world. But who is she? What is she?"

"She is a stenographer at Luddigates and Simmons, Old Broad Street. We both live at Dalston and we come up to the City every morning——"

"And return at night, I suppose, and probably meet for lunch every day," added the chief, "and yet, like the point of a steel pen, you are extremely fine in your devotion, but divided on the question of coming up to the scratch. I sincerely sympathise with you, Arthur. But the only thing for you to do is to wait until Miss Fortescue proposes, which the young lady is bound to do, and pretty soon, too, I should imagine. I shall be glad when the happy day is fixed for many reasons. In the first place, every young man filling a position of trust ought to marry, for the fetters of wed-

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lock put restraint upon him. Again, certain changes have taken place in the office, in consequence of which more responsibility has been thrown upon your shoulders."

Thus expiating on the necessity of marriage, regarding it in every light as the chastening influence in the character of men, Mr. Philpotts walked up and down the room. He stopped suddenly.

"I am anxious to see you settled, Arthur. Mr. Leslie is thinking of retiring. I cannot last out much longer; that is to say, I, too should like soon to retire, hence Mr. Leslie and I are discussing the question of admitting you into partnership next year."

Mr. Wingfield was, of course, fairly and rightly staggered at this piece of good news.

His presence just then being required in the outer office, he withdrew from Mr. Philpott's private sanctum.

"I'll settle this business myself," thought the old gentleman. "I'll get Luddigates to lunch with me, and make arrangements—or I should say scheme them—for the early union of Miss Fortescue and Arthur. He is madly in love with her," saying which he walked over to the telephone and rung up No 1898, Bank.

"Are you there? Are you Luddigates and Simmons? Thank you. Who are you? Miss Fortescue, did you say? Ah, yes. Beautiful day, isn't it? Been away for your holidays, haven't you? Er—well—er—is Mr. Luddigates in? Ask him to come to the telephone, please, will you? I say, Luddigates, is that you? I'm Philpotts. Lunch with me to-day—usual place—want to see you particularly. Don't bother about him; it'll do to-morrow. Send him a wire, or telephone him, that you can't come. But you must come, my friend; something important. Thanks—yes—thanks. I'll be there at 1.30. Good-bye."

II.

Mr. Luddigates was sitting alone in his private office—a white-haired gentleman, with a fresh complexion and a kindly blue eye. He rang his bell, and presently here glided into his office, from an outer one, with book and pencil in her hand, a fair-haired girl of about twenty. Her face was perhaps pale, but she had a nice complexion, the beauty of which was added to by a pair of sparkling dark blue eyes. She was an extremely comely girl, of very persuasive manners, and was considered an unusually attractive young lady.

"I want to give you a few letters, Miss Fortescue." The girl sat down in her usual place close to Mr. Luddigates' desk, and "took down" about a dozen letters.

"Just one more, miss. Messrs. Philpotts and Leslie——"

The girl looked up blushing scarlet, and then bent her head down again.

"'My dear Philpotts,'" began Mr. Luddigates, "'I am grieved to hear of your determination not to stand for election for your ward, but if, as you tell me in your letter, the only reason is your age and the lack of supreme energy which accompanies one's every advancing year, perhaps there is ground for your supporters excusing you. I hear that our mutual friend, Leslie, is retiring. But I suppose you have still young Mr. Wingfield, a very promising young fellow, but as he remains unmarried, I should hesitate about doing that which you contemplate, at all events for the present. You tell me he is to be married soon. That's much better. As you have chatted with his young lady, you will, of course, know what she is like. Owing to the coming changes in the composition of the firm I can understand your anxiety respecting the solid position of your head clerk. Dine with me on Monday evening at my club, if you care to!'"

Miss Fortescue felt quite ill as she retired to her own desk in the outer office. Her eyes almost danced out of her head. Everything about her was a blank. Her head swam; she was dizzy, hysterical. She hurried to the telephone box, which was in a third office, shut herself up in it, and rang up the Exchange furiously.

"Put me on 17,310 Bank," she called to the Exchange, with a pronounced tremor in her voice.

"Is that you, Arthur?"

"Yes—is that Alice?"

"Yes. Oh, Arthur, is it true—tell me, quick?"

"Is what true, darling? What's the matter?"

"Why—there's something wrong somewhere, isn't there?"

"There was a false alarm of fire here an hour ago. Don't be alarmed, dearest. I'm quite safe. The engines have gone."

"Oh, I don't mean that—but fancy your having a fire! How dreadful! I've rung you up about something else."

"Can't you go to-night? Don't bother, then, darling. I can get the tickets changed."

"You don't understand, Arthur. Mr. L. has just dictated a letter to your Mr. Philpotts, and your name is mentioned in it, and my heart is breaking."

"What does the old rascal say?"

"Why, that you're engaged to be married—but you are not, are you, dearest? Say no."

"I cannot say no. Are you there? Alice, are you there? Don't go away. I cannot say no. Am I not engaged to you?"

"To me, Arthur?"

"Of course, dearest. Isn't that so? But when is the day to be, Alice?"

"Oh! Arthur."

"Are you there? When is the day to be?"

"I'm taking my holidays next month—August 15th—but, Arthur, this is too——"

"I have just fixed mine with the governor for August 15th, too. How lucky! Shall we say then, my love?"

"Have you finished?" called out the Exchange operator.

They had.

Mulvy Ouseley.

Ethel: "Why did you dismiss Mr. Goodheart?"

Blanche: "Oh, he got so he'd rather sit at home and hold my hand than take me to the theatre."

"Your father doesn't know anything about artillery, does he?" he asked, *apropos* of nothing in particular.

"Not exactly," she replied, looking at the clock, "but on occasions I've known his boot to make a first-class substitute for a quick-firing gun."

However, he didn't wait to test it.

Miss Ethel: "Mr. Bloomer called upon you night before last."

Miss Clara: "Yes; he is delightful. But he stayed so late."

Miss Ethel (with a slight cough): "Yes, he told me that it was twelve o'clock before he could get away."

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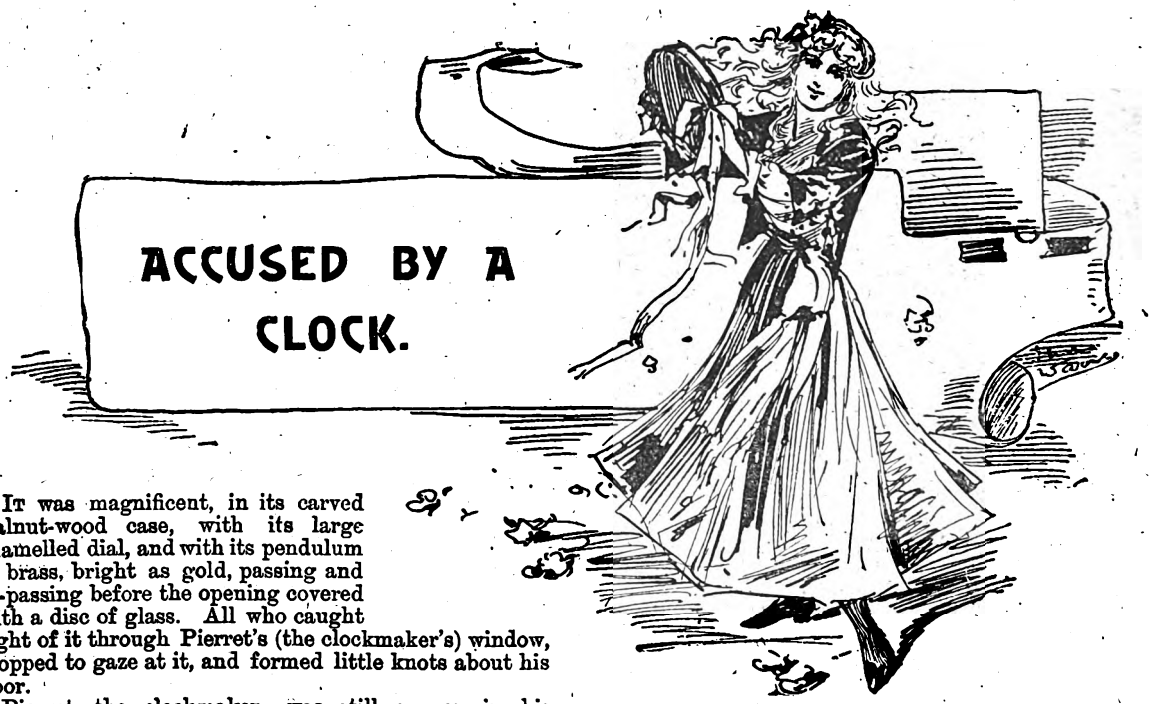
ACCUSED BY A CLOCK.



It was magnificent, in its carved walnut-wood case, with its large enamelled dial, and with its pendulum of brass, bright as gold, passing and re-passing before the opening covered with a disc of glass. All who caught sight of it through Pierret's (the clockmaker's) window, stopped to gaze at it, and formed little knots about his door.

Pierret, the clockmaker, was still a man in his thirties; but nevertheless, he was inclined to sadness, and not at all talkative.

He had known a great sorrow.

Seven years before, while he was serving in the army, his father had been murdered—in this very shop now occupied by him.

Who was the assassin?

On whom could he avenge the old man, who had never done harm to anybody, and who had been so kind to him.

Justice had failed to lay hand upon the murderer and robber, who had carried off four thousand pounds, saved sou by sou by the father for his son.

All researches had been fruitless. Pierret had finished his time of service in the army, and, as soon as he was free, had returned and established himself in the murdered man's shop, determined, doubtless, to drive away care by labour.

But it was clear that sorrow was gnawing at his heart.

At nightfall he was seen wandering about the village as if in search of somebody, that somebody being, surely, the criminal.

Time passed—weeks, months, years. The murder was forgotten by all save the orphan and the—other, who could not but remember it.

Quite recently Pierret had gone to Paris and remained there several days making purchases, bringing back with him the magnificent clock, which set everybody who saw it longing to possess it.

"Come in, gentlemen," said Pierret to the admiring groups who pressed closely about his shop window.

"What is the price of it?"

"One hundred crowns."

"Does it strike?"

"Certainly. Listen!"

The clockmaker caused the bell to sound—clear, sonorous, silvery.

"But nobody will buy it," said Pierret. "I am afraid I have done a foolish thing in bringing it from Paris."

"Oh, that depends, Pierret! We are not rich enough, but there is somebody here——"

"Really! whom?"

"Eh? Locard, good-looking Locard! who is going to marry, and who doesn't mind what he spends."

"If you would not mind putting in a word for me——"

"With pleasure; and—who knows?—by touching him on the side of his vanity——"

"You would be doing me a great service."

Jacques Locard was not very much liked, and that for several reasons. In the first place he had made his fortune too suddenly. It had come to him from the clouds, by the intermediary of a notary—oh! not of this village, but of a long way off, over the mountains—an inheritance which had at once put him at his ease, and, he had increased this by dabbling in business.

For all that, he was close-fisted, spoke in a loud voice swaggered in the street, drank heavily, and had a following. When anybody wanted to unloosen his purse strings for a bowl of punch or a bottle of champagne, they knew on which side to deal with him. A man like him!—the king of the country! He wagged his head, and allowed himself to be taken in.

The thing, however, was not so easy as it had at first seemed to be. When the name of Pierret was pronounced before Locard, it evidently produced an unpleasant effect on that person's nerves. He disliked Pierret, that was clear. Well, everybody is free to like or dislike, according to his impressions, is he not Pierret, a pettifogger, an idler! No, no! he was not that; but even if he were, what had that to do with the greatest wonder that had ever been seen in the place? Besides, it cost nothing to look at it.

While talking, Locard had drunk a good deal. He began to get warm, saying "Yes," saying "No," and

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finally consenting to stroll as far as the clockmaker's shop, then withdrawing his consent.

"Why, anyone would say you are afraid to go to Pierret's——"

"Afraid? I? What do I care for Pierret? Come on."

The little watchmaker was at his bench, his magnifying glass in his right eye, bending over the works of a watch. Certainly he was not looking at anything that was going on outside his shop, yet he saw, very plainly observed, the approaching group, and something very much like a smile might have been seen to play about his lips as he did so. He hoped for a customer, and to a poor tradesman that must always be a pleasant feeling, must it not? Oh, doubtless. But of all possible customers Pierret hoped for one; and that one was now at the door.

Locard entered.

"Is that it?" he said contemptuously.

Pierret rose politely. Locard turned his back upon him—from hauteur evidently. In short he immediately agreed to give the twelve pounds, and threw down a five pound note on account, on condition that the clock should be that same evening installed in his dining-room at his house.

Who did not know Locard's house? In less than an hour the clock should be there.

"This evening, friends," cried Locard (of course he did not include Pierret), "we'll drink to my new piece of furniture!"

"At what hour?"

"Nine o'clock."

As soon as Pierret found himself quite alone, he burnt the bank-note in the flame of a candle. Then he went into the room behind the shop, and took up a small box, on which there were English labels pasted. Returning, he opened the case of the clock—no doubt to regulate the movement.

Within the promised time it was placed—prominently placed—amid the rich furniture of Locard's dining-room.

Round the table—from which, point upwards, a goodly array of bottles stand—Locard and his old friends drink, laugh, and sing. Eleven o'clock—the silver bell records the hour. What a voice—a song rather! One could listen to it through the whole night. Midnight—the voice puts forth all its delightful power.

Attention! One! two! Light the punch! The flame flits, obl n-like, over the surface of the bowl lapping it with upthrown tongues of yellow and blue. The sugar frizzles. Now put out the lamp. Huzzah! Hush! the clock is going to strike.

No, it speaks.

"Jacques Locard! Jacques Locard!"

"Eh? Who spoke? Who said that?"

"Jacques Locard! Confess! confess!"

"Locard! Locard! What jest is this? How very pale you are!"

The voice sounds as if it came from the cellar.

"Jacques Locard, you are a murderer!"

"It is false! Who has dared to say that?"

"Jacques Locard, it is you who killed old Pierret! Assassin!"

There were cries, groans. Locard had risen to his feet—lost, mad! He clutches at his cravat to tear it from his strangled throat. The voice still pitilessly continues—veiled, distant, as if coming from a tomb. It repeats, repeats, repeats the word "assassin!"

Locard falls upon his knees, rises, falls again.

"I confess! I confess!" he cries. "Yes, it was I who killed the old man and robbed him; but let that horrible voice cease."

It did not stop, but went on repeating its dreadful denunciations with the persistency of a machine in motion.

"It is the clock that speaks!" screamed Locard, seizing it, shaking it, dragging it from its place, casting it upon the floor. The works were scattered, and in their midst was seen a small cylinder covered with metallic paper.

Pierret, who had heard all, sprang into the room through the open window, and seized Locard by the throat.

"You are all witnesses that this man is the murderer of my father!" he cried.

* * * * *

Murder will out; but men who take the lives of their fellow men for gain always think their cunning more than a match for proverbial wisdom. So thought Locard and had not seven years' impunity justified his estimate of his own cleverness? No; it had only put him off the guard which the murderer must never for a moment cease to keep. The police had utterly failed to track him down—had not even associated him in any way with the crime! yet there had been a detective at his heels, as he now saw with horror.

A few years in the army do one of two things—sharpen or deaden the wits of a soldier; they sharpened Pierret's. The failure of the police left in his mind a deep and bitter sense of disappointment. His father had been cruelly murdered and robbed, almost in the light of day—a kindly but undemonstrative man respected by all his old townsmen; who was never known to have made an enemy; who had many friends, Locard among the number. Who but one of his friends could have known that he had, by the merest accident of circumstances, the whole savings of his life in his possession that day, in view of an advantageous investment to be completed on the morrow that never came for him? No stranger could have known of this.

No stranger? That idea haunted Pierret's mind day and night and goaded him to action. Step by step he pushed on inquiry. Bit by bit he came upon the history of all his father's old friends and associates; and at length suspicion pointed to the sudden and vaguely explained uprising of Locard, nearly simultaneous with the old clockmaker's assassination. There was the murderer's false reckoning of chances; too eager for the enjoyment of his murder-stamped gold, he surprised his acquaintances by his ostentatious display of means; but Pierret he provoked to make inquiry as to their origin.

Still the proof, the legal proof, eluded the young man's search, though he had come close enough to it to satisfy the instinct of his heart; while the persistency which Locard, who had been an almost daily visitor at his father's house, avoided him was in itself a confession. It was at this stage of his search for justice that the idea of laying a trap for the criminal came into his mind.

* * * * *

"Gentlemen of the jury," said the prosecuting barrister, "you see here of what social utility is the progress of science. Was it not a trait of genius on the part of a poor clockmaker to have utilised, by adapting it to the mechanism of an ordinary clock, that immortal invention of Edison's, the phonograph?"

G. G.

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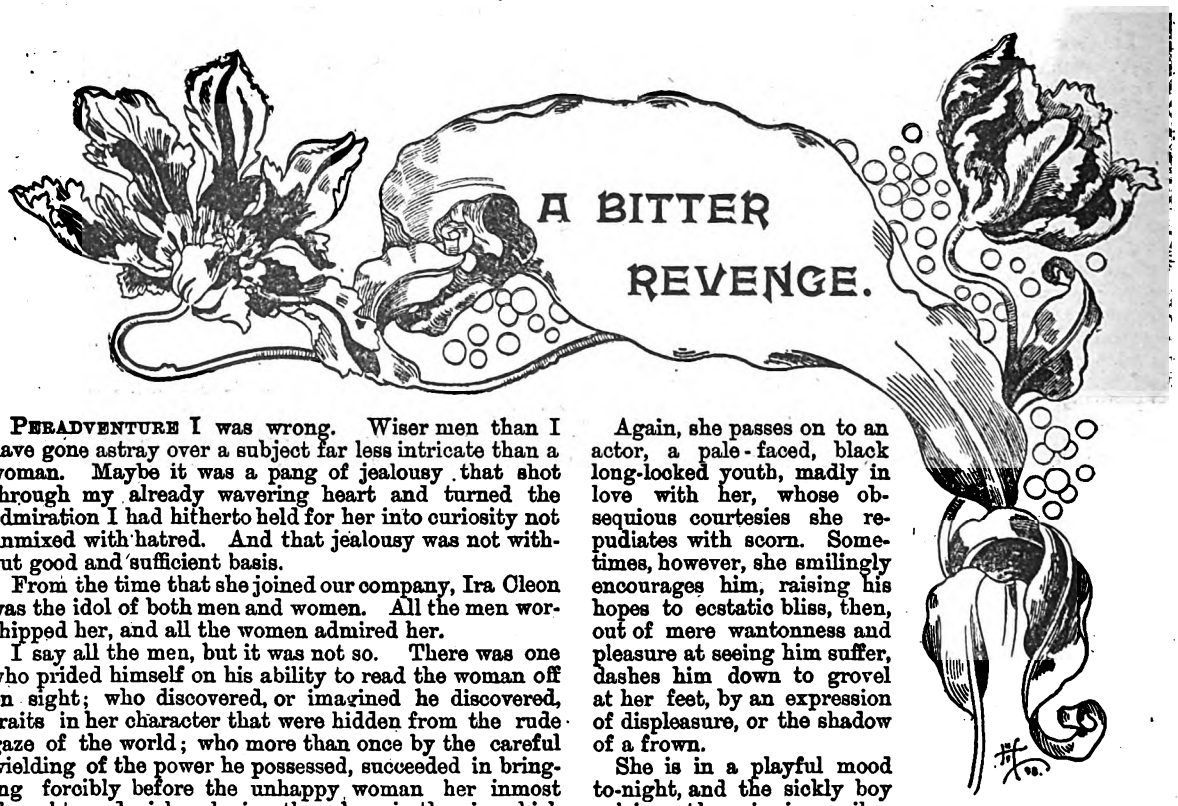

PERADVENTURE I was wrong. Wiser men than I have gone astray over a subject far less intricate than a woman. Maybe it was a pang of jealousy that shot through my already wavering heart and turned the admiration I had hitherto held for her into curiosity not unmixed with hatred. And that jealousy was not without good and sufficient basis.

From the time that she joined our company, Ira Cleon was the idol of both men and women. All the men worshipped her, and all the women admired her.

I say all the men, but it was not so. There was one who prided himself on his ability to read the woman off on sight; who discovered, or imagined he discovered, traits in her character that were hidden from the rude gaze of the world; who more than once by the careful wielding of the power he possessed, succeeded in bringing forcibly before the unhappy woman her inmost thoughts and wishes, laying them bare in the air which surrounded her. I was that person.

Ira Cleon appeared amongst us when *The Feud* was about to be produced for the first time at Norman's Theatre. She came as leading lady. Our manager had picked her up in America, but she was not an American. She spoke several languages, but no one knew her history.

She was very beautiful, and I cannot do justice to a description of her. Yet with my blunt pen and dull wit I will make the attempt.

Her eyes were large, blue, and overhung with long silky lashes; her soft cheeks were tinged with the rosiest red; the full, rich lips, the pearly teeth, the short, curly hair, the white dimpled arms, the form of suppleness and grace—combine the whole with a strange union of masculine force and womanly sweetness, and you may be able to catch a glimpse of our lady through the misty and all too clumsy veil of prosaicness that I in my capacity have drawn round her beauty.

Thus, in such a form she is as near perfection as mortal woman could hope to be.

But, listen to her conversation, watch her stride, note the vile cigarette between those dainty lips, and hear in amazement the coarse jests that emanate from the small clouds of smoke that rise about her curly head.

Then you will, perhaps, get an insight into the character of this fair lady.

She rises from the box on which she has been sitting—carelessly, legs crossed—and strides over to the manager anxiously scanning a roll of manuscript. She claps him on the back with a loud "Ha! Ha!" that makes him start. It amuses her, but the oath that is on his lips is dispelled in a moment, for he knows full well she can give him back all that he is worth.

Again, she passes on to an actor, a pale-faced, black long-locked youth, madly in love with her, whose obsequious courtesies she repudiates with scorn. Sometimes, however, she smilingly encourages him, raising his hopes to ecstatic bliss, then, out of mere wantonness and pleasure at seeing him suffer, dashes him down to grovel at her feet, by an expression of displeasure, or the shadow of a frown.

She is in a playful mood to-night, and the sickly boy rejoices at her winning smiles, hoping against hope they are meant for him, and him alone.

"Ah, poor Turmole! she cried, nonchalantly, flinging aside the stump of her cigarette, and preparing a fresh weed. "You seem in good spirits to-night. Not quite so confoundedly groggy." And she laughs gaily as the gas jet, at which she obtains a light, radiates on the cruel, lovely face.

"'Tis but natural," comes the reply, with a dramatic flourish of the thin, white hand, "that I should feel the glamour of your presence, even as the world looks bright and cheerful beneath the warm and fruitful rays of King Sol."

"Then it's comforting to know I have a different effect upon you to what the moon has," she replies, with a slight dash of sarcasm, moving towards her next victim.

"Oh, pray, you misunderstand me," gasped the love-sick one, stretching out his hand supplicatingly after her in vain. He sinks back dejected, miserable, realising in its intensity the bitter fact that this woman he adores despises him.

And so she passes from one to another, treating them in much the same way, knowing all the time what pain and anguish she is causing the love-sick fools, and revelling in her heartlessness.

All the women admired her, too, even showing their appreciation of her talent by going so far as to beg a photograph of her in the costume of Prince Arthur.

She loved her profession; her whole heart was on the boards. She may have been good at the bottom; sometimes I almost fancy she was, and that I was too harsh in criticising her little excesses. More than once she told me I had no right to do so as a fellow actor.

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"Let society be my judge," were her words; and society went mad over her, though beyond its kindly criticisms she cared nothing for society.

She always assumed male *rôles*, and few were able to bring out so fully and powerfully the features that characterise the stage hero.

There came a time, some months after she appeared amongst us, when the piece, which had met with a most successful run, was to be supplanted by another of an equally thrilling nature, the cast of which meant the addition of another member to the company.

This person took the form of a man named Ralph Masser, a tall, splendidly-built fellow, with a forcible and determined cast of countenance.

I shall never forget the night of the first rehearsal. How we all watched every movement of that lithe and muscular body, listened to the sound of that rich, deep voice, and applauded with genuine admiration as he stepped to the back of the stage at the conclusion.

I was near Ira as he finished, and she just clasped her hands in rapture, while a soft bravo! escaped her lips. Somehow or other I could not keep my eyes off her face, and I noticed that as she caught sight of him when he turned towards us, a deathly pallor overspread the features, while a gasp of amazement and terror issued from the white lips. No one else saw the little incident. It was soon over. But I am an observant man, and my suspicions were aroused. She must have known him before.

On one occasion I told her so. But she strenuously denied it. Then I became so positive that she admitted the truth of my assertion.

It so happened that Ira and the newcomer shared the honours of the celebrated duel scene in the new play. And she never acted so well as when with him, treating him with marked familiarity.

I watched them narrowly. No one else did; no one else had any reason for doing so. I had. True, every male actor in our company was madly jealous, but, after a time, resigned himself to fate, and gave up all hope of ever winning the love so palpably offered to another.

If tender actions may be taken as a sign of tender feelings in these matters, little doubt could be entertained as to whether or not the two loved.

He was ever by her side, whispering soft words to her willing ears, driving her to and from the theatre, championing her cause during her absence. She, too, laughed less often when he was near, never gave way to coarse jokes, accepted the little favours from him that she refused from others, and flushed slightly at his approach. These signs all came under my notice, and I had many opportunities of observing them.

Still, there seemed to me to be an occult something existing between them which it was impossible to unravel. They had reached a point in their love beyond which it appeared impossible to extend.

Once, at a morning rehearsal, I chanced to stumble unobserved into the green-room. There they sat, together, on a loung , her head resting on his shoulder. She was speaking, and as I turned to go, the words—

"My love, my only love!" fell upon my startled ears.

Then, as the days went by, her smile came less often, and the eyes became encircled with dark rings, her step was less sprightly than of old, while sometimes she became dazed and bewildered, losing all control of her movements and the thread of her discourse. The manager saw and noted all these developments for the worse in her disposition, and said that she studied too hard. No one could in common fairness gainsay that. She had worked hard ever since we had known her, and certainly a change would do her good. Rather than lose permanently so valuable a member of his company, he decided to finish up the run and send her off to America for a time with Masser. To this both agreed.

On the last night I was standing in the wings, awaiting my cue, when I heard them approaching. She was staggering slightly, with pale face and quivering body. He was supporting her. Some strange incident had taken place between them, of that I felt certain. When they got quite close to me she was better, though very white.

Ira went on first, and I had never seen her look more beautiful. The house fairly shook with rolls of applause, which burst out afresh as he entered from the opposite side.

With a small peaked cap set jauntily on the mass of golden curls, a light blue cloak hanging caressingly over her shoulders, and her shapely limbs encased in a pair of white breeches and top boots, our leading lady represented to perfection a champion of the age of chivalry.

By her side hung a small sword—a mere plaything—bright, glistening, and harmless. This she drew at the conclusion of a blusteringly delivered speech, and swung round her head, crying to the ruffian who stood before her:

"Defend yourself!"

With a well-practised, swift movement, his rapier leapt from its sheath, and steel clashed to steel.

How the people applauded! They were splendidly matched, these two, his six feet scarcely lifting him above her plume-covere l cap.

At last, as in all such battles, the hero, by a dexterous movement sent his opponent's sword springing across the greensward.

"Enough," she cried, holding her weapon aloft, then flinging it away with a gesture of contempt.

She approached him, and, as a hundred times before she had done, would have clasped his hand. But at that point she hesitated. A thrill seemed to pass over the delicate frame. The whole theatre was hushed in silence. A white hand was ungloved and thrust beneath the light-blue cloak. Another second, and Masser lay unconscious on the stage, while a thin blue ring of smoke curled unnoticed up and up till it vanished in air.

* * * * *

Masser was not mortally wounded; he recovered from the effects of his wound, and left the country before Ira came back to health and strength.

It was all explained a few months afterwards.

She was a Corsican, and had sworn to avenge her brother's death. Such was the issue of the battle between love and duty.

Masser had known her motive all the time; had known that she would attempt his life, sooner or later. And the strangest part of the whole thing was his connivance at it.

FRANK SYDENHAM.

A NUMBER of children were making a good deal of noise, and their mother, after rebuking them several times, at last said: "If I have to speak to you again I shall punish some of you."

At this the younger child rolled off the sofa, and, after gravely reflecting awhile, remarked: "Then, mamma, I'd advise you not to speak."

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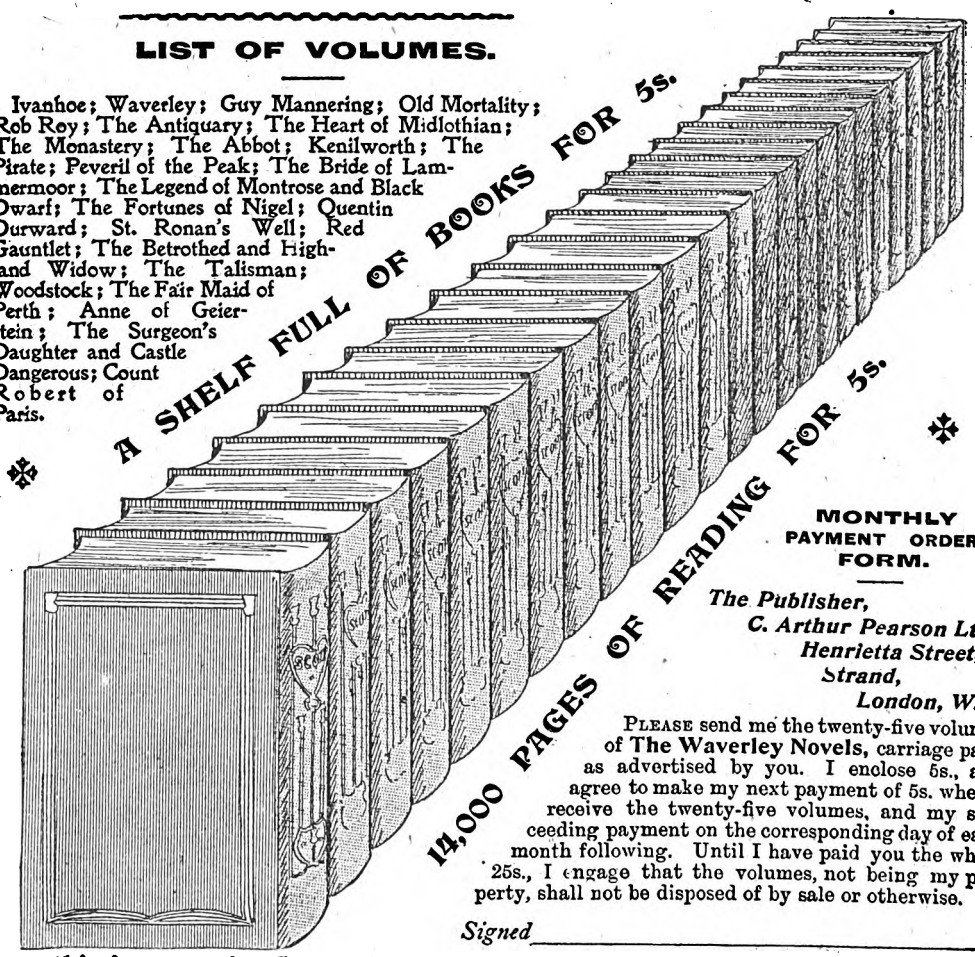

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXVII.

England and the United States.

When Parliament met on the evening after the battle of Cardiff, it wore an aspect of serener dignity than its wont.

This was the only external sign of the elation born of the new turn in events.

The period of excitement had long passed away, and the popular Chamber no more had its moods. Representing truly the genius of the English people, the splendid calm of the House of Commons amid all the varying fortunes of the war, its phlegmatic pride, its stern attitude of quiet resolution, formed a striking example of the indomitable character of the Saxon people.

As day after day passed, each with its new and startling development, its record of heroism, its swift dramatic action, the House sat outwardly unmoved, betraying no emotion, grimly imperturbable.

To many who waited breathless in the galleries and witnessed the solemn scenes in which the great assembly received the daily reports of the Under-Secretary for War and, with scarce a word of discussion, rapidly passed measures of supreme importance and far-reaching consequences, it seemed as if history had unrolled itself, and a return to a period of national danger had produced anew an heroic type.

For the members of the House of Commons, faced by dangers so grave, made one by the overshadowing menace of ruin, had revived in themselves those stern Puritan virtues which have left so deep an impression on the character of England.

A meeting of the House was curiously like a meeting of that Long Parliament which sat through the Civil War.

There was the same inexorable purpose, the same equanimity, the same high moral temperament, the same majestic gravity—scarcely a ripple of emotion, scarcely a word of debate, scarcely a hint of disagreement—the House was in the truest sense a single and united body.

Even to the casual eye this fact became obvious. In the appearance of the Commons there was something novel that would have staggered a Rip Van Winkle of a month.

The Conservative party greatly outnumbered the Liberal, and the accommodation to the right of the Speaker was consequently very inadequate. Etiquette gave comfort to the Liberals and discomfort to the Conservatives. By tactic consent the term Unionist was dropped, as being no longer distinctive.

But a week or so before the great battle of Cardiff, Sir E. Ashmead Bartlett, coming into the Chamber whilst the First Lord of the Treasury was making an important statement, and seeing that there was not an unoccupied place upon his own side of the House, calmly walked across the floor to the thinner ranks of the Liberal party, and in a nonchalant manner took his seat upon the right of Mr. Haldane.

The incident—despite even the gravity of the moment—produced a little laughter and some applause. But the ultimate effect produced was extraordinary. It was felt that Sir Ellis's act had in it a touch of genius. Of what use etiquette of party when no party existed, or discomfort to the right when there was ease to the left?

Took his seat upon the right of Mr. Haldane.

And from that day, indifferent to points of custom, the members of the House proceeded to take their seats exactly where they found them. Liberal and Tory, Whig and Radical, Ulsterman and Nationalist were to be seen side by side as chance would have it, and for the first time in centuries the House of Commons presented externally no aspect of division or party.

Mr. John Burns was seen to slap General Goldsworthy on the back, whilst next to him Mr. T. P. O'Connor chatted amicably with Mr. Austen Chamberlain. A friendship which evoked much comment was that which suddenly sprang up between Tim Healy and the Serjeant-at-Arms.

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"The whole Saxon race is against the rest of the world."

When Parliament met on the day succeeding the battle of Cardiff, there was no change in its attitude of dignified decorum. There was only a more crowded meeting and a subdued air of expectancy and unrest.

Amid deep silence, Mr. Balfour read to the house a communication received from the President of the United States, announcing the American declaration of war against the allies.

"This step," declared the message, "is taken with a full sense of the responsibility it involves. The American people have maintained their attitude of neutrality so long as hostilities appeared to be those of nation with nation. The intervention of Russia, however, transforms the war into a European conspiracy, in which the peace and prosperity of the whole world are involved. America regards it as a threat to the principles of liberty, and in so holy a cause she cannot hesitate. She will put forth her whole strength of wealth and courage, to assist England, and her armies, for the first time in history, are prepared to take the field—if not by choice in France, where old ties make such a step distasteful—at least in Germany, Russia, or any other country where joint deliberation may determine. The American people extend the hand of kinship and affection to the British nation, and are proud that the traditions of the great Saxon race are now to be defended and maintained by the peoples on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean."

It was in slow and impressive tones that Mr. Balfour read this telegram, and, as he concluded, he looked round upon the House and paused.

And then, in an instant, nobody knew how prompted or suggested, the whole House rose to its feet and uncovered. It was an act of welcome and gratitude to a new ally: an act more impressive than the most clamourous and turbulent demonstration.

Mr. Balfour then proceeded with his speech. He uttered an eloquent tribute to the generosity of the American people, and, in the name of Great Britain and Ireland, offered the thanks of the United Kingdom.

"There is no need, sir," he went on, turning to the Speaker, "to use extravagance of language, even at a supreme moment such as this, when our feelings are likely to over-balance our judgment. Let us look at this offer calmly and see what it means.

"Am I belittling it when I claim that it has not come at a moment of desperate need? The English armies are sore pressed, but they are unbeaten; they have swept their way into hostile countries and have not yielded a jot in the great scheme of invasion. Our fleets on all sides have vindicated the invincibility of England upon the seas. And it is my profound belief that, under the guidance and protection of Heaven, the British people would have forced their way to ultimate victory, alone and unaided though it be, against the three most powerful nations of Europe.

"Am I wrong in thus emphasising the proud belief in the destinies of Great Britain with which the humblest of her sons is animated—a belief in the eternal security of a nation which has, so far as human weakness permitted, based its acts upon the most sacred principles the world has known, the principles of liberty and of righteousness?"

There was applause at these words. Mr. Balfour continued:

"But the victory, let us confess, would be long delayed, lying, perhaps, far off in a dim and melancholy day, the passage to which would be filled with the groans of suffering, the lamentations of bereavement, the piteous cries of the fatherless and the widow; and stained, too, with misery, ruin, destruction, nay, even with famine and despair. This frightful passage we had entered upon without hesitation or misgiving, but let us be thankful that it is rendered shorter, lighter, easier to traverse, by the help and manly courage of another great people, the people who are of our own blood and lineage, who share our history, whose language is our own.

"Yes, sir, it is an alliance of which there should have been, could have been, no doubt whatever. It was ordered in Heaven. Nature herself called aloud for it; and if there interposed the mere chicanery of man, the interests of individuals, the narrow, selfish policy of ambition or of party, how futile and how powerless they have proved against the mighty and irresistible instinct of race, of family, of mutual blood! For America herself has risen in her strength and shaken off at a shrug the feeble manacles by which they sought to bind her; and over the ocean peals the great voice of our brethren, bearing a message of sympathy and help.

"Sir, is it unnatural? And am I right when I say that there could be no other issue of the desperate alliances amongst our foes?

"No; this is no mere struggle between one nation and another. As the American President has rightly said, there are deeper causes at work, there are principles fighting with each other, and in this stupendous contest seeking each the extermination of the other.

"This war means that the forces that have worked for selfishness, for aggrandisement, for slavery, for personal greed, are pitted against the forces that work for liberty, for progress, for peace. It is an old world fighting with a new; it is feudalism taking its last stand against democracy.

"Is the world to be the battleground of ambitious nations and cruel tyrannies; or is it to become a universal garden, smiling with peace, and ruled by temperate and beneficent wisdom?

Miss Lottie Collins .... appearing in the uniform of the Guards.

"That is the tremendous problem which this war is to solve. And solved it must be. It is a war of extermination; it is, in truth, the Final War.

"And, if this be so, how else can we regard it, save that if Europe attacks freedom and democracy, she attacks the peoples who support and maintain these principles, in a word, Britain and America, the entire Saxon race? The quarrel that Europe has with England she also has with the United States. America is our heir. If we passed away as an Empire in the death-throes of the fight, the splendid heritage that we have secured would descend in sacred trust to the United States, and it would henceforth be her mission to cherish, to guard, to protect it. That is why, surely, we had a right to expect the support of our brethren. The battle is once more between the West and the East; the whole Saxon race is against the rest of the world.

"It is our duty, then, the duty of the Briton, whether on this side or on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, to rally to the common cry, to overthrow the forces of evil

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arrayed against us, to demonstrate by might—as we are alas! compelled—our controlling power upon earth, and then with wisdom and benevolence to mete out the conditions of a new era, the golden era of peace, freedom and prosperity.

"One word more, sir. Let us not be too jubilant. The way is long yet, and dark and heavy with catastrophe. We are few against many. We strive with odds that threaten by sheer bulk to overawe and overwhelm us. America is rich in war and in resources, but her army is not yet formed.

"She has once more to create a splendid militia, such as that which, in the last war, won the admiration of the world. Let us, then, remember that a bitter struggle is still before us, that many a long day of sacrifice remains, and that there is need now as ever of the strong, patient heart of Great Britain to continue in endurance and in magnanimity."

Loud cheers greeted the conclusion of Mr. Balfour's great speech.

A few words of similar import were uttered by Sir William Harcourt and Mr. Dillon, and then a solemn and stately message of thanks to the people of America was framed and adopted.

If gravity and decorum prevailed in the House there was at least excitement without. Not the turbulent excitement that a sudden sensation causes, but a strong and passionate impulse of national pride.

This great people had been prepared to fight on and on single-handed, not in braggadocio or idle vaunting, but with the calm resolution of their self-contained nature. The sudden news that a kindred people had come forward to take their share of the struggle had filled the English nation with emotion, a grave, sober emotion, such as one man in deadly peril feels when another comes swift and silent to his aid.

Joy reigned on every face. For instinct was truer than argument, and every Englishman realised how absurd were the artificial barriers that sought to separate the two members of a great race.

England and America were not cousins, they were brothers. It was impossible that England should stand idly by and see America worsted. It was impossible that America should see England at bay before the world and be mute.

It was no alliance this. It was the reunion of one great family.

No less did the Americans in London feel the thrill of this new emotion. There were a thousand touching scenes in which the bond of union was manifested, as though it were the meeting of brothers after a long separation.

Fashionable London was present that night at Covent Garden Opera House. There had been no break in the continuity of pleasure. The imperturbable Englishman ordered his life as before, and although sorrow had closed many houses and there was ever present the sense of national calamity, still there was no such concession to the foe as would be implied in universal mourning.

The music-halls throve apace, and poets were busy on all hands in writing patriotic ballads which were set to music by inflamed composers. At the Tivoli Miss Marie Lloyd defied the allies every night at ten, and at the Palace Miss Lottie Collins created a sensation by appearing in the uniform of the Guards and singing a passionate song which told the world that:

When in their envy nations rise
And to each other call,
And coward-like in swift surprise
Upon Old England fall!
Roused in his wrath the Lion flies
And sweeps away them all.

Everywhere, on variety stage, in melodrama, from street band and hurdy-gurdy, pealed forth the strains of martial music, and life was made mournful to every earnest member of the Peace Society. Even Dan Leno linked his patter to patriotism, and no acrobat could leap from pole to pole without displaying upon his back the emphatic colours of the British ensign.

"Here, miss, a corpse reviver, please!"

On Friday night the management had announced *Parsifal* at Covent Garden. It was the first performance in England, for the copyright question had been settled and English prejudice no longer protested against a sacred work upon the decorous stage of the national Opera house. A huge and fashionable gathering had assembled, crowding every part, and the stage was filled with operatic stars of first magnitude.

It is to be feared that Wagner was little attended to that night. A constant buzz booming through the house plainly showed that the music of the future had less attractions than the politics of the present.

About ten o'clock it was observed that the curtains of the royal box were fluttering, and then, to the enthusiasm of all, the Prince and Princess of Wales appeared in the full view of the house.

The whole audience rose to their feet and cheered and cheered again, and the Prince, with smiles, bowed repeatedly, the Princess meantime standing at his side, her arm linked in his.

It was noticed, too, that the Prince's eyes were wandering over the boxes on the other side of the house as if in search of something, and then, as if satisfied, he withdrew abruptly and disappeared from view.

It was but for a few moments, however. What could express the delight and enthusiasm of the house when he was seen again in another box, bringing forward to the sight of all present no less a person than the American Ambassador.

There are some supreme moments when in mere vociferation the whole moral feeling of a people exhaust themselves. This was one. The two who stood there, the Prince and the simple American citizen, the heir to the proudest of thrones and the commoner of the greatest of democracies, were true symbols of the great event that had happened, the reunion of the old and the new England.

"Mr. Smith," said the Prince with a warmth that knew nothing of courtly ceremony, "your name is a fit one indeed for a representative of your country. We recognise her chivalry, and I thank you in the name of Britons throughout the world."

"Sir," answered the ambassador simply, "we are all Britons. America, I assure you, is prouder to-day when she shares your peril than when in the beginning she claimed her independence."

There was an opportunity for but few words, for the excitement in the House was not to be allayed. It was impossible to follow the tortuous passage of Wagnerian phrases through the entanglements of bewildering orchestration. Already the audience began to rise and move about, to gather its wraps, and to discuss with animation the dramatic scene they had witnessed.

The manager, with true tact, saw that the performance could not continue, and he ordered the curtain to fall. But a minute later it rose again. The entire company advanced to the front of the stage and sang, with a vigour and fulness which opera seldom knew, the National Anthem.

When the last strains died away there was a moment's pause, and then Madame Melba advancing started the

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American Anthem "Hail Columbia." The audience joined lustily in it, and the whole theatre rang with the simple refrain.

The audience flowed out to the buffets and there was an end to orderly speech. Everyone spoke to everyone else, and over a whisky and soda a reign of brotherhood began.

"I can't do much," said one of the crowd to his own circle of excited listners. "But blow me if I don't go in for American drinks. Here, miss, a corpse reviver, please!"

Never were the American bars so popular as through the next week or so. It was a tribute that the least might pay to a new ally!

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The News the Spy Sent.

The people of England were now beginning to calm down to a grave appreciation of the dangers and difficulties of the war.

In the first wild days of public excitement, with their anger, their eagerness, their mad jubilation at the success of British arms, affairs had rushed forward in such a fierce and turbulent stream that a quiet survey of the situation was impossible and not to be expected.

But on the morning after the defeat of the Russian fleet by the United States force, the Times gave philosophical utterance to the national sentiment in its chief leading article.

"By the spontaneous action of our brothers across the Atlantic," said the great newspaper, "England and America now practically face the world in arms. The English-speaking race is called upon to fulfil its mission; to its hands are fully committed the future destinies of mankind. The duty to which we are devoted is noble yet awe-inspiring. We are no longer fighting a national quarrel, having become the trustees of human progress and civilisation.

"In this momentous struggle we represent the misgoverned and misled peoples of the Continent as completely as our own communities. When the stress and fury of combat shall have passed away our first consideration must be the claims of justice and tolerance and Christian charity. Let us pray for light and strength to guide and sustain us in our task."

These magnanimous words were directed by a kindly Providence.

By mysterious channels they found their way into France and Germany and far-off Russia. They planted fruitful seed in the hearts of the true patriots in those countries, and in due course they blossomed into a vigorous growth which largely dominated the arrangements for satisfactory and restful peace.

Puck exactly hit off the situation by its cartoon.

The Daily Chronicle, too, found cause in the situation to become contemplative. "Lest there be any misapprehension in the minds of sections of the English people regarding the attitude of the Liberal and Radical party," wrote the well-known organ of the Opposition, "it is our duty to finally and completely disavow all sympathy with what was once known as the Little England party.

"When our fleets are grappling with the navies of three powerful nations in all parts of the world, when our soldiers, in hundreds of thousands, are camped on the shores of Germany and France, when Australia is shaking off the wolves who would devour her, when our Indian army is tightening its accoutrements preparatory to invading Asiatic Russia, when the United States are impelled to cast in their lot with ours in the throes of this new epoch, it is no time to talk about Little England.

"The words in the past represented a policy, an honest endeavour to preserve the balance of power, a fair division of the yet unoccupied places of the earth's crust. To-day the mere jingle of the phrase is hurtful and ridiculous. We solemnly inter it. May it rest in peace."

Even Mr. Labouchere accepted the inevitable. "I can plainly see," growled Scrutator, "that the columns of Truth will be actively employed when this wretched business is finished in denouncing the grabbing and Maximising that will go on in Africa and Asia for a considerable time. Meanwhile it is not Grab but Holdfast that is a good dog, and I will bark with the loudest in this quarrel."

The Stock Exchange being closed, its members, such as were not actively engaged with the army, naturally had their little joke. They telegraphed to the chairman of the Wall Street Institution: "We welcome your fleet. Where are the excursion steamers?"

But the Americans got even with them. Soon the reply came: "Excursion steamers all engaged in protecting Cardiff."

The new policy of diplomatic openness, inaugurated by Mr. Chamberlain during the Transvaal crisis some years earlier, was now emulated by the United States Government with excellent effect.

Daily, almost hourly, messages were received at the American Embassy from State Departments at Washington, detailing the preparations for taking an active part in hostilities now being made all over the country; and these cheering items of news were immediately sent to the British Press.

Thus, one read: "Two army corps, of 100,000 men each, will be shipped from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, in detachments of 20,000. They will each carry full complements of arms, horses, ammunition, and clothing, with large supplies of field stores, and may be expected to arrive

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The coster was not a bad sort of fellow.

in England, or elsewhere as directed, between June 5th and 12th."

And again: "The first contributions of America's aid will consist of well-drilled troops, but a subsidiary army of 400,000 men is now being energetically mobilised. Volunteers are pouring into all the centres of enlistment."

Canada, too, had fulfilled her promises. Fifty thousand men were already at sea, shipped in every possible variety of steam vessel, and an equal number were preparing to embark when transports could be provided.

Puck, the famous New York weekly humourous journal, exactly hit off the situation, both political and social, by its cartoon, of which a small reproduction is here given.

England, by this time, had become one vast camp.

It was calculated by statisticians that the war expenditure by Great Britain alone exceeded two and a half millions sterling daily, while France and Germany were each piling up costs at the rate of a million sterling per diem.

Relatively the outlay of England was greater because she was maintaining fleets and armies at a distance from the base of supplies, but in every other sense it was impossible to estimate the tremendous losses the allies were suffering as the direct outcome of the campaign.

Cut off from their colonies, most of their warships sunk or captured, all their commercial marine swept off the seas, compelled to pay high prices for such American products as reached them—these now to cease entirely—the two great Continental nations had already received incalculable injuries, and were soon to undergo the loss of all save the commonest articles of food.

Trade, of course, was much disorganised in England, and almost at a standstill abroad.

But in this country the commercial stagnation was not so severely felt owing to the fact that the coal and iron and shipbuilding industries had never been so busy. In fact, owing to repeated representations from local authorities, Lord Wolseley directed Sir Redvers Buller to cease recruiting men from the great metallurgical and colliery districts, as the demand for labour was such that the urgent requirements of the Admiralty and private shipowners could not be met if skilled artisans and miners were taken away to swell the ranks of the army.

Some difficulty was experienced at first in dealing with the great number of prisoners of war, particularly Frenchmen taken at the capture of Havre and the battle of Yvetot, but this question was happily solved by sending them off in batches into the agricultural districts, where they earned food and money by useful work.

Indeed they settled down in their new quarters with suspicious ease for the most part.

It was in London, Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham and other large towns not specially associated with the iron and coal trades that the total loss of the Continental market and the shrinkage of the export trades all round, caused a stoppage of employment which, under other circumstances, would have resulted in much misory and deprivation.

One of these birds being liberated at dawn.

But, as the direct outcome of the war, in which every Briton knew that he was fighting for his life, there sprang into existence a magnificent spirit of self-denial. Commencing individually, it gradually spread until it embraced all sections of society.

Every man was not content to have a sufficiency of food and raiment for himself and his family, but he deemed it a duty to see that his poorer neighbours were equally well provided for.

In London, for instance, the inhabitants of the West-End no longer held rigidly aloof from the people of Southwark or Poplar. It was necessary for the preservation of any that all should live, and when remunerative employment largely ceased, for the reasons already detailed, the Government started much needed public improvements, the rich spent as much money as they could afford in providing useful but otherwise unnecessary work, and public and private organisations took care that if man, woman, or child died through want of food or exposure it was absolutely the fault of individual ignorance or neglect.

During these brief weeks there was more practical Socialism to be seen in the internal economy of London and other important centres of population than had been dreamt or spoken of by philosophical reformers in as many centuries.

The general peril had caused the inhabitants of Clubland to realise that the coster was not a bad sort of fellow when you knew him, and the coster had been heard to declare that he never before believed "them bloomin' toffs had so much real good nater in 'em."

Marino . . . . accosted him.

Strange companionships these, it will be said, but a forest fire has produced stranger, and what belt of woodland ever blazed with such a flame as now lit up the Continent from Gibraltar to St. Petersburg?

It was a time of trial, of development, and of great achievement for England. The national character came through the ordeal purified and ennobled.

Public curiosity had been aroused by several paragraphs that had appeared in the press concerning Mr. Thompson, the electrical engineer, who was somewhat inconsequently dubbed "the Prince of Wales' inventor." But Mr. Thompson was adamant in his refusal to give information as to the nature or scope of his invention. All he would say was that it would be found valuable when the right time came.

The Prince, the Commander-in-Chief, and many distinguished officers had expressed their full confidence in its efficiency, and the troopers would require little previous instruction before using it with deadly effect.

Thus far were the reporters able to travel in their quest for this interesting news item, but the secret might have leaked out had not Lord Wolseley sent round a polite note to the newsagencies asking that no further comment might be made upon Mr. Thompson's work, as it might prove injurious to the national cause.

This was sufficient.

But it did not suffice for a certain quiet-looking person, who said he was an Italian, but was really a native of the South of France, who rented a top floor in Soho, and whose daily avocation was that of a waiter in a restaurant.

The man was far from servile or common-place in his appearance, but he discharged his duties efficiently enough and was never wearied in discussing the details of the war with customers.

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He was so eager to ascertain the progress of events that he took home with him each night all the newspapers he could lay hands on, and the authorities would have been interested in his movements had they known that he wrote a *précis* of all he could learn in the smallest of handwritings upon the thinnest of papers, which was then folded very neatly, inserted in a quill and attached to a carrier pigeon, one of these bird being liberated at dawn every fourth day through a skylight in the man's lodgings.

As these pigeons flew to Boulogne, and as the messages they carried were forwarded to Paris without delay, it may be assumed that Pietro Marino was not his real name and that his ordinary profession had little to do with attending the beck and call of diners in a restaurant.

Marino, as he may be called, was very anxious to find out something tangible concerning Mr. Thompson's secret.

All the employés at work on the invention were fully aware of the importance of concealing their knowledge of its properties, but the spy determined that from one of them and by no other means should he get at the facts.

So he fell ill at the restaurant and had to obtain sick leave, which he devoted to stalking various individuals among the men as they left the factory placed at Mr. Thompson's disposal by the Government.

At last Marino chanced to follow three of the men into a public house, and over a glass of beer he heard the youngest of them complain of the dearness of good wines and delicacies which his sick wife required, but which he could not possibly afford to buy.

Him Marino followed and accosted as the mechanic was crossing Waterloo Bridge.

"You are employed at Mr. Thompson's electrical works?" he said, speaking in perfect English and coming straight to the point.

"Well, is that any business of yours?" said the Englishman, whose temper was not improved by the reflection that chickens and old port were impossible luxuries for a working man to buy during war-time.

"Yes, it is," replied Marino. "I believe Mr. Thompson has stolen my device, and I will give £50 to the man who enables me to prove it."

The man to whom he spoke was no fool. George Slater—that was his name—came to the conclusion that his interlocutor wanted to tempt him to no good purpose, and, notwithstanding his fluency, Slater believed him to be a foreigner.

"Fifty pounds is a lot of money to a poor man," he said.

The spy felt that his object was as good as gained.

"I will give you that sum now," he almost whispered, "if you will give me full particulars of the—of the article Mr. Thompson pretends to have invented."

Slater scratched his head as though in doubt, but he really required time for thought. At last he said cautiously:

"Let us go to a quiet hotel to get some paper and pens. I will then hand you all the information in full detail in return for the sum you name."

When employed in Lord Armstrong's works at Newcastle, the Englishman had once seen a new breech-action tested, of which the object was to enable dynamite cartridges to be used in small-bore weapons.

The result of the test was that several people, including the patentee, were severely injured by the bursting of the gun, and the guileless and easily-bribed Slater now proceeded to make drawings of this fine piece of mechanism with great care and accuracy, together with much written description.

"There," he said, when he had finished, "that's the complete idea. We're making thousands of 'em, and they'll give the French fits when we can arm our men with them."

The spy siezed the papers and eagerly examined them. "It is as I thought," he muttered in a fury, "this rascal has taken from me the labour of years. But I will be revenged on him yet. There is your money," he continued. "You have done a good evening's work."

"Yes, so have you," replied Slater laconically as he counted the notes, and found that there was, indeed, the amount named by his companion. "Now I must be off home to the missus."

The pair left the hotel coffee-room in which they had transacted their business, and separated at the door.

Marino hurried off to Soho, but he did not escape the earnest attention of Slater, who dogged his footsteps all the way, noted his residence, and then started to see a friend at Scotland Yard.

"If I thought that chap would make that breech-action himself, I would not bother any more about him, as he wouldn't have long to live," he said to himself, "but I'm blest if I don't think he's a spy. He was too quick to throw his fifties about."

Slater interviewed his acquaintance at the police headquarters, and then drove home in a cab laden with port wine jellies, soups, and chickens, all articles still to be easily acquired by those who could pay for them.

When he told his sick wife of the trick he had played on the foreigner she laughed so heartily that she already felt better. Marino had at least benefited one household by his enterprise.

He awoke . . . . to find himself in the clutches of two policemen.

It was late that night when he retired to rest, having copied all Slater's notes on to the thin slips of paper that alone were fitted to travel by so small an express.

When the quill was packed and sealed and securely fastened to the leg of the bird selected out of nearly thirty pigeons which he kept in an inner room, he set an alarm clock to wake him at 5.30 a.m., and then went to sleep, proudly conscious of having done a great service to the French Government.

But he woke somewhat suddenly at one a.m., to find himself in the clutches of two policemen, and for the summer months he was accommodated with quarters in Holloway.

The quill was opened and Marino's message read. A Foreign office clerk was found who wrote a hand curiously resembling that of the ex-waiter, so, with a fresh introduction, the description of the dynamite rifle was forwarded to France a day later, and so long as the supply of pigeons lasted the French War Office obtained some truly remarkable and veracious accounts of the sayings and doings of perfidious Albion.

(To be continued.)

THE PICTURE POST-CARD CRAZE.

THERE are, among the readers of Short Stories, a large number who are either collectors of the picture post-cards, that at the present moment are the craze in Germany, or they wish to become so. The Editor of Pearson's Weekly is in a position to help them. A gentleman is going out to the East, in the wake of the German Emperor, and will post to subscribers one prettily-illustrated post-card from each of the following towns, Venice, Athens, Constantinople, Cairo, and Jerusalem.

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6D. BOTTLE MAKES 8 GALLONS NON-INTOXICATING BEER

The most palatable refreshing tonic drink producible.

IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 3d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

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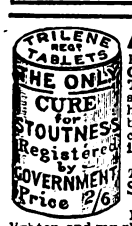
The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.



ALL FAT PEOPLE

Readily **Reduce Weight** and **Cure Corpulency Permanently** by taking **TRILENE TABLETS** (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. **Reduction begins immediately.**

An English Countess writes: "*Your Trilene Tablets act admirably.*"

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

Miss HEYWOOD, 27 Hindhill Street, Heywood, Lancs., says: "I am 21lb. lighter, and my rheumatism also seems cured."

MRS. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Station Road, Ross, Hereford, says: "Am reduced from 13-st. 8lb. to 11st."

MR. CANHAM, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned."

LADY CONSTANCE CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with the Tablets."

PRINCESS LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent Tablets directly."

COUNTESS C. FURSTENBERG, Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

MR. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone.

Send 2/6 to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**

THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

10,000

CHRISTMAS PRESENTS AMOUNTING AT ORDINARY RETAIL PRICE TO £625,

Also **£100** IN FREE MONEY PRIZES

WILL BE GIVEN AWAY

As follows:

1st Prize £50 To Competitor solving four or more of the Puzzle words below correctly, or if more than one, then equally among them.

2nd Prize £25 To Competitor solving three of the Puzzle words below correctly, or if more than one, then equally among them

3rd Prize £15 To Competitor solving two of the Puzzle words below correctly, or if more than one, then equally among them.

4th Prize £10 To Competitor solving only one of the Puzzle words below correctly, or if more than one, then equally among them.

Having purchased the entire stock of a large Christmas Card Firm, at considerably less than half the original cost of production, as well as several other important lots at ridiculously low prices for cash, we have decided this year, **for the first time**, to deal direct with the Public instead of through the shopkeepers, and are making up monster packets (sold in the ordinary way for at least 3/6), containing one dozen choice assorted Christmas Cards, for 2/- per packet, Post Free to any address in the United Kingdom (Foreign Postage, 1/- extra). With each of these packets, by way of advertisement, we shall present gratis to every purchaser a most interesting, instructive, and amusing Christmas present. This article is sold retail at 1/3, and is in great demand for winter evenings.

In addition to this, the above £100 Free Cash Prizes will be given away amongst the competitors who can make out the correct names of one or more of the six stone fruits, which the following mixed letters will spell, viz.,

RRHYEC, EEEGGGANR, CHEAP, LUMP, TAPIOCR TARNICENE.

The only conditions Competitors have to comply with to qualify them to receive one of the above Christmas presents, and to compete for the Free Cash Prizes, are as follows: Send in your solutions, and enclose Postal Order for 2/- for our Monster Packet of Christmas Cards, together with stamped addressed envelope for sending your Prize Money at the close of the Competition. The packet of Cards, and the Christmas Present, will be sent upon receipt of your order, but the Prize Money will not be forwarded until a few days after the close of the Competition, which will positively be on Thursday, December 22nd, 1898. Competitors are advised to send in their orders without delay. Address: FINE ART COMPANY, 92A Isledon Road, Holloway, London.

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

Result of Football Players' Competition will appear next week.

D. W.—One of the quickest possible ways of dispelling a nervous headache is to give some of the muscles—those of the legs for preference—something to do. Take a stiff walk, or a short bicycle ride if you can. Muscular exercise flushes the parts engaged, and so depletes the brain.

W. D.—The two biggest fire-engines in the world are in Liverpool. They are capable of throwing 1,800 gallons of water a minute, and a jet 140 feet high. You can realise the force with which the water is ejected when I tell you that the jet will kill a man at a distance of fifty feet.

M. A. T.—The "ingenious art of painting words and speaking to the eyes"—as the art of writing was called—was, according to an Egyptian legend, revealed to the god Thot and by him taught to King Thamos. The latter did not see the advantage of it; the young people had been taught orally and had to learn things by heart, and to render their studies easier by writing the wise things on papyrus or stone, so that they could "turn them up" when they liked, would have a bad effect. They didn't have a *Royal Magazine* for 3d. in those days.

S. O.—When the Soudan is properly developed, the quantity of corn that it will be possible to grow there will seriously affect the sale of American corn in this country. The soil will readily yield two heavy crops yearly. In 1878 the Soudan was as prosperous as it ever has been, but even then there were 150,000 square miles of arable land still uncultivated.

F. L.—Among the Swedish peasants the wedding festivity usually lasts several days, and some strange customs prevail. The bride's friends load her with all kinds of ornaments, which they hang round her neck, arms and ankles or place upon her dress, shoes, etc. It reads like a description of the marriage rite of some semi-civilised tribe to peruse an account of the struggle between the married and unmarried guests, the one side trying to prevent the bridegroom from taking possession of the bride and the other side assisting him in his efforts to seize her. The Swedish peasant rarely marries anyone from another parish than his own.

Luna.—When two pieces of cane sugar are rubbed quickly together, there is a slight but perfectly distinct flash of bluish-white light, which penetrates the substance far below the surface. If discs of loaf sugar be mounted on a lathe and a hammer be projected on the rotating surface, an almost continuous luminosity is obtained.

A Player asks: "What is the origin of the oval shape of a Rugby football?"——Football was played at Rugby School long before the indiarubber inflator was ever thought of, the bladder of an ox being used for the purpose. By inflating this gradually and rolling it for a considerable time on a smooth board while in a moist state, it attained an oval shape, and, as the bladder of an animal necessitated an outer covering or case of leather, that took the oval shape, too.

Birdie asks: "Where do the English swallows go for the winter?"——Some go to Rome, some to Nice and Monaco, some to Algiers and some to Egypt.

Ethel has been in the habit of keeping gold-fish for some time. Being of a tender-hearted disposition, she was very much perturbed the other day when a friend let fall a remark about the cruelty of keeping such pets. She therefore appeals to me to know what I think about it.——It certainly does seem as though there were some foundation for your friend's remark, for, according to an authority, half of such captives die from sheer want of rest. As fish have eyes so formed that they cannot endure the light, in a glass vessel they are in an entirely wrong place, as is evident from the way in which they dash about and go round and round until they are fairly worn out.

C. G.—The honour of inventing the first thermometer is claimed for three or four people, including Gallileo (about 1595) and Drebbel, a Dutchman (1609). Drebbel's instrument was a vertical glass tube with a bulb at the top and the lower end prolonged into a vessel containing water or some coloured fluid. When the bulb became warm, the expanded air drove back the water; when it cooled, the water rose again.

A. K.—The opinion has hitherto been that the majority of deaths have occurred during the early hours of the morning; that is, of course, deaths resulting from diseases. Dr. Riseri has, however, devoted some years to the investigation of this question, and states that most deaths occur during the afternoon, from two till seven. The idea that ailing people become very weak about four o'clock in the morning and were more likely to die at that time than any other, appears to be erroneous.

P. F. G. writes: "Most people know that the Russian Government blots out offending paragraphs in foreign journals or destroys those journals. But is there any instance of a book being seized in a foreign country—say in England—by the Russians?"——Well, they couldn't go to work quite in that style here, but they seem to have done the next best thing on one occasion. Some years ago, the celebrated Prince Kropotkin published a book in London concerning Russian prisons. A large edition was printed. That edition seems to have disappeared, even the author could not get a copy when he advertised for one a few months afterwards. He is of opinion that the agents of the Muscovite Government bought it up, which is very probable.

H. M.—A wasp is not exactly the kind of creature to make a pet of, one would think, but it all depends upon circumstances. Sir John Lubbock, whose study of these and similar insects is well-known, had a pet wasp once; he caught it in the Pyrenees, and succeeded in taming it. The creature used to take its meals out of his hand, and allow itself to be stroked. It was so great a pet that Sir John went to unusual trouble to prolong its life and was sincerely grieved when it died.

J. Y.—No; the poplin industry owes its origin to the immigration of the Huguenots after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. The seat of the Irish poplin industry is Dublin. A century ago it was in such a flourishing condition that it was stated in the Irish Parliament that 11,000 persons were engaged in it; but in 1891 the number was less than 400. The trade is in the hands of the descendants of the Hugnenots, and very few outsiders are admitted. It is a cheap fabric, but there is now being made a white poplin of special kind that fetches £3 5s. a yard.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0 10 0
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DO YOU WANT

A £25 BICYCLE FOR NOTHING.

WE WILL PRESENT A BICYCLE FREE

to **EACH PURCHASER** of a bottle of PETROLINE, the New Remedy for the Hair, who fills in correctly the missing letters in the following sentences relating to our PETROLINE.

1. P- - - - - - - E P- - - - - - S W- - - - - - S H- - R
2. D- - - - - - - - Y P- - - - - - - - E
3. D- - - - - - - - - - - - - Y R- - - - - - - - E
4. P- - - - - - S A- - - - - - - - - - N

PETROLINE, the NEW HAIR PRESERVATIVE,

Prevents waveless hair. It is decisively persuasive in its action, and the effect after use is distinguishably remarkable. Petroline promotes animalization, is free from Odour, not inflammable or injurious, and is invaluable for Dandruff, Scurf, etc.

THIS IS A GENUINE COMPETITION.

PERFECTLY FREE. NO ENTRANCE FEE.

What you have to do is: When you have found what you think are the (missing letters, write the words out on a sheet of paper, numbering them 1, 2, 3, 4, as above, and send same to us with a P.O. (not stamps) for 1/6 and stamped addressed envelope for results, and we will forward to you post free a bottle of **PETROLINE**, the New Hair Preserver. (Foreign orders, 3s., payable in London). We offer the above prizes to purchasers of our **PETROLINE**, in order to make this remarkable invention known to the public.

Remember, EACH ONE who correctly fills in the missing letters will receive a Beautiful Brand New £25 Gent's or £26 Lady's Windsor Cycle, fitted with the best pneumatic Unpuncturable Tyres. These machines are the very best sold by the Windsor Cycle Co. Ltd., of London, Glasgow, and Coventry, and cannot be bought for less than £16 16s. and £17 17s. cash respectively. All we ask you to do when you get the machine is that you pay the carriage on it. These elegant Cycles can be viewed at the Company's London Showrooms, 3 Great Turnstile, Holborn, W.C. As a guarantee, we print below a copy of the undertaking given us by the Windsor Cycle Co. Ltd. We are quite prepared to spend several thousand pounds on this scheme, as we believe it will do more to advertise our new Hair Preservative **PETROLINE** than if we were to spend this amount in newspaper advertising.

DO NOT DELAY, but send AT ONCE for a bottle of **PETROLINE**, and grasp this opportunity to win one of these beautiful Cycles. Write your name and full address very distinctly, and put the name of this paper on the top of your letter. Keep the number of your Postal Order in case it goes astray. **This Competition will close on December 31st, 1898,** on which date the correct solution, which has been sealed and deposited with the Fiction Press Agency Ltd., Crown Court, E.C., will be opened. Prizes will be awarded and results posted during the following week.

YOU CAN HAVE THE BICYCLE AT ONCE

before the Competition closes; full particulars regarding this will be sent you at the same time that you receive the bottle of PETROLINE.

COPY OF UNDERTAKING *October 5th, 1898.*

"We undertake to supply the Petroline Co. with whatever number of our best Ladies' and Gents' machines they may require during the next six months. "(Signed) for the Windsor Cycle Co. Ltd., 'The Manager.'"

Please address The PETROLINE CO., 39 GROSVENOR RD., HIGHBURY, LONDON.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

When you can get a real safe remedy like **KAPUTINE?**

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which KAPUTINE is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vesicle tissues generally."

NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.

All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.

The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

DEER RECTORY, MINTLAW, ABERDEEN,
NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.

From Rev. J. H. BURN.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.

Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.

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If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.

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BEECHAM'S PILLS.

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

Sick Headache, Constipation,

Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,

Disordered Liver, & Female Ailments.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 514. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 5TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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How to Have a Good Appetite—how to have good Digestion—how to have good Assimilation—these are the cardinal points of successful Treatment of Debility or Ill-health. Ensure good Digestion by the use of Guy's Tonic and the good Appetite will come as a natural result, at regular intervals. This is because Guy's Tonic itself contains constituents of the *Gastric* or digestive juice, and that, furthermore, it possesses other properties which strengthen and invigorate the natural processes of Digestion, and which, among other things, enables the stomach to store up certain digestive ferments with which to digest future meals. In other words, the good Digestion of one meal helps to provide the wherewithal to digest the next, and this valuable preliminary digestion Guy's tonic enables to be done.

We Have Already Provided for two points out of three. Now as to the third. Assimilation means the conversion of digested food into Healthy Nerves, Flesh, Blood, and Strength—into Life, in fact.

Here Comes Into Play the beautiful recuperative and restorative powers of Guy's Tonic. It exerts a Vital influence for good upon the processes of the Body that make Flesh, Life, &c., from food, so that by its Tonic powers Guy's Tonic attains all three points required for successful Treatment of Disease. This is why Guy's Tonic does such a vast amount of good.

There is nothing haphazard or chance about it—the successful results are the gratifying outcome of the care, study and conscientious efforts to solve this difficult problem, and, as a matter of fact, Guy's Tonic was tested and watched in a West London physician's practice for years before it was offered for general sale. In other words, Guy's Tonic is a great success, because of its great merits.

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"My Wife has been in delicate Health for some years, and was recently "attacked with Influenza, which left her very weak. I advised her to try a "bottle of Guy's Tonic. She now sleeps better, eats better, and is a living "Testimonial to your valuable medicine. "CHARLES T. MACE."

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THE 'ALFOSCO' COSTUMES

The "Alfosco" Half-Guinea Costumes are recommended by thousands of delighted customers, who acknowledge them to be GREATLY SUPERIOR in MAKE, STYLE, and VALUE, to any costumes they have ever seen at anything approaching the same prices.

Design No. 455. **10/6**

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Design No. 69. 7/6.

A Great Bargain. The Cape for the Million. Price only **7/6**, made in an excellent **Beaver** Cloth, with collar trimmed with extra wide real Mohair Chinchilla. Colours—Fawn, Brown, Green, Navy, and Black. Send for one. Securely packed, sent Parcel Post, 6d. extra. Our New Illustrated Sketch Book contains a number of the latest designs of Jackets and Capes. Sent post free on application.

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Is a fashionable Costume for the Winter season. A wonderful costume for Half-a-Guinea. Made in the Allen Foster Specialite Serge. It consists of the stylish Reefer Jacket, with fashionably-made skirt. Costume Complete, **10/6**. Skirt only, **5/6**. Carriage paid, 6d. extra.

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GOOD FELT HAT, Black, Navy, Brown or Grey. **2/6.** Carriage 4d.

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HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

are promptly sent by Parcel Post, safely packed, direct from the Largest Firm of Costumiers in the World, and are made to look smart and yield faithful service.

TRIMMED HAT, as sketch, **5/11.** Carriage 4d.

Model 984.

Exceedingly well-made and carefully finished Chesterfield Coat, and full-wide **10/6** Tailor Skirt. Price complete Costume, 10/6; carriage 6d. Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d. Good quality.

Stylish blouse bodice and neat skirt. Bodice lined through, and made with prettily gathered **6/11** front and shaped belt, *as sketch.* Lengths and Prices:

35	38	42	46 in.	Car.
6/11	**7/11**	**8/11**	**9/11** ea.	6d.

Lengths are from top of neck-band to bottom of skirt in front.

PRETTY MAID'S COSTUME Model 1016.

These Costumes are supplied in the following two good durable Cloths:
I. **John Noble Cheviot Serge,** weighty and weather-resisting.
II. **John Noble Costume Coating,** smooth-surfaced and of lighter weight.

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together with the new 84-page Illustrated Fashion Book for Ladies and Children. Please mention *Short Stories* when writing.

A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloth (6yd. 52in. wide) for 7/6. Carriage 8d. **7/6**

COLOURS of all Costumes are Black, Navy, Electric, Brown, Ruby, Myrtle, Fawn, Grey, Moss, Sage Green, and Purple.

THE THREE SIZES IN STOCK are 34, 36, and 38 in. round bust (under arms). Skirts being 38, 40, and 42 in. long in front.

Any other size can be specially made to measure 1/6 extra.

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Gives ease at once and effectually removes Piles, Cracks, Fissures and Ulcerations. In boxes 1/- & 2/6 each. Post free 1/2 & 2/9

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Short Stories

No. 514. One Penny.

For the Week Ending
November 5th, 1898.

THOSE WHO FOUGHT AT OMDURMAN.

No. 6.—Officer of the Camel Corps.

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And it Came to Pass.

"Oh, turn it off, Melrose!"

"I beg your pardon. Was I staring?"

"You have done nothing else for the last ten minutes," and Cyril St. Austen laughed in a quiet, lady-like way.

Lord Melrose pushed his cup across the table and gave a little apologetic shrug.

"What a curious fellow you are," he said, with an amused smile. "If I were in your place, by Jove! I should be drinking brandy laced with champagne instead of tea."

The wintry sunlight flooded through the mullioned window, giving a cheerful aspect to the luxurious little room; there were violets on the carved oak mantel-piece, and primroses on the cosy breakfast-table drawn near the fire.

St. Austen opened his brown eyes wide and stared at his companion.

"We have always been pals," he said; "I wonder how many more years it will be before you understand me."

"Upon my word, I don't know," Melrose answered, with a touch of irony. "Diagnosis of character is one thing; the interpretation of an enigma of your kind another."

"Thanks."

St. Austen got up and crossed over to the window. Piccadilly was only half awake, and a thick slush betokened the rain which had fallen during the night. With a little shudder he turned back towards the fire.

"Ugh! Fancy going out a day like this."

Cyril helped himself to a cigarette; his hand trembled slightly as he stooped down and lighted a cedar wood spill in the fire.

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"There you go," said Lord Melrose, "shivering at the thought of turning out on a beastly morning, and yet you only steady your nerves with tea, when any other man would be white and haggard and——"

St. Austen interrupted his friend with a laugh.

"I assure you life is much easier if you never let anything worry you. Things always turn out for the best if you don't interfere. That's my creed. You think I'm a ruined man, and, by Jove! so I am if Isaacs has got out of bed the wrong side. But d'ye think I'd care if I was?"

The two men faced one another on the hearthrug. St. Austen's smooth, baby-like face and mild blue eyes contrasted strangely with the other's bronzed military appearance and long black moustache.

"I have seen pluck on the frontier," said Lord Melrose slowly, disarranging the violets to make himself a button-hole. "I have seen the V. C. won, but upon my word, old man, you beat the lot of us."

"Nonsense," said St. Austen quickly, "I'm like the coward who shuts his eyes and walks across the Strand, and hopes he won't get run over and generally doesn't. I'm too lazy to dodge the traffic, that's all."

He called his man and sent out for a cab and the *Financial News*. Then he turned to his companion.

"I say, old fellow, will you come with me?"

Lord Melrose declined promptly.

"Considering all things we'd better not meet just at present," he said. "Isaacs thinks I am in India, and the delusion is worth the best part of £5,000 to me."

And so St. Austen set out alone, and, as he went down the stairs Lord Melrose heard him whistling and occasionally smacking his hands together as if he felt the cold.

Mr. Isaacs' office in Jermyn Street was an elegantly furnished room with a thick Brussels carpet, and comfortable easy chairs scattered about. A cheerful fire burnt in the grate, and a small terrier stood with its paws on the fender, and its head turned away from the heat.

The Jew looked up when St. Austen entered, and by sheer force of habit rose from his chair.

"Ah. You got my letter then?"

St. Austin nodded.

"Made capital spills," he said, turning a cat off the chair nearest Mr. Isaacs' desk, and arranging himself slowly. "If you don't charge 6s. 8d. for writing them you might send me a few more. So you intend to summon me, eh?"

"I shall be compelled to take that course unless you pay back at least £20,000 before to-morrow."

St. Austen turned out his pockets and produced three pounds, which he held out mockingly.

"Will you have this on account?"

The Jew's dark face flushed.

"I am not joking, Mr. St. Austen," he said, shifting a pile of papers on his desk, and then getting up in an uneasy sort of way. "If it had ever occurred to me that your father might marry again I should never have advanced you sixpence."

"I don't suppose you would. That's where the joke comes in."

"And you will be still laughing at it when I summon you."

St. Austen stooped down and stroked the cat which was rubbing itself against his legs.

"What's the good of summoning me?" he asked.

Mr. Isaacs returned to his desk and twisted his chair round to his visitor

"I will tell you. I know as well as you do that you have not got a penny in the world. I know that you have got so-called 'debts of honour,' which make you wish you had; otherwise, you would have been off to America long ago."

"You seem tolerably well up in the subject," observed St. Austen, straightening himself with a little jerk. "Go on."

"When your name appears in the police reports your father will pay anything to save a scandal—for his wife's sake."

"Ah!"

The Jew's eyes fell in an embarrassed way before the other's gaze.

"I suppose if I told you that my father would do nothing of the sort, you would believe me."

"No I should not."

"Very well, then summon me."

St. Austen rose and picked up his hat. In another moment he was standing outside in the street. He had anticipated the worst and the worst had happened. Ruin stared him in the face.

Ten minutes later he pushed open his sitting-room door and Melrose threw down his paper and jumped up eagerly.

"Well, old man, is it peace?"

"He is going to summon me. You know what that means."

There was no sign of agitation on St. Austen's face.

Looking at the two men a casual observer would have said that Lord Melrose was the sufferer.

"And you don't care?"

This absolute stoicism annoyed Melrose inexpressibly.

"Of course I care. I'm not going to tear my hair though; or put on sackcloth and ashes. It's always best to let things run their course."

"By which you mean that something will turn up."

"Precisely; and if it doesn't what's the good of struggling against fate? Come and have a game of billiards till lunch time."

A telegram had been delivered during St. Austen's absence; he took it up as they went out and opened it on the stairs.

"Excuse me for a minute," he said, "I must read it because one never knows—hullo—look here," the pink form fluttered to the ground and St. Austen leant back against the wall.

Lord Melrose picked the telegram up and read it through.

"Your father is dying. Come at once. He has promised to sign a will in Mr. Phillip's favour. —HODSON."

"Phillip?"

"Mrs. St. Austen's son."

"How dreadful!" Melrose exclaimed. "Poor old chap, I am sorry for you."

St. Austen nodded his head gratefully.

"I can't help loving the old man in spite of everything," he said half apologetically. "Dear old Hodson, she always stood up for me."

"What are you going to do?"

"I suppose I must go down. I always anticipated this, but it is just possible he might relent if he saw me. Isaacs will be sold anyway. If I get the money he will be sorry he took out the summons; and if I don't he will have all the expense for nothing——"

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"Never mind Isaacs now," interrupted Melrose. "Where do you keep your Bradshaw?"

St. Austen threw it to him, and sat down to write a letter.

"Look here, can't you attend for one minute?"

Cyril laid down his pen with a sigh. "All right; what is it, old man?"

"You have just missed the only train which makes the connection. By Jove! you'll have to take a special."

St. Austen turned round and went on with his writing.

"That's out of the question," he said calmly. "I haven't got any money."

"Will you leave off that writing for a minute, or I swear I'll go and leave you to yourself. You must get home to-night. What a confounded fool you are! A little energy, and you may save a fortune; and here you are drifting towards absolute ruin and disgrace, and wasting your time by writing a letter to some girl."

"My dear Melrose, please don't work yourself up like that.

"You've looked it up in Bradshaw and found there isn't a train, haven't you? Well, that settles it. What's the good of worrying? Now if you will just be quiet while I write this note I shall be free——"

Lord Melrose said afterwards he could have taken St. Austen by the scruff of the neck and shaken him with the greatest of pleasure.

"Take a special, man," he roared. "Look here, I'll lend you the money if that's all."

St. Austen shrugged his shoulders and got up from his chair.

"If there isn't a train I'm not going. If I was wanted down there the telegraph boy would have come here without stopping to play marbles on the way, and the wire would have reached me before I went out—in time to catch the mid-day train. All these things were arranged ages ago. It's no good fighting against our destiny. Now if you'll just be quiet while I write this——"

"Perhaps the programme arranged that you should take a special. Perhaps there is a goods train which wants to be smashed up; perhaps that's why the telegraph boy stopped to play marbles on the way; perhaps——"

St. Austen held up a deprecating hand. He had not thought of the matter in this light before and for a moment he was puzzled.

He thought it out slowly, drumming a little air on the table with his fingers.

"I call that legislating and not construing the law of Destiny," he said at last. "Now if you will only just be quiet while I write this note——"

"Listen, Cyril."

"No, no. For goodness sake let the matter drop. I can't be bothered with these things. The probability is if I took your advice I shouldn't be allowed to go into the house, or something like that. Besides I don't wan't to smash up any luggage trains. That's just the sort of thing which does happen when a man begins to interfere. Now if you'll just be quiet while I finish this note I shall be free to go out with you to lunch."

* * * * *

Old Mrs. Hodson was right. Mr. St. Austen was dying.

The doctor had told him years before that his end would come suddenly, and he faced death with a heroic fortitude which touched the hearts of all those who waited on him.

Mrs. Hodson persisted in hovering round him, hoping against hope that at the last moment he would forgive her darling.

Cyril's name however never passed his lips, and his last hours were drawing near.

Everyone had forgotten about a will until the doctor mentioned it. A telegram was sent at once by the second Mrs. St. Austen to the family solicitor in London. Hour after hour had passed since then, and still he did not come. A great fear seized her that after all the old man might die intestate; in that case she would only get one-third of his fortune, and Phillip would get nothing.

She was sitting alone in her husband's room. It was a large, luxuriously furnished apartment, and a huge fire threw fantastic wavering shadows on the walls and carpet.

Struck with a sudden idea she laid down her novel and stole quietly across to the massive mahogany writing table. Taking a half sheet of writing paper she drew out her husband's last will and testament, stopping every now and then to refer to a legal text book at her elbow.

The reading lamp threw a ghastly pallor over her face through its green shade. Occasionally the sufferer on the bed moved in a restless sort of way.

She read it through, nodding to herself and smiling, and then, taking a pen in her hand, she crept to her husband's bedside and roused him gently.

"Darling, you must sign this," she whispered, "or else everything will go to Cyril, and Phillip and I will be cast upon the world."

The old man turned restlessly, and raised himself on his pillow.

"Hush! I cannot bear to hear his name. Give me the pen."

Mrs. St. Austen slipped across the room and called softly to two maidservants who were making her bed in an adjoining apartment. They came to their master's bedside, their eyes filled with tears, and keeping close together.

The will was signed and witnessed; the girls crept back to their work, crying.

Mrs. St. Austen crossed over the room and held the half sheet of note paper to the fire. At last she was safe. Phillip would be one of the richest commoners in England before the grey light of morning crept through the shutters.

Mrs. Hodson's step was heard outside. With a guilty start of which she felt ashamed, Mrs. St. Austen slipped the half sheet of paper in the blotting pad and snatched up her novel.

An hour later the first gong sounded faintly. She laid down her book and went out into the passage.

The sufferer's face was growing more and more transparent; it was evident he had not many more hours to live.

Mrs. Hodson crept to his side.

"Sir, say you forgive Mr. Cyril. Say you forgive him."

The old man waved her away impatiently.

"No. No, I can't."

He stretched out his hand and the old woman took it and held it between her own, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Won't you forgive Mr. Cyril?"

A sort of groan broke from Mr. St. Austen. He

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tossed himself from one side of the bed to the other, and doubled up his knees.

"You must forgive him, sir. What will you say to his mother when you meet her up there to-night?"

With a cry the sufferer sat upright in his bed. The firelight lit up his drawn and haggard face.

"Yes—yes—you are right. I—I—tell him that I forgive him. Tell him, Mrs. Hodson. Promise you will tell him."

The old head fell back on the pillows, the eyes closed, the breathing seemed to stop.

Suddenly he moved again.

"Paper!" gasped the old man, "paper!" The housekeeper took a sheet from the blotter.

"Write it down, write it down." he murmured, pushing back the hair from his forehead. "I leave my son Cyril a thousand a year for his life—only for life," he added. "Witnesses"

Mrs. Hodson ran towards the door and flew down the stairs, passing Mrs. St. Austen on the threshold.

"Margaret," called the old man. "Is that you, Margaret? Good-bye, darling. Say good-bye to Phillip."

Mrs. St. Austen bent over and kissed him fondly on the forehead. As she did so her eye fell on the codicil lying on the counterpane just where it had dropped from the old man's fingers.

With a little cry she took it up and read it. Then with a defiant look at the expiring man she crushed it between her fingers and, crossing over the room, she threw it with a vicious little laugh in the fire.

* * * * *

A week later Lord Melrose was breakfasting again with Cyril.

"Upon my word," he remarked, tapping the top of his egg and yawning contentedly, "upon my word it's more than you deserve. It was the nearest thing in the world The odds were at least a million to one against. Gad! You ought to be just as ashamed of yourself as young Hastings who won every penny he's got at Monte Carlo."

Cyril laughed good-naturedly.

"It was all arranged ages ago," he said. "What's the good of bothering. If you want to get on in the world sit tight. That's my motto. It all comes right in the end."

For the will disinheriting Cyril had been burnt by his step-mother. Mrs. Hodson's codicil had by a strange freak of luck been written on the back of the self-same sheet of note paper.

And so it came to pass that in these days Cyril is the richest commoner in England, and Mr. Isaacs grovels mournfully and asks him to recommend his friends.

M. H.

CASHIER (of bank): "You'll have to bring some one here to identify you before we can cash this cheque. Got any friends in the town?"

Stranger: "No. I'm a tax collector."

HIGH-PRICED Doctor: "You are now convalescent and all you need now is exercise. You should walk ten, twenty, thirty miles a day, sir; but your walking should have an object."

Patient: "All right, doctor. I'll travel round trying to borrow enough to pay your bill."

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 2.

Three persons have this week applied for a sovereign each:

L. W. JUDD,
19 Stanton Road,
Barnes, S.W.

Mrs. F. W. FRYER,
12 Holker Street,
Barrow-in-Furness.

G. ROBERTS,
Dairy Supply Co.,
Museum Street,
London, W.C.

The names of the following people had been selected, but none of them applied, and, consequently, each is £1 the poorer by it:

W. S. Mathers, 15 George Street, Montrose, Forfarshire; Miss Clara Long, 102 Oxford Street, Great Grimsby; Richard Baglin, 5 Hungerford Street, Cheltenham; Miss Tilly Greenspoon, 42 New Street, Dublin; James Clifton, 9 Marted Road, Peckham; H. Boys, 200 North End Road, West Kensington; Miss Cookson, 33 Crown Street, Newark-upon-Trent; Mrs. Irvine, Lochfoot, Dumfries; Miss Capps, 13 London Road, Spalding; T. H. Melen, 3 Yoek Street, West Cliff, Ramsgate; Miss Brown, Springfield, Tirley, Glos.; J. P. Endered, Evesham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch; G. Clayton, 59 Cromwell Road, Bristol; Miss M. Abbott, York Villa, Norbiton, Surrey; O. H. Sharrott, Chestnut House, Tamworth; Mrs. S. Williamson, 42 Ordnance Street, Chatham; Thomas Davidson, 18 Granville Terrace, Edinburgh; J. Whitehead, 1 Willington Square, Harrogate; F. Pratt, 2 Wanderers Avenue, Wolverhampton; G. Tuck, The Limes, Victoria Street, Windsor; J. Webb, 61 Caversham Road, Reading; Miss M. M'Caughley, 34 Duncairn Gardens, Belfast; J. B. Batchelor, Elm Cottage, Military Road, Limerick; C. T. Frost, 11 Bosworth, Rugby; R. Luckin, Fortescue Hotel, Plymouth; Mrs. Green, 315 Oxford Road, Macclesfield; J. E. Watson, Magdalene Lane, Taunton, Som.; Arthur Gray, 48 Tasburgh Street, Grimsby; Charles Wilson, 303 Goldhawk Road, Shepherd's Bush; Walter Grimes, 6 Netherton Road, St. Margaret's, Twickenham; Mrs. O'Sullivan, 81 North Main Street, Cork; Joseph Broadbent, 12 Furness Street, Hyde, Cheshire; F. T. Gibson, 24 Elmwood Street, Sunderland; F. Morsfold, 5 Lansdowne Place, Upper Norwood; Miss M. Hughes, 25 St. Andrew's Road, Liverpool; Miss E. Cramphorn, 4 Wellington Road, Wanstead, N.E.; A. B. Lee, 160 Shaw Heath, Stockport; P. C. Grant, 135 Hoe Street, Walthamstow; A. Braham, 4, Ealing Road, Ealing, W.; Thomas Hilton, 12 Grove End Road, Woodford; Miss Tickell, 14 Lemon Street, Truro; W. Denmore, 22 College Street, Leicester; L. Stewart, 37 Carleton Road, Tufnell Park, N.; W. Meek, 15 Tait Street, Carlisle; A. J. Smith, Broadfields, Wylde Green, Birmingham; W. Cross, 74 Brixton Road, S.W.; W. Stanley, 157 High Street, Croydon.

Several readers have asked whether they may enter for the *Home Notes*, *Athletic Record*, and *Pearson's Weekly* distributions as well as *Short Stories*; if so, whether the applications may be made on the same postcard. Readers may apply in all or any of the distributions, but each application must be made on a separate card.

As a certain proportion of the names given above are those of people who are not readers of *Short Stories*, and as it may so happen that the names selected this week are those of people who are similarly unenlightened, I would point out the advisability of your saying a few words on the subject to your neighbour, or to the man you meet in the train. It can do you no harm; it may do them good. Ladies, particularly, have many opportunities for chatting on a subject of this kind, and it would be doing yourself and your friend and us a good turn to tell your lady acquaintances all about the scheme. A sovereign is always a welcome addition to a man's coffers or to a woman's dress allowance. What is there to prevent you from helping yourself and your friends at the same time.

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THE LETTER WITH THE MONOGRAM.

It was towards the close of a dreary November afternoon. Outside, the wind was howling mournfully among the leafless branches of the tall elms.

The sky was a cold, dull grey, except in the west, where an angry streak of red stretched along the horizon, making a bright back-ground for the tall, naked elms that bordered the drive.

Inside, the scene was scarcely less dreary. A fire burnt slowly in the old-fashioned grate in the library, throwing its shadows upon the walls and ceiling, bringing into view the book-cases, crowded with richly-bound volumes, now leaping higher and higher, and casting its shadows among the oaken rafters that studded the ceiling; then, as if ashamed of its sudden uprising, sinking down almost into its embers.

The two occupants of the room were watching its fantastic movements, each, however, without a thought of the fire itself. He was standing with his elbow on the mantelpiece, his hand supporting his head. She was sitting on the opposite side, nervously twisting her handkerchief in and out through her fingers. Her face wore an indifferent expression, but it was with difficulty that she could refrain from every now and then glancing at that of her companion.

There had been a misunderstanding between them; not one of those trivial, inconsequential quarrels that make Cupid's heart weep for an hour or so, and afterwards brighter and happier for the little cloud, but rather one of those where love's sweet dream, cherished, it may have been, for years, is likely to be crushed.

She had accused him and he had explained, but to no avail. An awkward pause ensued; neither knew just what to say. Finally she broke the silence.

"Yes, I loved you. To be true to myself, I admit it. I loved you for what I thought you were, but now that I have found my faith in you is groundless, I release you."

Still he held his peace and continued to watch the fire, his mind busy with the past. His silence exasperated her. At last she arose, and, crossing over to the writing-table, opened one of its drawers and took from it a bundle of letters.

They were tied with a pink ribbon, and were, as he knew, those he had written since their engagement. She tried to untie the knot, but, being unable to do so, gave it a vicious little twitch, when the ribbon broke, and the letters scattered right and left.

He bent down, and, gathering them up, handed them to her.

"I do not want them. I was going to burn them but will leave that delightful task to you," she said, in a tone meant to display indifference and sarcasm, but which, as such, was a miserable failure.

He drew a chair up to the grate, and seating himself, began to read, as he finished each one dropping it into the fire. It seemed to her she had never seen him so cool and self-possessed before. It seemed as though her heart would break as, one by one, the letters she had longed for, loved, and cherished were dropped into the fire.

Outside, the wind still mourned in and out among the branches of the elms, whose creaking and twisting afforded a weird accompaniment. The room was almost in darkness, except for the light of the fire, whose flaring arms seemed to wave for joy every time the silent reader dropped a letter into its depths, and to spring up in a mocking, tantalising manner.

At last he came to one almost covered with monograms. Oh, how quickly it all flashed before her mind! That lovely summer morning, a year ago, when he had twined her initials with his and then blushed to find the combination spelt "L. O. V. E." Oh, he must not burn that one!

Slowly, and with an almost imperceptible sigh he replaced it in its envelope and consigned it to the fate of the others.

"Oh, how could you!" she cried, and darted forward, but ere she could save it the mocking flames claimed it as their own.

The young man was startled at this sudden outbreak and glanced up in unfeigned surprise.

Such a pitiful, pleading face looked down into his, the tears coursing down her cheeks, her two little white hands clasped in front, that it was no wonder he instantly forgave her all the unkind words and cruel thrusts that only a woman can give.

He reached out, and, taking both her hands in his, drew her down till her head rested upon his shoulder.

"No, dear, you need not tell me," as she essayed to speak. "I know you did not mean all you said. I know you love me; don't you, dear?"

And she who had pretended to be so cold and sarcastic, dignified and withering, nestled closer to him and whispered:

"Yes, Lionel, and you will forgive me?" While the treacherous, fickle fire now tossed it arms as joyfully as it had mockingly only a few moments before.

D. MILLAR.

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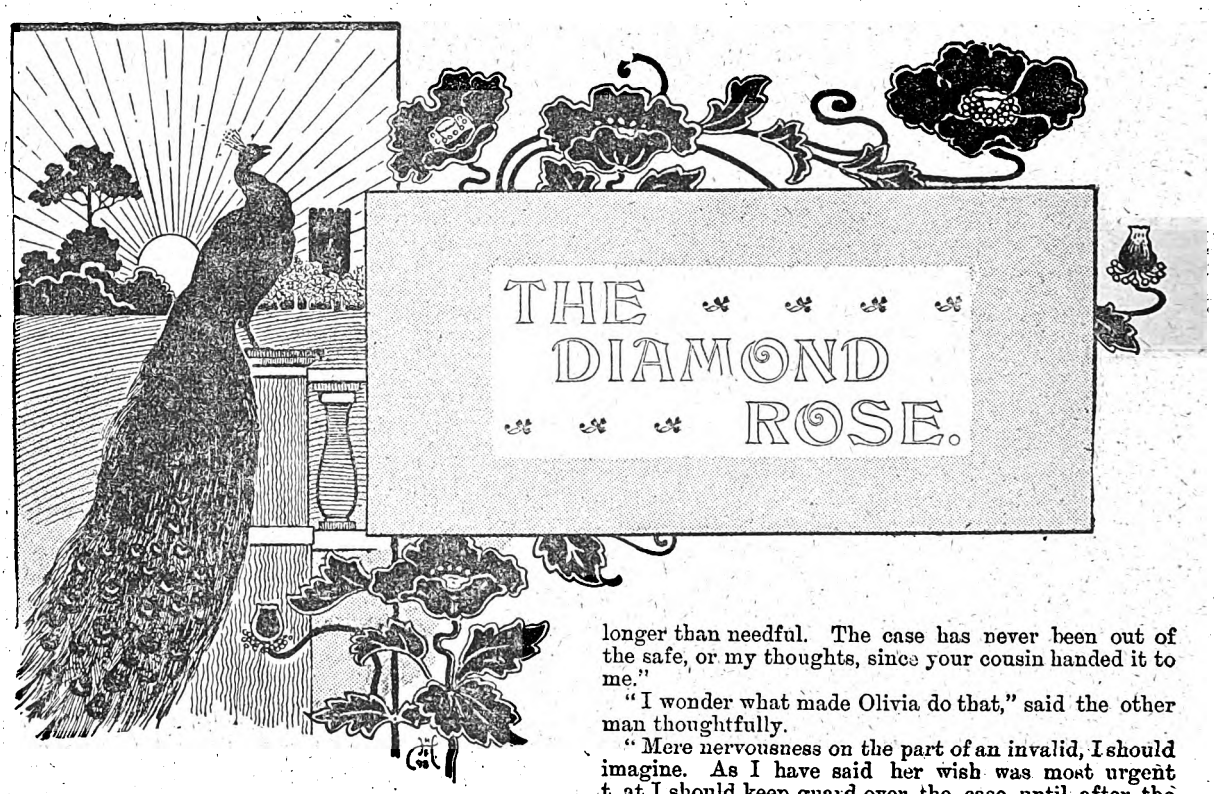

THE clean-cut, good natured features of William Sebright, lawyer, wore an unusual expression of anxiety.

"He must have come in by this time," he said, half aloud; "I shall be glad to have done with the whole business."

Then he rose, went to the other end of the room, and unlocking a small iron safe, took therefrom a sandal-wood box fastened with clasps of antique silver: apparently a lady's jewel case. He re-locked the safe and left the room, carrying the box.

After traversing a long gallery he descended a flight of stairs without meeting a soul; a noticeable stillness reigned in the house, perhaps owing to the fact that only the previous day, its young mistress, Olivia Hennesey, had been laid in the grave, and now her cousin, John Hennesey, reigned in her stead.

Sebright crossed the hall, and opened a door of a room at the far side.

A tall man of about two-and-thirty was restlessly pacing within, and the face turned to greet the lawyer was worn with secret grief.

Sebright placed the sandal-wood box upon the table without a word.

"Ah, you have brought the jewels?" said John carelessly.

"Yes, and heartily glad I am to be rid of them; only waited until I felt sure you must have come in."

Hennesey threw himself into a chair by the fire.

"Ah, well, there is no need to look at them now. Stay and have a pipe."

"Honestly, I should be glad if you would satisfy yourself that they are there—right with the list. One does not care to have the responsibility of that sort of thing longer than needful. The case has never been out of the safe, or my thoughts, since your cousin handed it to me."

"I wonder what made Olivia do that," said the other man thoughtfully.

"Mere nervousness on the part of an invalid, I should imagine. As I have said her wish was most urgent t at I should keep guard over the case until after the funeral; the key remaining in your possession. Then, when we two were alone, I was to hand it over to you. Now I have fulfilled my charge I will go back to the deeds; but let me know that all is right."

The lawyer cultivated tact and ready sympathy; he had reason to think that John Hennesey would not care for a witness when he counted over the jewels inseparably associated with the vanished beauty of Olivia, his cousin, and, therefore, went back to his rooms.

Soon afterwards Hennesey entered the lawyer's room abruptly—startling him from his pipe and easy chair.

"Good heavens! Hennesey, anything wrong? What's the matter?"

"This is the matter," said Hennesey. He held out a small leathern jewel case, open; the case and the lining were both old, and upon the faded satin rested what was evidently a part of an ornament of rare design and workmanship.

It consisted of a stem of chased gold, fashioned like the stem of a rose, and bearing two leaves of fine-gold fretwork, veined with seed pearls, the serrations pointed with emeralds. From these leaves the stem rose and curved slightly, but had apparently been sharply cut or broken.

The lawyer leant forward staring, and holding on by the arms of his leathern chair.

"What—the rose—gone?" There was a moment's silence, then with an upward glance keen and quick, he added: "By Jove! Hennesey, you don't think——"

Hennesey laughed

"Oh, make your mind easy, the rose has been gone these three months, and it is I who am supposed to have taken it. Olivia died, believing that I stole it from her."

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Sebright looked utterly mystified.

"I never heard a word of this."

"No, the poor child kept silence, thinking to shield me. There has been a cruel trick played upon me and upon her. It was her desire to shield me, even after her death, from awkward discoveries that made her place the jewel case in your keeping till I could receive it into my own. I found a letter inside here, where the rose should have been."

"Can you give me particulars?"

"Oh certainly; they must become public before long. She wrote as though the whole affair were foreknown to me, but I gather that some villain, by the aid of a mask and fancy dress, impersonated me at the ball given by the Seymours in May. He talked to Olivia for some time, and managed the business so cleverly, that she fully believed she was speaking to me, and allowed him to hold her cloak when she was leaving. As he was wrapping it round her, she turned to say good-night to someone. The diamond rose fastened some draperies on her left shoulder. As he was arranging the cloak, standing behind her, he must have leant over and contrived with his right hand to snap the rose from its stem. She saw the gleam of the diamonds in his closed hand as she turned back her head; but in her fear and horror she would not attract attention, or betray what she believed to be my crime. She only whispered an entreaty that I would come to her on the morrow. In the carriage she assured herself that her suspicions were correct, that the rose was gone.

"Of course I was never at the ball at all, but I had talked of going, and helped to choose her dress. My departure the next day and subsequent silence naturally deepened the apparent malice of my crime. I seemed to be trading on her forbearance. She feared to write me on the subject, but meant to take steps for the restitution of the stones, at her own expense, if needful, on my return, and implored me to fulfil her intent."

"Where were you on the night of the ball?"

"I never left my rooms. A press of work came in at the last moment. I was starting for Paris the next day and sent word that my going had become impossible to Margaret, my sister, early in the afternoon, and asked her to tell Olivia. I don't remember speaking of the matter to anyone else."

"And the dress worn by your impersonator, does Miss Hennesey mention it?"

"She does not refer to it; that, however, might be learnt from Mrs. Seymour. I had intended going as Romeo."

Afternoon deepened into twilight while the two men were still reviewing the bearings of the case; although beyond one or two points rendered evident by circumstances, little was to be gained by the discussion. The area in which the thief might be looked for was narrowed by the facts that he must be, at any rate, able to assume the bearing of a gentleman: that while his inches must approach those of John Hennesey, he must have considerable flexibility of voice, and an intimate knowledge of the family's affairs; even as Hennesey said, speaking to his cousin of personal matters which he had believed profoundly secret.

"One thing," he added, "materially increases our difficulty. I am personally a stranger to Mrs. Seymour, If she believed the man talking to Olivia to be her cousin John Hennesey, supposing, that is, that she noticed him at all, she would have some difficulty at this distance of time in establishing any points of difference, especially taking into consideration the change of dress."

Sebright flicked the end of his cigar. "You have positively no suspicions?" he asked.

"None; unless, indeed——"

"What?"

"A supposition so degrading to my cousin, that I could wring the man's neck if it were verified. Servants have opportunities of acquiring knowledge. I gave Lovett a holiday that night (the last of his stay in England) presumably to say farewell to his sweetheart."

"And probably that's what he did. Ah, my dear fellow, you're out of it there. We're too far advanced in the century to be robbed by our servants, we only rob each other. You must look higher than Lovett for the motive and design of a very clever trick."

The next evening saw Mr. Hennesey in the room of Mr. Wilson, who had been recommended by Sebright as the man likely to solve the problem.

The room, an ordinary top-floor back, was scrupulously neat. At his ease in an old leathern arm-chair, sat Mr. Wilson, reading by the light of a solitary candle, robed in a dressing-gown.

Hennesey was not favourably impressed, and remained standing, holding the back of the chair, and looking at the man before him.

It was hardly a countenance to inspire confidence, unless by its inscrutable ugliness. The skin was thick, unhealthy in colour, and flaccid, closely marked with lines which in places deepened until they became suggestive of folds. The eyes, half hidden by the drooping lids and the puckered flesh, shone as mere glittering beads in the heavy, repulsive face.

Mr. Wilson felt his visitor's scrutiny, impeded though it was by the dimness of the light.

"I suppose," he said, in a sulky voice, "you're surprised at having to mount to a three-pair back?"

Hennesey remained silent.

"I pass here for a commercial traveller. I come and go unnoticed, my visitors the same; there's no better place to conduct private and confidential business than a London three-pair back, provided the walls are thick and you don't talk over loud."

During this speech John Hennesey felt that his scrutiny had been lazily returned. His first sense of repugnance deepened, and but for Sebright's recommendation, and the assurance he had that day received from Scotland Yard as to the man's undoubted capacity when he chose to exert himself, instinct would have decided against further transactions. As it was, he sat down and stated the case as briefly as possible. As he proceeded, Mr. Wilson became alert and business-like.

"And on the night in question you remained—where?" was his first query.

"In my own rooms."

"Alone?"

"Alone."

"Ah! I see you were. Perhaps, now, you were playing the violin—something of that sort—that would make your presence known to your neighbours."

Hennesey started. Some idea of the drift of the apparently simple question, of the intent with which those keen eyes were fixed upon his face, crossed his mind; but he felt that hesitancy or anger would be the height of folly.

"I was finishing work for the press. I started for Paris the following morning."

"Yes, and when finished you went upstairs to bed; about what time?"

"I went into the adjoining room to bed at 2.30, my rooms being on the ground floor."

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"Communicating?"

"Yes."

"The other inhabitants of the house—what might they have been about? No one there, I suppose, of whom you may have suspicion?"

"In the house? Certainly not. A barrister, I believe, lived in the rooms above me—a couple of clerks above him. I knew nothing of them, nor they of me."

"They weren't at home on that night?"

"I heard the barrister come in soon after I had gone to bed."

"And the landlady—where was she?"

"She lived, I believe, in the basement and slept in the attic. She brought me hot water, in answer to my ring at 9.30. Half-an-hour later I heard her go upstairs."

"Your servant slept out that night, I think you said?"

"Yes, he had twenty-four hours' leave, as he was leaving England with me the next day."

"Do you mind telling me where he slept?"

"In a small room at the end of the hall, adjoining my bedroom."

Mr. Wilson was growing more and more courteous.

"Excuse me; but a little awkward, was it not," he now said deferentially, "for a gentleman of your habits to dispense with the services of his valet the night before a lengthened absence? Many things must have required attention."

As the suavity of the man increased, Hennesey's temper rose. He left the last question without reply.

"But, of course, that is no business of mine," said Mr. Wilson at last, turning his eyes to the fire. "Facts, though, we are forced to ascertain. That letter, now, can you let me see it?"

"Impossible!"

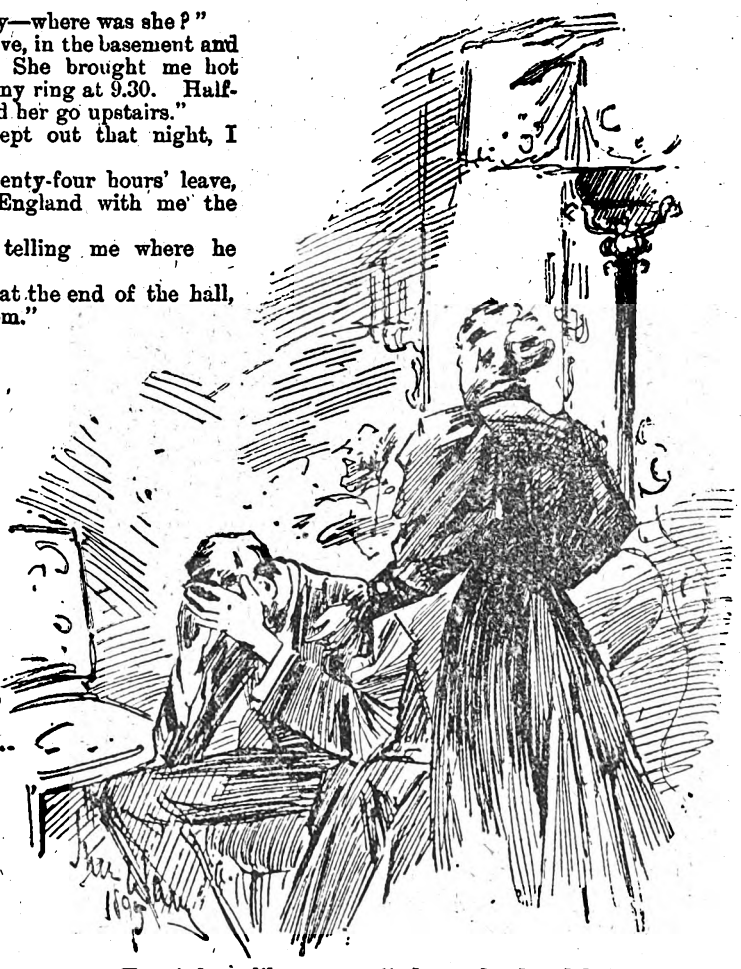
Mr. Wilson raised his eyebrows.

"I might obtain from it most important data."

"I have told you from notes every word that it contains bearing on the case."

Mr. Wilson leant back in his chair with closed eyes.

"Well," he said, in a voice that seemed suddenly dead and muffled, "you might go now. You shall hear from me in three days, that is, on Saturday. There is a candle—be so kind as to light yourself down. Disturbance of the body is fatal to the balance of the mind, as you may know. Good-night."



He sat down like a man utterly perplexed and lost.

John Hennesey's visit to George Street took place on Wednesday evening.

On the afternoon of the following Friday he called to see his half sister, Mrs. Winthrop—the daughter of his mother by an earlier marriage.

Mrs. Winthrop was at her house in Eaton Place for a week or two, on some special business, and, John, hearing of her arrival, lost no time in seeking her. He found her in her drawing-room, gay with roses from Winthrop—and, to his disappointment, not alone. He fancied that he saw a shade of constraint in her greeting, which, in his present mood, chilled and dismayed him.

"I don't think you have ever met Mrs. Hazel, John?"

He turned towards the stranger, whom hitherto he had seen dimly as a dark figure in the window among the flowers, and felt that he was favoured with a rapid, inquisitive glance, which subsided as quickly into indifference. He saw a pretty woman, with the complexion of a young untamed gipsy—warm, glowing, brilliant.

Hair soft and brown, full of natural curve and waves, and a childish, plaintive mouth that seemed pleading against something—perhaps too severe criticism of the rather startling and assertive style of beauty for which its owner could hardly be held responsible.

Hennesey had frequently heard of the young widow who, after devotedly nursing Squire Hazel Holt for two years, had been left to freedom and a jointure of £2,000 a year.

The girl of three-and-twenty had seemed honestly to mourn the elderly squire—perhaps she was not without gratitude towards the man who had raised her from the position of his sister's companion to that of mistress of Hazel Holt and life-long independence. But John Hennesey was not favourably impressed. That undeniably assertive flash of colour and effect was prejudicial, and armed him against her.

"I am so glad you have come, Jack," said his sister Margaret, "I am dying to hear the correct and true version of the diamond mystery."

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"Your curiosity sha'l be gratified—in due time."

"Due time—nonsense! At once! Mrs. Hazel is as interested as any of us; she was at the ball and noticed the rose on poor Olivia's gown."

John turned sharply, eyeing the widow with renewed interest.

"Mrs. Hazel was there? Can she throw any light?"

"Not much, I fear, but if you will let us hear your version——"

"The tale is hardly a pleasant one, especially as I have an idea that I have already told it to my own disadvantage, and set a couple of detectives at my heels. I have something more than a suspicion that I have been watched since yesterday morning."

"Oh, Jack, what an abominable thing! You must have some bitter enemy in the background." She glanced nervously at Mrs. Hazel, and the widow flashed back a quick signal in reply.

"At any rate, Mr. Hennesey is safe here from misjudgment," she said warmly. "My desire to hear the story from himself springs from a hope that my memory of that night may be of use in arriving at the truth."

John Hennesey rapidly recounted the events of the past few days, and the two women listened in unbroken silence until he mentioned his visit to Wilson, by Sebright's advice.

"Wilson, 15, George Street, Gray's Inn Road," Mrs. Hazel repeated in some surprise, "and you never heard of him before?"

"Certainly not. Why?"

"Why? oh—why I thought everyone in town had heard of Wilson, the arch-discoverer—the refuge of the scandalous and the scandalised."

"Happily the present is my first appearance in either character," said John coldly.

The widow seemed about to make some further remark, when the sound of a fresh arrival brought an interruption from Margaret.

"John," she said uneasily, "I forgot to tell you—Clem is in town. I hear him coming now—he is in the hall—with Mr. Sebright, I think."

"Clem—in town? Why hasn't he been to see me?"

"Because—but come with me, quick, into the next room. I must speak to you before you meet. Violet, will you take my place?"

She opened a door leading to her private sitting-room, and drew John away, wondering just as those other steps reached the landing.

"John," she said, when they were alone, "I must tell you before you and Clem meet—you will find him in a strange mood—he has had a horrible letter, unsigned, type-written, full of malicious accusations against you, trying to stir him into action against you in his position of legal heir. It has staggered and upset him, but be patient with him—he is so young—inexperienced."

"Good Heavens! Margaret, you can't mean to say that my brother suspects me?"

"He seems under some strange influence—not like himself."

John sat down like a man utterly perplexed and lost—harassed by some new idea, which yet he must reject.

"Margaret," he said at last, "Clem is changed, you say; has it ever occurred to you?"

The sister covered her face with her hands.

"Oh, John, I know what you mean. It is wicked, cruel, yet how can one help thinking! Clem is in debt—he knew everything—you are alike—in voice—in height. I dare hardly think. This very letter may be a part of the plot, an attempt to avert suspicion."

John remained silent some little time.

"Margaret," he said gravely at last, "I trust and believe that the injustice to Clem of our thoughts is as great as the injustice to myself. The boy is misguided, that is all. We had better go back to the drawing-room. You can depend upon me, I shan't quarrel with the lad, whatever folly he may commit."

When they returned to the larger room they found the widow at the tea-table, the lawyer in a state of high complacency, lounging at her side in the most comfortable chair the room afforded, his tea-cup placed within easy reach of his hand.

In spite of his own preoccupation, John found time to feel amused at the expression with which the widow's deep-fringed eyes rested upon the lawyer, and to wonder whether the latter's manifest air of satisfaction and home-like ease in Margaret's drawing-room resulted from the attentions of Mrs. Hazel.

Clem stood upon the hearthrug, looking moodily into his tea-cup, and responded coldly to the greeting of the elder brother.

He was a fairly exact copy of John Hennesey, allowing for the difference in their ages and the downy markings of the upper lip, which with the elder had developed into a thick mous ache.

By tacit consent the subject of the diamonds was avoided. John strove to be cordial, and asked his brother to dine with him that night.

"Thanks, I dine with Margaret," was the curt reply, and soon after he left the house.

John, returning to his hote an hour later, pondered more than the occasion seemed to warrant upon the widow's somewhat sudden and apparent development of interest in Sebright. The offer of possible assistance to himself had not been renewed, and the stories of his troubles had failed to elicit any such signs of personal favour as she had bestowed upon the suave lawyer.

Nearly three weeks passed away and no definite clue to the impersonator of John Hennesey had been discovered.

Under pressure, Olivia's letter had been at length submitted to the police, and the testimony it contained—the absolute conviction of the dead girl regarding the falseness and crime of the man whom she had evidently loved with unchecked fidelity—was felt to be almost conclusive.

Clem's moody bitterness increased; he had received a second warning letter, which, however, contained no hint at blackmailing. Margaret affirmed a belief that he was under some sinister influence; but, if so, he was dumb to all betrayal.

Meanwhile, in spite of the widening of the breach between the brothers, and the undisguised hostility of the younger, John made no effort at reprisals, and gave no hint that might tend to avert suspicion from himself by throwing it upon Clem, yet one or two damaging circumstances came to light.

Clement had been in town at the time of the ball, with the object of borrowing money from Mr. Winthrop to meet some pressing debt, but had urged his sister to keep his visit and his difficulties alike secret from John, whom he knew, he said, to be powerless to help him. Clement had, in fact, been sitting with Margaret when the note came from John, explaining the sudden press of work which would both prevent his dining in Eaton Place and joining Olivia in the evening.

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Winthrop had not had the required £200 to spare at the moment, but had advanced £50, and Margaret had heard no more of the affair.

In the midst of deeper anxieties she could afford to feel annoyed with her friend Violet Hazel, who appeared so ready to outrage all the canons of good taste by an absolute infatuation for William Sebright. She remained in town, prolonging a visit originally intended to be a flying one, long after the end of all ostensible reason. Sebright also stayed, detained by the interests of John Hennesey, and the widow's carriage was constantly to be seen waiting in Bedford Row. Her affairs must have been hitherto in a bewildering state of entanglement—so much explanation and legal assistance seemed suddenly required.

"Heaven knows that I believe in both my brothers!"

According to Margaret's notions, her friend was doing something more than encouraging a man, who, whatever his professional ability, was an insult to the memory of Squire Hazel, when viewed in the light of a possible successor.

As she sat one morning, expecting the arrival of the widow to luncheon, she pondered over the matter afresh, and determined that she would attempt one word of warning before it should be altogether too late. The expected knock at the door came nearly a quarter of an hour before the time fixed. Two minutes later Mrs. Winthrop found herself greeting Sebright, and feeling really exasperated at an appearance which she thought must be planned.

He looked even more beaming and self-satisfied than usual, and Mrs. Winthrop speedily learnt that any attempt at interference on her part would now be probably worse than useless. Violet Hazel had accepted the lawyer on the previous day; he had called to communicate the fact without delay to one of his oldest friends, and evidently in the express hope of being asked to remain and meet the widow at luncheon.

Margaret submitted with a very bad grace, offered her congratulations and the required invitation with as much amiability as she could master at the moment, and turned the conversation to John's affairs.

Sebright was honestly concerned for the difficulties of his old client, and became once more business-like and alert. He owned that Wilson seemed completely baffled for once.

"You know my devotion to your cause," said the lawyer: "yet you must own that circumstances——"

"Mr. Sebright," said Margaret, rising to her feet in her earnestness, "Heaven knows that I believe in both my brothers! Clem is foolish, but innocent of any guilt greater than his suspicion of his brother, I am convinced. Yet, of the two, sooner he could have done this thing than John, with the great love he bore and still bears for Olivia Hennesey."

A hand was laid upon her shoulder as she ceased speaking, and she turned to find Violet Hazel beside her. The widow had entered unannounced, and unobserved by Margaret, and must have heard her last words. Mrs. Winthrop, turning suddenly, was struck by the unusual pallor and pathos of the beautiful face and her kind heart reproached her. Was Violet already repenting her bargain?

"You startled me, dear," she said kindly. "I did not hear you come in; but you look half frightened yourself. Come and take your bonnet off, and let me give you congratulations, instead of this dismal talk. Mr. Sebright is going to stay to luncheon."

Mrs. Hazel's colour came back to her cheeks, but she did not quite recover her cheerfulness until the luncheon was nearly over, when she suddenly became inordinately gay.

Margaret grew correspondingly repelled, and, so soon as they reached the drawing-room, made some excuse for relieving the lovers of her society.

She remained absent nearly a quarter of an hour. When she returned there seemed some slight embarrassment, suggestive, Margaret thought, of what was under the circumstances an irritating stage of love-making. Mrs. Hazel was stooping ostensibly to recover a handkerchief dropped on the bear-skin rug but, in reality, Margaret thought, to hide some silly girlish confusion. Something she said quickly to Sebright made him desist from a natural and polite effort to assist her, and turn his attention to his hostess.

A moment later Violet Hazel came forward, still with heightened colour. She had in her hand a small flat jeweller's case, in which she had just replaced a sapphire pendant, a present from Sebright, bought that morning in Bond Street. The case had fallen on the bear-skin with the handkerchief when Margaret entered, and the entanglement of the fastening in the long fur had caused slight delay. Now Mrs. Hazel claimed her friend's appreciation of the jewels with an eagerness of delight which Margaret condemned as childish and irksome.

The widow left the house half an hour later with Sebright. From the stairs she ran back to the drawing-room door.

"Margaret, if you are alone to-night I should like to spend the evening with you."

"Come by all means. Sam is obliged to stay at Winthrop, I only did not ask you because——"

"Never mind why, I have asked myself. I, too, shall be alone and I wish to come."

Mrs. Hazel returned to Eaton Place, as she had proposed. During dinner Margaret thought her nervous, but afterwards, in the quiet of the drawing-room, the widow said, breaking a silence that was beginning to be awkward:

"Margaret, I never told you the history of that night of the ball as I knew it. It has been on my mind for some time."

"I understood that there was nothing to tell."

Margaret spoke rather sharply.

"I was on the point of detailing my impressions the afternoon that we were interrupted by Mr. Sebright and

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your brother Clem: afterwards I thought it best to be silent, but I must tell you to-night."

"If there is anything that can harm John—" began Margaret.

"You shall judge. You must hear what I have got to say, sooner or later, if not from me from someone else—so listen.

"When I first saw Olivia Hennesey that night, she was sitting alone in a small sort of ante-room, just a couple of lounges and some ferns in it. She had removed her mask and was leaning back with a strange fixed look upon her face. I thought she was ill, so I asked my partner to fetch an ice and went to her. She said however, that she was perfectly well, and had only come there, as I had done, for cool and quiet.

"Presently, by way of saying something, I remarked; 'I am so sorry your cousin is not coming this evening. It seems fated that I am never to meet him.'

"She looked at me in a surprised sort of way.

"'Who? Jack. Jack is coming.'

"'Margaret told me an hour or two ago that he had sent word it was impossible.'

"'Oh!—a message. Yes, I remember, but he is coming, for all that.' She smiled in such a satisfied, happy way, that I could not help saying: 'Ah, you have had later information?' just laughing a little.

"'No, I have heard nothing; but it is very odd, I know he is coming, I am waiting for him here. Do you never have strange presentiments—intuition?'

"'Very often, and they are invariably wrong.'

"'That will not be the case with mine this evening,' she said, with quiet conviction.

"Just then my partner returned with the ice, and soon after I was obliged to leave her. I thought her mood a strange one; I thought it stranger still, when, half-an-hour afterwards, looking into the ante-room, I saw her talking earnestly with a man in the dress of Romeo. Evidently Mr. Hennesey had come.

"I had no chance of speaking to him, he never left her side; but whenever I could I watched this Romeo with some interest. You had talked so constantly about your Jack, that you had roused my curiosity, and the whole affair struck me as peculiar.

"I had dined with the Sinclairs, and arranged to stay the night, instead of returning to Kensington. The carriage would not hold us all, and Mrs. Sinclair left first, and I with her. On reaching the house she told the coachman to drive back immediately for the rest of the party. I suppose the servants inside had not expected our return so early. At any rate, we were kept waiting a few moments on the step.

"It was a warm night, but dark. We must have been almost hidden by the shadow of the porch. While we stood there a man came up the pavement, and the light from the gas lamp—which did not reach us—fell upon him. He wore a long overcoat and a crush hat, yet the figure struck me as familiar. A hansom was crawling up the street from the opposite direction. He hailed it almost at our doorway; the street to him must have seemed otherwise empty.

"For a moment I saw his face distinctly as he lifted it to give the direction: 15, George Street, Gray's Inn Road. As he raised his arm to throw open the door of the hansom, the cape of the light Inverness fell back, and I further saw Romeo's starched sleeve which had been before my eyes for the last hour. Then I knew why the figure had seemed familiar. Evidently Mr. Hennesey had walked from the Seymours until he met a cab. I thought the address he had given an odd one, and I was disappointed in his face; both dwelt in my memory, also the tone of the voice.

"The incidents of the evening seemed suggestive of a sequel, but none came for some time.

"Mr. Hennesey remained abroad, and Olivia died; then I heard of the loss of the diamonds. Of course I held my tongue, but I came up to London all in the heat really to try and see John Hennesey and satisfy myself as to his identity.

"I did see him here that afternoon; but not until to-day have I been able to prove who the man under the lamp-post really was."

There was a sudden dropping of the sustained tones—a pallor and a drooping of the white lids, as of one who, having reached the end of a painful task, yet sees a sequel full of bitterness.

* * * * *

About the time that Mrs. Hazel reached this point in her narration, John Hennesey and a sergeant of police were mounting the stairs of No. 15, George Street. Hennesey's visit was an appointment of some days standing, made with the avowed intent of forcing the hand of the detective, to whose manipulation of his affairs he greatly attributed the growing hostility of general opinion. The additional presence of the police sergeant was an arrangement of a few hours.

Face to face with Wilson, however, Hennesey's views seemed to have undergone some modification.

He appeared to be in no hurry to bring his charge, and anxious not to raise Mr Wilson's wrath. For the first time he openly expressed doubts regarding Clem, which Wilson listened to with a polite smile of attention.

"You can hardly suppose you are suggesting a new idea to my mind, Mr. Hennesey, or that I have not admired your reticence about suspicions it was impossible for you to avoid. I may tell you that several circumstances have transpired that have an awkward look for your brother; but, naturally, I have felt some delicacy in approaching the subject with you. The temptation was, of course, a great one. The diamonds——"

During this speech the sergeant who had accompanied John had risen from his chair and gone over to the window, which was behind Wilson's chair, as though suffering from the sultry heat of the night.

A sharp turn brought him up close to the private detective, who was sitting easily, his arms resting on the sides of the chair. The sergeant suddenly leant forward and seized him a little above the wrists with a grip which made Wilson writhe round in a blaze of wrath and astonishment that yet seemed tinged with alarm.

"That's all very fine talking, Lawyer Sebright, but I shall have to trouble you to come along with me presently on account of those same diamonds which you know more about than either of the Mr. Henneseys, and wash that face of yours."

The man, pinioned in his chair, tried to struggle to his feet, but the sergeant had the advantage both in position and muscle.

"Come, now, don't," said he, unmoved and calm. "Don't ye force me to put them persuaders on. You're a clever fellow—clever as ever I did see, but the game's up, and swearin' won't help ye. Mr. Hennesey's here; he was only leadin' you on, bless you! just to keep you suspectin', and see how far you would go. I've a mate outside. I always did think that mug of yourn were plaster of Paris, but so long as you did our work and acted on the square it worn't no matter of consequence."

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This speech was naturally spasmodic, in spite of the unemotionalism, owing to the struggles of the writhing figure in the chair. At its close the figure grew still; defeat was with it, and despair.

"Tell me," he said, "how have you hunted me down?"

The voice was no longer muffled, and its familiarity coming from the painted mask, struck painfully upon the heart of the man who had been wronged.

"Well, if you're bent on knowing," said the sergeant, "it was the lady as did it. She showed us the trick of that nice little safe of yourn."

There was a sharp cry of rage and pain, the first and last sign of weakness that Sebright showed.

* * * * *

"That he was not Mr. Hennesey I felt convinced that first afternoon," Mrs. Hazel was saying.

"Oh, Violet! And you have been silent all this time, when a word——"

"Be quiet. What proof had I but the cut of a sleeve seen in the dark? But to-day—only to-day—I have proved not only who the man was, but his identity with Romeo."

Margaret was struck with a fear hardly less alarming than that which she had just escaped, and which made further questioning impossible. She remained silent—waiting.

"He was Wilson, the detective," Mrs. Hazel said, still with that touch of final resignation.

Mrs. Winthrop was entirely taken aback. After the first throb of intense relief this seemed the wildest hypothesis, and untenable. Her mind could seize no line of connection with this man.

"Can't you see the deduction?" Mrs. Hazel went on. "Wilson stole the diamonds. Wilson, to avert suspicion, has secretly helped to keep it alive against Mr. Hennesey; he was probably the sender of the typewritten letters, and Wilson was recommended by Sebright."

"They are in collusion, then? Oh, my poor Violet!"

"They are one and the same. As you said yourself, the secret has been too well kept for more than one to be in it. As for me, why do you pity me? My own fear has been that I should overdo my part, that you would find me out. I was angry sometimes that you should think I should care."

Slowly Margaret realised the truth.

"Remember your own words, Margaret. Surely no cost is too great to save an innocent man and an honourable name. And I resolved to save your brother if I could. When Sebright came into the room that first day I recognised him. I led Sebright to say the address in George Street and any doubt I might have had was removed. Still I had no proof. I fooled and flattered him to the top of his bent, hoping to lead him to commit himself, but he was too clever for that. Then I led him to think that I was in love with him, and used my poor money as a bait. I soon found that he had considerable influence over Clem, and had lent him money, having him to some extent in his power.

"I grew very anxious to see Wilson, and wrote once or twice to appoint an interview. The detective was coy, and not anxious for the test; but I succeeded at last by intimating that I had important secret information to impart upon the Hennesey case. Then he called upon me at dusk. I had the lamps lit, and while he was there, moved one, and on some excuse raised the shade; but I frankly own that I gained nothing—the disguise baffled me.

"You can imagine that I was careful in what I said. I merely insisted on my conviction that John Hennesey, and no one else, had been at the ball and stolen the diamonds; but I think my friend was a little disappointed at the lack of anything that could be called evidence. He said, of course, that he had hoped to hear something that might tend to clear Mr. Hennesey.

"I began to see that my only chance was to get at Sebright's papers. At this stage I went to Scotland Yard and reported my impressions. I don't think they were taken very seriously; but as a result detectives were put on to watch Sebright and Wilson. And the counter suspicion delayed, I think, Mr. Hennesey's arrest. Of course, it was so manifestly impossible that I might be mistaken in everything but the address given by the man under the gas lamp, that the story was not held sufficient warrant for immediate official measures, and it rested with me to prove it. Wilson's transformations were so cleverly managed that up to yesterday his identity had not been established; from what I could gather there was a point of disappearance, where so far he had eluded all vigilance.

"In my visits to Bedford Row I noticed a portable iron safe fastened with a Chubb's patent, the key of which was never out of Sebright's possession. I made all sorts of plans for getting hold of that key. I even descended to a promise of marriage, and then chance favoured me. I asked him last night to bring me some of a particular kind of bonbon, and to-day he was so infatuated that he let me search for them in his coat pockets, knowing that I should find the sapphires. Of course, I stole the key, slipped it up my wide linen cuff, sheltered by the lapel of his coat.

"He carried it always in a small breast-pocket, with a note-book.

"In case he should miss it before leaving, I shook it down into the fur rug. Naturally, it was most important that he should not suspect me. I covered it afterwards, while you and he were talking. He had an appointment in West Kensington—a will case which I knew would occupy him for some hours, for he had told me about it. Directly he left me I ordered a carriage and drove to Bedford Row.

"He had a habit of never saying at the office the exact hour of his return, thinking this had a beneficial effect on the industry of his two clerks; and his caution now served me in good stead.

"I told the clerks that I had an appointment with their master at half-past four—that he would certainly return to keep it. They were so accustomed to see me there, treated as Sebright's most honoured client, that not the slightest demur was made at showing me to his private room.

"Once there, the door shut, the rest was easy.

"In my own mind I had arranged that should I fail to find anything compromising I would at once return to you and replace the key in the fur rug—where, when Sebright missed it, it would be found. I unlocked the safe, trembling with anxiety lest I should be discovered. At first I found only deeds and legal documents, coupons, securities—nothing bearing upon the case.

"But on opening one drawer, I saw a packet of letters addressed to Wilson, 15 George Street; almost at the top were my own, with pencilled notes written across which I dared not stay to read. Beneath I found a small sealed parcel, some jeweller's instruments, and some scraps of filagree gold, like that used in the leaves of the rose, also half-a-dozen letters written in cipher, and all bearing the post-mark of Amsterdam.

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"Stowed away underneath was a small book of notes in Sebright's handwriting. It was just a series of remarks and memoranda, and I saw enough towards the end to assure me that I had succeeded. I fancy that book will afford some curious revelations.

"I quickly replaced everything. Then rang the bell and told the clerk I could wait no longer, something unexpected must have detained Mr. Sebright. I was sitting over by the window then, looking at the *Times*. I was bowed out and drove at once to the nearest office to wire to Scotland Yard. Within twenty minutes a detective arrived.

"Sebright had not returned. I gave up the key and left the man in possession. *Voilà tout*, I had a cup of tea, dressed, and came here."

Mrs. Winthrop would not let her friend leave her that night.

They were both nervous and overwrought. Margaret excited and thankful, yet feeling as a reproach her want of spontaneous gratitude, her inner shrinking from the part the widow had played. She wished that her husband was in town, or that John would come to relieve her of the burden, and supply her deficiencies.

John did not appear until the following morning. Then, if he felt critical over the audacity that had saved him, he was careful not to show it. Mrs. Hazel could have no reason to complain of the warmth of his recognition and gratitude, yet she was cross and almost rude in her disclaimers.

The trial of Sebright was effectually a *cause célèbre*. The Hennesey diamonds were found almost intact, he having been afraid to hurry them into the market.

It was from Clem, on the very afternoon of the ball, that Sebright had learnt that John would be unable to keep his engagement, and other particulars needful to the scheme for obtaining the diamonds which he quickly perfected. He owned that the idea had been spontaneous—springing from opportunity.

John caused the rose to be re-fashioned, and the diamonds re-set; but for a while it seemed probable that in his lifetime no woman would have the right to wear them.

After the excitement of the trial, Violet Hazel fell ill, and Margaret persuaded her to spend the winter with her in the South of France. Mrs. Winthrop had long since ceased to criticise her friend; both women were glad to escape notoriety and gossip; and Margaret, watching the widow's softened beauty, and shy, timid ways, wondered over her; and pondered to find the motive power that had transformed her into the daring heroine of an ugly adventure, formed her own conclusions.

"I wish John would marry," she said suddenly one day; "it is bad for the estate, for the family, especially bad for Clem."

Mrs. Hazel had risen, and was staring out of the window.

"What of the memory, Margaret; and your own words—the great love he bore, and still bears, for Olivia Hennesey! Who is worthy to succeed her?"

Margaret rose and put her arm about her friend's neck.

"Violet, I think that Olivia's answer to that question would be, the woman who saved John's honour and good name."

All the world said this would be a fitting ending to the romance, yet John himself was slow to see it.

Mrs. Winthrop tried gently to enlighten him, with results which were not unsatisfactory to those chiefly concerned.

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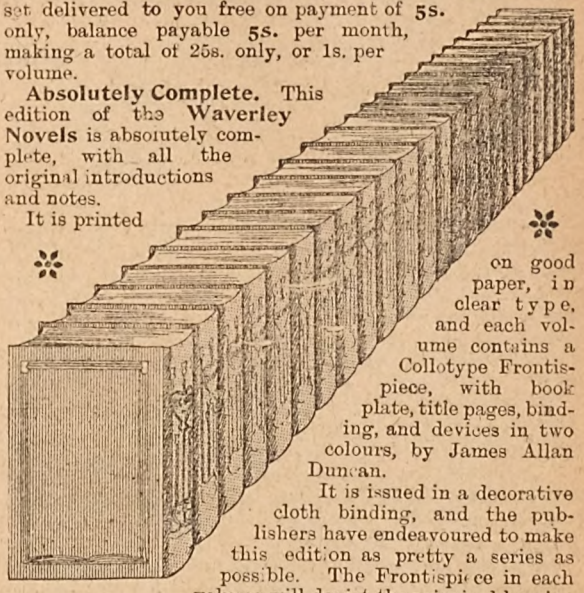

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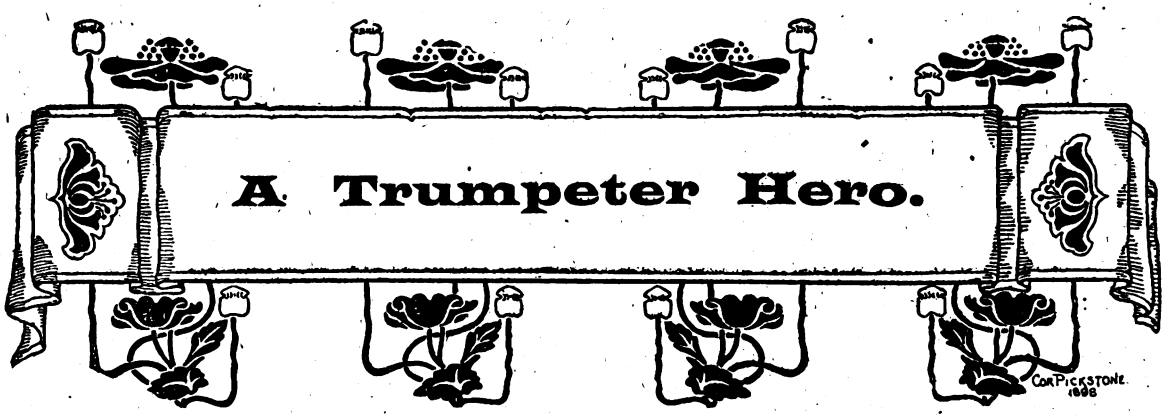
A Trumpeter Hero.



He was under an unlucky star, this handsome trumpeter, this Jean Blouart, as he called himself, or Victoire, as his comrades called him. And everything smiled upon him in his little world; no one could sound the reveillé as loud, as long, or as joyously as he could sound it, and they were always able to recognise him, no matter how great the distance, by his alert and decided step.

He played it well, that loud-tongued clarion, for Victoire was a true musician, who had spent his childhood listening to the birds and fashioning, when guarding his flocks in the beautiful country of Touraine, strange instruments from the barks of the willows, to mingle their shrill or mellow notes with the thousand-and-one voices of Nature.

Naturally he was happy now that he possessed a real instrument, and every evening during his life in the garrison, and when the duties of the day were done, went to exercise it upon the banks of the Orne and to hear the echoes carried by the wind and reverberating from tower to tower of those grey old churches of Caen.

It was the hour of sunset, however, that Jean Blouart liked best of all, when the voices of the bells flung themselves into space in a gigantic concert, at first a soft, vague harmony, like a rocking cradle, then mounting and resounding tones, ringing and chiming and dying away upon the evening breeze, note by note, like the dropping pearls of a necklace.

Jean Blouart remained always a long while listening to this heavenly music, and from time to time adding to the melody a long and rolling blast from his own instrument.

In fact, he had had but one sorrow in the whole of his life—the leaving behind him in that same country of Touraine his old father, already far advanced in age and alone in that desolate dwelling. He consoled himself, however, with the reflection that time passed quickly, and that now but two years remained to him of service.

And sometimes, while listening to the voices of these bells, Jean Blouart fancied them the Angelus of his native village, and saw before him the humble cabin surrounded by its green trellises, and with the old father smoking upon the doorstep. But he was only twenty-two years of age, this handsome Victoire, and at that age, as everyone knows, everything seems so very gay and so very easy.

Besides, garrison life was full of distractions—talks with his comrades, meetings with the other buglers, the morning reveillé, the evening retreat, the passage through the crowded street, the blonde heads of the peeping demoiselles, and the rest under the shade of the trees when the exercises were over.

The days were truly going at a racing pace when one morning, as Jean Blouart got up as usual to sound the reveillé, he found that war had been declared.

* * * * *

They had been fighting all day long. Already the sun was low upon the horizon, and still they battled, for both sides had sworn to conquer, and no one dreamt of recoiling. And the trumpet rolled and cried its stirring music, sending its inspiring notes into the very heart of the *mêlée*, mingling its voice with the fracas of the cannon, the screaming of the balls, and the shouts and groans of the combatants.

Jean Blouart was always to the front, dragging at his heels the soldiers drunk with carnage and grimed with powder. They fought now hand to hand and body to body, Victoire, as if determined to justify the name his friends had given him, and, like a horse that has run away, literally throwing himself upon the enemy, still sounding the charge without relaxing.

All at once Jean Blouart saw no more about him the uniforms of the French regiments; instead, before him, behind him, upon every side of him, there rose a solid rampart of the opposing forces, a living wall of flesh and bayonets, through which he sought in vain to make a passage. Guns turned upon him from every direction, swords pricked him in the arm, the face, the sides—he had flung himself into the trap; it had closed upon him—he was a prisoner.

* * * * *

The sun no longer lighted the desolate country; night slowly descended from the heavens; the struggle for the moment was finished. Blouart, still a prisoner, walked in the midst of the encompassing soldiers, and saw as in a dream defiling before him the fields, the hills, and sombre forests. He walked mechanically, and always in his ears the fracas of that ended battle.

Before long they halted in the shelter of the forest, and lighted the camp fires. The flames cast a sinister light upon the trunks of the trees; the trumpeter threw himself upon the ground, and, overcome by fatigue, slept and dreamt.

A scene in his childhood. The sun shines, the birds sing blithely in the hedges, and he sees again his beloved home; this time his mother seated at the window spinning at her wheel. And he? Well he, a soldier then as now, has just arrived from school, a soldier three feet high, proud as a peacock, and with a splendid gun

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plucked from the hazel tree, borne upon his shoulder.

Suddenly a passing dog upon the highway stops to bark at him; he shrieks and runs with all his legs to bury his head in the lap of his mother.

"For shame!" she cries, "for shame, my boy! A true soldier runs from nothing!"

A true soldier runs from nothing! It seemed to Blouart that a voice repeated that in his ear. He rose quickly and looked about him. Everything slept beside him; everything slept in the silent forest. Even the step of the sentinel was dulled by the moss. The heavens, resplendent with stars, shone between the branches of the trees, and the breeze that always heralds the dawn came to his nostrils freighted with the perfume of the peaceful wood. Victoire passed his hand across his brow. He remembered now—he was a prisoner. He must rouse himself; he must save himself, or he must die. But he was watched; he could not stir.

The hours passed, the horizon widened, and he saw a road winding along the side of the forest, above him a chain of timbered hills. The road ascended abruptly. Beside it was a ravine, at the bottom of it a roaring torrent, and they gave the signal of departure. This time, however, it was not Victoire who gave it; no, and sorrowfully he regarded his silent instrument, henceforth dumb and voiceless.

A mad desire to die, to end everything, had seized upon him, but "a true soldier runs from nothing." The words persistently resounded in his ears, and he walked away between two soldiers who never took their eyes from him. No matter, the precipice was there beside him; it was deliverance; it was also death. No matter, again.

Victoire plunged forward; there was a cry, a crash, and the soldier at the edge of the abyss had disappeared into its depths. Blouart leapt at the same time—too late, a hand of iron had closed upon his arm, and the muzzle of a pistol pressed his brow. He thought of his father, alone, without a son, without love or care, and ending his days in tears over his desolate life. Jean Blouart no longer had the courage to die.

Meanwhile the officer in command had run forward and ordered the weapons to be lowered.

"Down with them!" he cried; "down with them *at once*! No harm must be done the prisoner!"

"No harm? Then what more terrible suffering," thought Blouart, as he heard him, "had they yet in store for him?"

And now the sun illumined the hills and valley. Along the roadway the oaks and beeches extended their nervous arms, from each leaf hanging a drop of dew, from each leaf a diamond, and all was brilliant and animated under the dazzling sky that gave them light and life.

But Victoire saw nothing of that which surrounded him. What to him was the splendour of Nature—to him, with anguish in his soul? Still he was young, his career before him; oh, no! one thing was certain, Victoire no longer desired to die!

Presently the top of the hill was gained, and the commanding officer again approached Blouart and ordered his hands to be untied.

"For now," he said to him, drawing him forward to the crest of the knoll, "you are going to sound your trumpet here where they can see you, those men below there in the plain—soldiers whom you are going to rally. When you have sounded as I bid you, freedom is yours!"

"And what soldiers are they?" asked Victoire quietly.

"What matters it to you?" coldly responded the officer. "*You* will do as I bid you or you are a dead man!"

And Blouart saw for a fact the muzzles of the guns menacingly trained upon him, and then the men about him were gone from sight, concealed in the bushes at the sides of the route.

"Sound!" cried the officer's voice; "sound, I command you! And you, you others, fire if he does not obey me!" and the answering click of the triggers was plainly audible in the stillness.

Victoire raised the trumpet to his lips, then lowered his eyes to the field below him, where in a little depression of the ground he saw a small encampment of men and horses—an encampment unmistakably of the French.

He knew at last what they meant him to do. They intended, those people who had taken him prisoner, to draw them into an abuscade, and he, in his uniform, and he, with his music, was to serve to this end.

"Play! Play, I tell you!" cried again the implacable voice.

And Blouart held the clarion to his lips and did begin to play, the joyous notes of the instrument ringing through the air like a merry song, but to Victoire like a cry of desolation and of death.

Still he played on, and the camp beneath him began to be agitated. They saw him, this friend that called to them from the heights above, and whom they gazed upon and whom they recognised with so much pride. He played on, and they, his people, began to move towards him; played with all his skill and strength, the notes following precipitately one upon the other, or with long and joyous rolls.

All at once, down in that little valley, a bell began to strike—a bell that was counting the hour of twelve. A veil of blood passed suddenly before Victoire's eyes; he heard anew in those muffled tones the Angelus of his Touraine village, the bells of Caen, and saw again the walk of chestnut trees, his cabin home, his father, and his beloved France, the France which now he was betraying!

Instead of sacrificing life and of yielding up his last drop of blood for her, he was willing to ruin her, helping her to die, and calling his comrades, his own blood brothers, to an ambuscade and to a shameful death.

In short, he, Jean Blouart, whose eyes had never fallen before the eyes of another, was a traitor to his country! And every rustle of the leaves, every twitter of the birds in the branches, every stroke of that distant but resounding bell, cried out to him the same thing:

"Traitor! traitor!"

He dropped his trumpet.

"Sound, I command you, sound again!" called that pitiless voice.

"Sound again!" began Blouart, but stopped abruptly; a thought had come to him. "Sound again? Yes, yes," he responded, "I am going to sound again!" and with all the strength that remained to him, all the pride and courage of his honest heart, he raised the bugle to his lips and sent forth, first, the wild, fierce notes of the call to arms, the alert, and the quick retreat. Far and wide the trumpet's voice rang through the air, and then there was a rattling volley, a shower of balls, and Victoire, the trumpeter, face downwards upon the ground, was dead!

E. H. POSENER.

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A LAWYER'S ADVICE.

EDWARD BRETT was a bachelor. In one sense this fact added to his philosophical resignation of mind concerning his lack of clients. In another sense, it kept him in an unenviable frame of mind because he was denied, through his impecunious condition, the luxury of a wife and home.

Brett was always of a domestic temperament, fond of home comforts and caring little for the amusements that appeal to most men of his age. Still, if he were unable to keep up an establishment worthy of such a woman as he would choose for his wife, and worthy of his own personal dignity, it were better to remain single.

It was years since he had been called to the Bar, and, in reality, it did begin to look a little dark for his future prospects that business with him did not begin to pick up a little.

There was Jack Erwin, who had been at school with him—a few years of struggling in his chosen profession, medicine, and then unbounded success from every point of view; he had grown immensely wealthy, had married and settled down, so Brett had heard.

One morning in August, Brett was stretched out at full length on the leathern covered lounge with a cushion beneath his head, smoking a cigar and trying to forget his troubles, when there came a tap upon the door marked "Private."

He sprang up from his recumbent posture, laid down his cigar, and proceeded to open the door. As he did so his eyes rested upon the supple figure of a gracefully-formed young woman, who answered his polite greeting, and, advancing into the room, cast herself into the chair Brett indicated, glancing up at him with a little flash of coquetry in her look as she did so. He seated himself opposite her and waited for her to state her errand.

She was inclined to be very coolly deliberate, and bore his scrutinising gaze with marked self-possession, as she drew forth her card case, extracted a card therefrom, and daintily tendered it. He took the card and read "Elsie Manfield."

"You are Mr. Edward Brett, I presume?" she asked in a well-modulated, musical voice.

Brett courteously bowed assent.

"At your service. What can I do for you?"

She fixed her eyes on his face with a keen, searching look.

"I came to consult with you concerning a most important matter. I hope I do not intrude!"

"My time is entirely disengaged," replied Brett in his most amiable tones, "and I shall be most happy to advise you to the best of my ability."

She blushed faintly and prettily as she gracefully inclined her head, and Brett felt his heart give one or two sudden bounds.

"It is a perplexing subject," she began, a slight shadow crossing her face, "and I scarcely know what to say first."

Her hesitation gave Brett an opportunity to take a more leisurely glance at the lady's personality without appearing to so do, as her eyes were downcast.

She was young, not more than eighteen, and a pure blonde, with those exceedingly rare dark, velvety eyes and lashes that are seldom met with, but that accentuated her beauty greatly. Her figure was full-rounded, with graceful curvings, and her features were small and of cameo-like delicacy and as clear-cut. Her attire, together with the appearance of several costly rings upon her small and shapely hands, indicated wealth, and already visions of a liberal fee flitted before Brett's mental vision.

"I wish I could help you; perhaps the best way will be to plunge into the subject, stating the simple facts as plainly as possible," Brett ventured, with a smile of polite encouragement.

"Very true," she murmured, "if I but knew how. It is in reference to a will, and also to a very perplexing and annoying position in which I am placed relative to that will. You will understand the annoyance and my perplexity when I have proceeded further with my story. I am but a woman, with all a woman's frailty and helplessness to combat the cruel scheming and greed of those who are so placed as to be able to show their power over me."

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Here the fair head drooped, and the dark eyes dimmed with tears, but these signs of emotion passed after a moment, and she continued:

"To tell you all I have been forced to suffer and endure would be impossible. You want the plain facts as briefly as I can give them to you.

"Not long since a near relative died, leaving a large fortune. I became chief beneficiary under his will, being the only person having any claim upon the deceased while living. This relative was always of eccentric disposition, and was fond of imposing difficult conditions upon people who sought his favour.

"Particularly disagreeable did he grow to be in all his associations with me, and to crown his peculiar whims he made certain conditions in his will whereby I must marry before August 30th of the present year, or forfeit the greater part of the fortune. In case of my forfeiture the money will go to another.

"Those are the main facts in the case." A rosy blush suffusing her cheeks, "what would you advise me to do? You can readily understand my anxiety, Mr. Brett," imploringly, with the dark eyes upturned to his.

"The 30th of August! The present month, and—why the thirtieth falls on—the thirtieth is to-morrow!" Brett gasped in amazement.

She nodded her head childishly, and drew forth from a small silk hand-bag a roll of parchment and handed it to Brett. "That is a copy of the will; please read it and tell me if there is any way out of this terrible difficulty."

Mr. Edward Brett unfolded the document and glanced carefully over the contents, his professional eye instantly comprehending its import, which was to the effect that the property willed to his would-be client was valued at £100,000 and the conditions imposed were that the girl and the property should be under the authority of guardians until she came of age, or until she married, in which case she must marry before August the thirtieth of present year or forfeit the estate.

Brett folded the document when he had finished reading it, and reflected. The girl had already told him she was but eighteen. He was a pretty good judge of a person's age by the appearance of the person, yet, in the case of women it is more difficult to form correct estimates. He glanced at her casually and placed her age at about twenty-four. Of course, she had told him correctly, however, there was no motive for deception in the matter.

Another fifteen minutes passed in the asking of questions relative to the conditions of the will, and they conversed for some time regarding it.

Brett could see but one way for his fair client to get out of her difficulties, but it was natural that the suggestion of that solution should be embarrassing to him.

He reflected again. The young lady's countenance betrayed extreme anxiety and agitation. Brett hesitated and then said, taking out his watch and glancing at it:

"It is now three o'clock. To-day is the last day."

A moan broke from the lips of the girl, "Oh, what shall I do, Mr. Brett—what *must* I do?"

"I see but one way out of it," he ventured. "I am a business man, my methods are business methods, understand; you came to me for counsel, and, unpleasant as my advice may be to meet, I advance it as comprehending and solving your rather remarkable situation——"

"And that advice is—" she broke in impulsively, "to——"

"To get married," Brett replied calmly.

"To get married!" she gasped, "but how can I? I have no one of whom I have ever thought of in that light, I——"

"My dear young lady, this is not a time for consideration of the matter from a romantic standpoint; it seems to call for very active measures in a very brief space of time."

He was slowly pacing the floor. Her eyes followed his every movement with nervous anticipation. She seemed to be trying to make up her mind to some action on her own part. She hesitated, a deep crimson blush mantling her cheek, then rose and advanced timidly towards him:

"Mr. Brett."

He cast a quick, questioning glance at her. She stood before him confusedly, the words she was trying to speak dying away upon her lips. It was becoming a painful ordeal for Brett, and he wished himself well out of the strange position he was being placed in.

"Won't you sit down here while we think matters over a little more?" he suggested, leading her to a chair by the window and seating himself close by her. Her agitation was apparent. Brett began to suspect that she had a suggestion which she did not quite like to offer after all.

"You won't, I beg, think badly of me," she began confusedly, "but—but—you see, it's this way. If I don't marry, somebody else will get the property?"

"Exactly," promptly assented the lawyer.

"And—I—I—don't want them to."

"Naturally enough."

"And I don't even know any gentlemen whom—whom I ever thought of marrying, except one, and he——"

"Except one. Ah, there is one, then! Have you known him long?" asked Brett, with increasing curiosity.

"No; only—only a *very* short time," she answered, her eyes dropping to the little chatelaine watch guard at her belt.

"Has he ever proposed marriage to you?"

"No, that's just it. *I* couldn't ask *him*, you know."

"Do you care for him?"

"I'm afraid—I do," she replied shyly, the blush on her cheek growing painfully hot and crimson.

She gave one swift, upward glance at Brett, and then her eyes fell again. That glance was an almost paralysing revelation to Edward Brett. He felt as if he were stifling for an instant, his heart seemed to suddenly stop beating and stand still. She saw that his lips had grown pale and were twitching nervously. He reached out his hand toward her with an impulsiveness that astonished himself:

"Miss Manfield, I love you. Will you marry me?"

A little sigh came from the girl's lips; a pallor swept over her face.

"You—surely—you do not mean it," she said. "How can you love me, me, whom you have never before seen?"

"It does look very much as if I were taking advantage of your helpless situation, but I am sincere in what I say. In this last brief hour I have learnt to love you. It seems strange to you, no doubt, but an irresistible attraction drew me to you from the first. I would not have dared presume to tell you this for many months to come, had not the conditions, that seemed so unfavourable to you, proved so auspicious to the love that possessed my heart at first sight, yet, if you cannot return that love, I swear to you never to betray the trust imposed in

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me. Should you marry me, that being a way out of your difficulties, you need not fear that I will in any way forfeit the confidence reposed in me."

"I know—oh, I know. I have already learnt your kindness. I cannot tell you more than I have already. That is not all the story, however; you ought to know it all, and then—"

"Never mind the rest; it can wait. I know enough. Can you trust me?" He held out his hands to her. She stood there before him, superb in her beauty.

"May Heaven help me," she said, with a little sob. "Yes, I do trust you. I will marry you. You will find me in my hotel at two this afternoon. You may come for me there."

Then the door closed and Brett was alone—alone to think over what had passed and ask himself if he were dreaming.

* * * * *

They were just returning from the registry office where the ceremony had taken place. Brett could not realize it all.

His head was in a whirl, and his heart was beating tumultuously.

He seemed suddenly to have lost his senses, to have taken up his being in another world. At length he found voice and spoke to her.

"I must leave you at your hotel and take the afternoon express for Bridgeton. A letter received from there demands my presence there to-morrow. Upon my return I will call on you and learn how further I may serve you. Be perfectly easy. Do not worry. Although speaking hastily, too hastily, in making an avowal of my love, let it be forgiven me inasmuch as I was sincere; that cannot prevent me being a steadfast friend to you, but I shall never obtrude myself upon you. Always remember that whenever you may need me I shall come to you."

She heard the half-sob in his throat as he spoke. She knew then, that, strange as it might be, he loved her.

"You will hear from me as soon as you return," she said simply.

The carriage had drawn up before the hotel; he had accompanied her to the ladies' reception room. He held out his hand in good-bye, and as she laid hers in his strong clasp her eyes met his for one brief instant, then fell before what she saw in them.

Her heart rebelled in one strange cry against this parting, and the sweet sensation of a still stranger love swept over her as, with clasped hands, they stood almost heart to heart; strangers, and yet husband and wife.

* * * * *

It was ten o'clock on the morning after Brett's strange bridal when he reached James and Burleigh's offices and was ushered into the private office of Mr. Burleigh, and that gentleman plunged immediately *in medias res:*

"You see we've just got round to this business of Erwin's—the late John Erwin, you know—schoolfellow of yours some years since. You know all about it, of course?"

"Erwin—Jack Erwin? Is he *dead?* It can't be!" ejaculated Brett, at a loss to comprehend what Burleigh was saying.

"Certainly—thought you were aware of the facts, of course; and, as I remarked before, we've been so very busy, we've just got to the will, you know. The matter has been in our hands for the last year, but slight complications having arisen, we have been all this time trying to get as far as the will. You are chief executor. He leaves his widow about £100,000. You know his wife, I presume—she was Miss Manfield—Elsie Manfield, and—why, what's the matter, man, are you ill? Here, sit here, and I'll get you a glass of brandy. Vertigo, I presume. Used to have bad attacks of that myself some years ago. Don't you call that pretty fair brandy?

"Well, as I was saying, Erwin married Miss Manfield—fine girl.

"Erwin was madly in love with his wife, and left her everything unconditionally, and—ah, excuse me for a moment—be back in a moment," as a call came from Mr. James summoning him into his office.

Brett finished his business with James and Burleigh in time to catch a late train back. When he reached his rooms, he received a letter that had arrived the evening before. Brett broke the seal and read the closely written page of large-sized note paper. It was from—his *wife.*

Brett felt as if he had assumed the identity of some other man, for he could scarcely recognise himself in the *rôle* of bridegroom as his eyes fell upon the first words of the letter:

MY OWN HUSBAND.—How strange it seems to write the words! How strange it will seem to you to read them! I scarcely know how to gain the courage to come to make the confession I must make; and still more do I wonder how I ever dared to take the step I did in regard to our marriage.

You said you loved me. I could hardly believe it possible that that for which I had prayed had come to pass; and yet some strange, strange influence has been drawing us together for years, yes, years. Before this time you have learnt a part of the truth: that I am the widow of Jack Erwin, your old schoolfellow. How often I have heard him talk of you and your college days together, and how little he knew what strange, strange fate was even then at work bringing us toward each other slowly but surely.

You have learnt this much from the lawyers, that he left all his money to me, *unconditionally.* And now comes my confession.

Edward, my husband, first of all let me tell you that longer than I dare acknowledge it to have been, longer than I dare remember, I have loved you with a blind, unreasoning, but pure love. I saw you but once, years ago, long before I married Jack, and at that one sight of your face I loved, I dare not say how much. You never even saw me, that you remember, before yesterday. I married Jack and tried to make him happy, and, I think succeeded. I never expected to meet you upon earth, but I could never have forgotten your face. It has haunted me through all these years.

Jack died, and I mourned him sincerely, but my sorrow and loneliness only revivified the love for you that I had tried to bury. I did not know how to reach you, or what to say to you after having found you, that would explain the state of my feelings, and yet not place me in an unwomanly light in your eyes, until the idea of writing out a false will occurred to me, and so I trumped up the story of my property and self being under guardianship, of my having to marry before a certain date, and all the rest of it. I *thought* you would do just as you did; you see I presupposed your chivalry, and everything worked beautifully! I have obtained through strategy the man I love, but you have acknowledged that you love me; you can't deny it!

I never would dare talk as I am writing, but love makes us bold. Can you forgive your wife's duplicity for the sake of the cause?—Yours for ever, ELSIE.

Mrs. Edward Brett, whose husband almost idolises her, by the way, often laughingly declares that, as far as her experience goes, consulting a lawyer is very expensive business, as she herself once gave £100,000 for a bit of legal advice. S. BAILEY.

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Mohammed Ben Ali Fallen Among Thieves.

MOHAMMED Ben Ali to Ismail Mustapha, love that dieth not and greetings of great joy.

Behold, the wisdom of the land of sand and pomegranates hath stood me in great stead this day; whereof, I now sit me down to write unto thee the true and touching story. To-day I was walking in the street called Broad, because it is so narrow and crowded, when a benevolent-looking stranger, with a long, white beard, accosted me, saying:

"Hullo! Sheik Abdallah, how are you?"

"I am not the Sheik Abdallah," said I, "and I marvel that thou didst ever hear of him. I am simply Mohammed Ben Ali, a merchant of Bagdad."

"I beg your pardon," he said; "but you look just like the Sheik Abdallah, who used to travel with Barnum, many years ago."

I passed on, and had gone but a few yards when another benevolent looking stranger, wearing a large black moustache and a great diamond, accosted me, with a kindly smile, saying:

"Why, I am sure this must be the great Mohammed Ben Ali, of Bagdad."

"That is true," said I; "but how didst thou know it?"

"My friend, Boswell Poor, travelled in the East, and met you in Bagdad. If you will come round to my office, I'll send for him."

Now, Son of the Nightingale, my memory recalled no such man, but I thought it best to go. He took me through many streets, and at last to a small, poorly-lighted room, where we found another man sitting.

"Where's Boswell?" asked this man.

"I don't know," said my new friend, turning in his seat; "let us send for him."

So saying, he went to the door, and called in a loud voice into the hallways:

"John, go and tell Mr. Poor to come round at once."

I saw no boy in the hall as we entered, and when he had called, he closed the door and locked it. I was now suspicious, and I obtained possession of the key by means which thou knowest. My new friend sat down and whistled. Suddenly he said to the man at the table, as if by sudden inspiration:

"I say, Jim, shall we have a little game while we wait for Boswell?"

"I'll go you," said the other.

Then he produced some cards, and, selecting three, one of which was an ace, by a dexterous movement of the hands, spread them out, face downwards on the table. My friend bet a sovereign he could pick out the ace, and he promptly did so. This was repeated several times, and then, seeing that it was what they desired, I offered to bet.

The man with the cards distributed them clumsily, so that I could easily see which was the ace, and I won. This was repeated thrice. Then the man with the cards appeared to lose his temper, and bet me five that I could not do it the next time. Now, oh, Nephew of the Pomegranate, did I, as we are in the habit of saying in the mosque, scent the rodent; but knowing that I possessed all the magic of our people, I smiled and took the bet. This time the man distributed the cards very skilfully. Truly he must have studied this foolish art with long labour. I permitted him to win.

Then I bet him that I could do it the next time; and I did. He seemed a trifle disconcerted, and he laughed with difficulty. I was still £3 ahead. Once more I bet him, and this time I permitted him to win; the next time I won. This went on for a quarter of an hour, and I was still £3 ahead. The man with the cards began to perspire. We tried it once more with the bet increased to £5. I pointed out the card at the left as the ace.

"Wrong," said the man; "it's here."

And he turned up the card at the right. But it was a king. Then he turned up the one at the left, and it was the ace. I see thee smile as thou readest of my doing this old, old trick. But the man did not smile.

"There's some trick here," he said.

"Surely," said I, with great innocence, "no one could suspect trickery in this place."

I was now £8 a-head, but my manner re-assured my friend, and we went at it again, and again I won. The next time—I see thee smile again—no ace could be found at all.

"You duffer," said the man who took me there; "you've dropped it!"

They searched on the floor but could not find it. When they lifted their heads again, they beheld the ace standing on end on the table, and dancing. Brother of the Pyramids, I blush to tell thee that I practised this aged trick on these unsuspecting strangers; but I was anxious to measure their ignorance. They sprang to their feet and turned pale.

"What alarms you, friends?" I said. "There is a draught from the window which blows the cards about. Let us close it."

That re-assured them, and they closed the window. Then we began again. Once more the ace was missing. When they searched on the floor again, I determined now to bring to my aid our true art. The room began to grow dark. On the wall a luminous spot appeared. I bade them look at it, and, as they did so, I caused a large image of the ace to appear. The two men turned deadly pale. Then I caused aces to appear all over the room, of very many sizes, dancing and glowing.

"Holy herring!" exclaimed one of the men, with devout enthusiasm; "we've buncoed Old Nick!"

With that they made a rush for the door. But I had the key. The room began to fill with sulphurous smoke. The two men could not breathe. With a wild yell they hurled themselves through the window into the street, and, bleeding from many cuts, fled for their lives.

As for me, I put out the sulphur fire which I had kindled behind a chair, removed the wet handkerchief from my mouth, gathered up my cards and my mirrors, and departed in peace, £13 ahead.

Verily, Descendant of the Prophet, when thou goest abroad, always carry the apparatus of our Eastern art with thee, for mayhap it will be of goodly service.

A. C. BROWNING.

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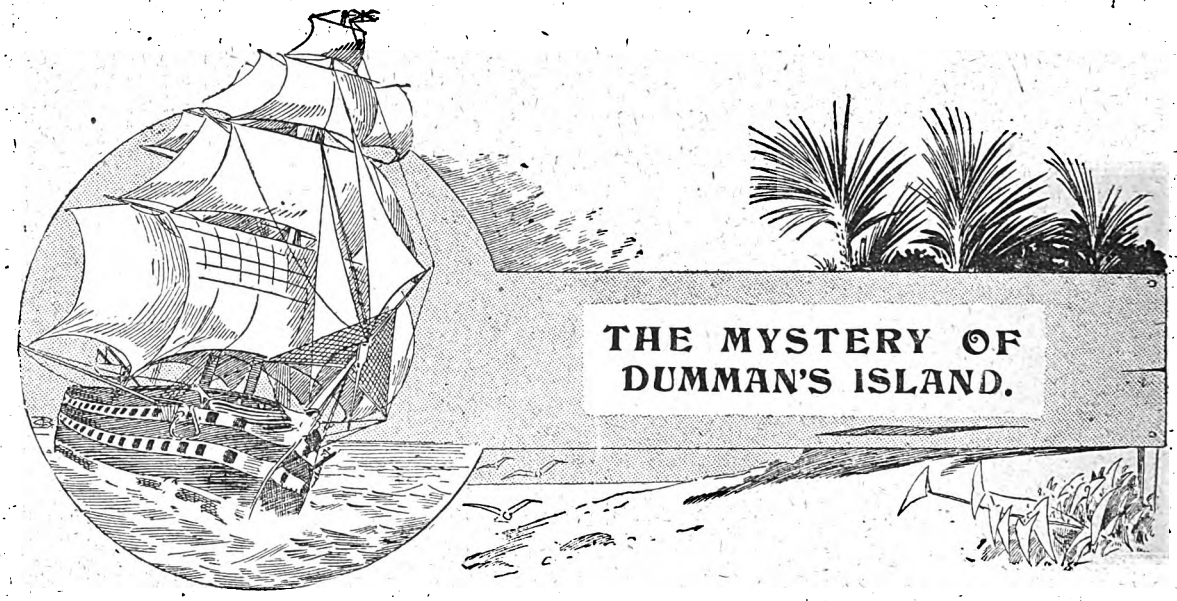

THE MYSTERY OF DUMMAN'S ISLAND.

In the heart of Wayne County, Pennsylvania, lies Lake Ariel, with alternating field and forests on its shores. Between hills to the north of it is the pretty village of Ariel.

The lake's southern bay bends sharply to the west, and just at this bend stands Dumman's Island, midway in the channel. This island, of not more than two acres, is covered with a growth of wild grass and stunted poplars. Why has the name of Dumman's Island been given to it?

The words are without doubt a corruption of the phrase, "Dumb Man's Island," and this is the story of its naming:

Towards the close of the last century, when the Miller and Purley families were hewing out farms from the hemlock forests south and east of the lake, a dumb man went to live on this island. Whence he came and how he subsisted no one knew, for no one ever visited his habitation. His known wish that people should avoid the island was respected.

The dumb man was seldom seen on the mainland. He was tall, straight, vigorous of motion, and was courteous to a nicety; but on looking into his clear eyes people instinctively felt that to cross his will would be dangerous. So he was left alone upon his island.

But there were two boys in the Jones settlement who resolved to visit the dumb man's island together, and explore the mystery of his habitation. The name of one of these boys was Robert Jones; the identity of the other was uncertain, but he is said to have been Will Purley.

Their opportunity came one afternoon when the dumb man visited the mainland, called at the house of Robert's father, and indicated his intention of going still further into the clearing. The boys slipped away, entered a boat, and paddled hurriedly across the half-mile of water to a gravelly beach on one side of the dumb man's island. Here they pulled their boat up, and left it under cover of some overhanging bushes.

It was in October, and darkness was already coming on, but the rising moon promised the boys sufficient light for exploration.

Towards the centre of the island, with a path leading up to it from the beach, was the dumb man's cabin—a rude stone structure pieced out with wood. The boys started towards it, but before they had taken half-a-dozen steps they stopped in amazement at the sound of a singing voice. They could distinguish no words, but the tune was familiar to them, and every note was plainly made out.

The voice was unlike any they had ever before heard. It was very sweet and very sad, and of a penetrating, tremulous, and unearthly tone.

The boys gazed at each other in dismay, and then, with one mind, retreated to their boat, which they drew into the shade of the bushes none too soon; for the next moment something emerged from the hut, and moved slowly in the dim light towards the beach.

It was a strange-looking creature, that partly rolled, partly dragged itself along the path, tumbling from side to side, stopping often as if for a moment's rest. If it had limbs they were invisible. It bore no bodily likeness to man or beast, save that once what seemed its white face gleamed for an instant in the moonlight.

The boys crept into their boat and seized their paddles to push off; but even as they did so they heard a faint splash of water on the lake, and, turning, saw the dumb man coming rapidly from the opposite shore. He sat with his back towards them rowing his boat. The lads, hardly daring to breathe, crouched down into the shadow of their little craft.

The strange figure on the path moved on with halting motion to the water's edge. The dumb man, with a few long, powerful strokes of the oars, sent the keel of his boat far up on the gravel of the beach. He leapt lightly to the ground, caught the strange object up in his arms, and kissed it. Then, most marvellous of all things, he talked to it!

The dumb man actually talked! The boys could not distinguish his words—at least, they were never able to tell what he said; but they knew that his voice was clear and musical, and they remembered that he spoke cheerfully and lovingly, and that once he laughed. They

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remembered, too, that the strange being answered, whether in words or not they could never say.

Talking to and caressing the burden in his arms, the man walked up the path from the beach and entered the hut.

The boys did not wait a moment to effect their escape. They pushed their boat off, leapt into it, and paddled away towards home as if for their lives.

When the wake of moonlit water grew long behind them they breathed more freely, but they did not feel completely at ease until they shot into the shadows of the eastern shore.

Before the blazing logs in the kitchen fireplace the boys that night told the story of their adventure to a family group of excited listeners.

The next day the strange tale, with exaggerations, went the rounds of the neighbourhood. The result was that fifteen men of the settlements met in the kitchen of Henry Jones' house three nights later to discuss the situation.

The general opinion seemed to be that the dumb man had given himself up to heathen practices, and that he kept on his island a strange and awful being whom he worshipped as a god. It was soon decided to visit his premises, with intent to expel the dumb man and destroy his deity, if examination proved their surmises to be correct.

"When shall we go?" asked one.

"Now! To-night! At once!" said several.

James Miller arose to counsel moderation and delay; but the magnetic impulse which sways larger bodies had already done its work here. With one accord the men seized their rifles and passed out into the night.

They hurried to the lake, embarked in three boats, and soon reached the beach at Dumb Man's Island. At the landing-place all was still. The moon was full, and the pale leaves of the poplar trees shivered white in the light wind.

Watching the bushes closely for an ambush, the men disembarked, drew up their boats, and gathered compactly to move on the dumb man's hut; but, before they could take one step forward, the dumb man emerged from the cabin door and came rapidly towards them.

They saw that he was armed. At fifteen paces from them he stopped, rested the butt of his rifle on the gravel at his feet, waved his hand towards them, pointed to the empty boats and then across the lake to their homes.

There was no mistaking his meaning. His face, white and haggard in the moonlight, was desperate with earnestness.

The men who faced him knew that he was in no mood for trifling; but they had come prepared for resistance, and were not to be turned back so easily.

Sam Purley stepped one pace to the front, and said:

"We have an errand here. When it is finished we will go back, not before. You have deceived us; you set yourself up to be dumb, but those are with us have heard you talk within the last four days. Those are with us who have seen you, on your island here, caress some strange creature in the form of neither man nor beast. Listen! We want no heathen gods among us, nor yet the worshippers of them. We demand that you bring out the thing that you keep here."

The form of the dumb man straightened and hardened till its rigid outlines seemed to inclose a thing of iron and steel. On his face were first the red marks of anger, then it paled with the white hue of pain.

Again he pointed commandingly to the lake and the eastern shore. When no heed was paid to his mute command he lifted his rifle to the level of his chin, and tapped the barrel of the piece significantly.

Then old Richard Miller, gaunt and bent, but hot-headed as in youth, cried out:

"Ay, you can fire! Fire if you will; but in one second from the time you touch the trigger you will be riddled with bullets. And what'll your heathen god do then, with your body dead on the sand? Answer me that."

The dumb man dropped his rifle in his hands, and lowered his head as if in painful thought. For the moment there was silence. No one stirred. All clearly heard the poplar leaves shivering, and the little waves that lapped the beach.

Suddenly, from the direction of the hut, came a sound strangely like and unlike a human voice, fine and thrilling, dying soon into a sad and tremulous wail.

A look of yearning and dread came over the dumb man's face as he glanced towards his hut. Throwing his rifle to the ground at his feet, he turned full upon his visitors, and reached out his hands to them beseechingly. Then at length he began to speak:

"Gentleman," he said, "it is true that I am not dumb I have imposed upon you, but I have done you no harm I am a man as you are men. I worship the God whom you worship. I have no heathen deity here. I have nothing here that calls for your disapproval. Believe me, I pray you, and go, that I may be alone."

Sam Purley again spoke up.

"If you have nothing here that is evil," he said, "no harm will come of our seeing what you have. Again we tell you to bring it forth."

The dumb man, for so he must still be called, since he was never known in that region by any other name, advanced a few steps and stood for a moment looking intently into the faces of the visitors. They could see the trembling of his lower lip and the glistening of tears in his eyes, for the moonlight fell full upon him. Then he said:

"Gentlemen, give me three days to myself. It is all I ask. At the end of that time come again. I shall be here. All that I have will be here. Then I will show you everything. I will tell you everything. But now I ask you to go. See! I fall on my knees and implore you to go. As you are men, with hearts in your bosoms, I beseech you, by the love you bear your children, to go and leave me with my own."

He was on his knees on the sand. His hands were clasped before him, his head was bowed to his bosom, and his strong frame was shaken with emotion.

The men who faced him looked at each other in silence. Then from the hut came again that unearthly cry. It was sharp and piercing now, and full of agony. It vibrated on the air till the moonlight itself seemed tremulous.

The kneeling man rose, turned his white face for one moment to his visitors, and then for one moment to the sky.

"Friends or foes," he said, "may the Heaven counsel you!"

Without another word he strode swiftly up the path away from the intruders, and disappeared in the shadows of his hut.

For a full minute no one of the intruders spoke; they were under the melancholy spell of that last agonised cry. Then Henry Jones stepped out to the front from among them, earnest and awe-stricken.

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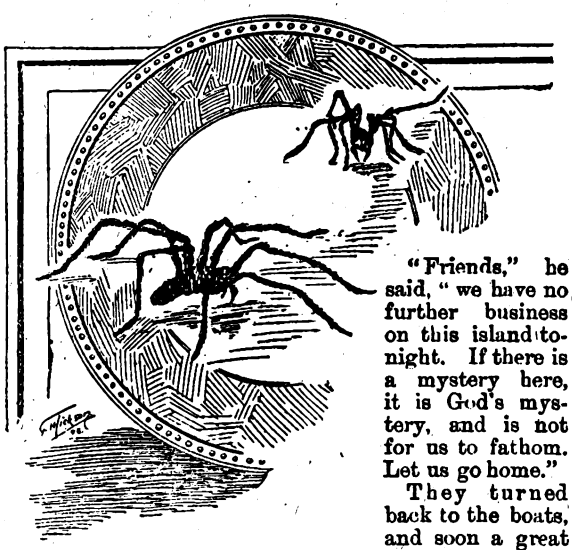

"Friends," he said, "we have no further business on this island to-night. If there is a mystery here, it is God's mystery, and is not for us to fathom. Let us go home."

They turned back to the boats, and soon a great expanse of moonlit water lay between them and the shadowed shore of the island.

Three days later the dumb man came, at evening, to the house nearest the lake. His eyes bore traces of long weeping, and his face was haggard and pitiful to look on. To the man who met him at the door he said simply:

"Tell the men who came to my island three nights ago that it is my wish that they shall come again to-morrow, after midday, and bring with them someone to perform the rite of Christian burial."

Then he went away.

Word was sent throughout the settlement, a minister was found, and the next day three boats grated on the sandy beach of the island. The dumb man met his visitors at the landing-place, and as they stepped ashore he grasped each man's hand and said:

"I thank you."

After a little while he told them the story. Standing before them with bared head, he said:

"My friends, we are in the presence of death. At sunrise yesterday a soul went up from that hut to Heaven. With my own hands I have coffined the clay and dug the grave. He who died was my child. His bodily form was not like yours or mine. To human eyes he was abhorrent. Thirteen years ago I brought him here, a babe, and kept from him the sight of all human beings save myself, that he might not realise the horror of his own deformity. The better to thwart the curiosity of others I deceived you with a feigned dumbness. For this I now ask your pardon."

He paused. Some one in the company managed to blunder out that he had done right, and need ask no one's pardon.

Tears came into the dumb man's eyes and a great tenderness into his voice, and he said again:

"I thank you. My friends, in that blighted body yonder there lived as sweet and beautiful a soul as ever passed to immortality. For thirteen years I have shut my eyes to all this fearfulness of form, and delighted in the strong and steadfast love of that loving child. I declare to you to-day that I have borne no cross save this cross of parting, and even that becomes a crown of gladness on my head when I think of that bright spirit freed from its dread imprisonment, as fair and glorious now as are the angels of Heaven."

His eyes were lifted upwards, his face was transfigured with joy, and those who looked on him said afterwards that he must have seen the spirit of his child.

From the rude casket smiled a dead face that was worthy of the sculptor's chisel or the painter's brush, so very beautiful was it as it lay there in the sweet serenity of death.

Tenderly the bearers bore the coffined body to its grave; tenderly were said the words of Christian burial.

When all was over the dumb man turned in his boat and looked, for the last time in life, on the rocky shores and yellowing foliage of his island home. Over the grave of his child for a hundred years the wild grass has grown and the leaves of the poplars have shivered in the wind, but no one now can mark the place of burial, and even the island's story is nearly lost and forgotten.

P. MANNERING.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☞ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 5 distribution must reach us by November 7th addressed to The 5th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Second Distribution appears on page 589.

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OUR CLIENT'S MONEY.

"THERE are some lives that are lived which in thrilling experiences savour more of drama than reality. I think I may consider some of my own actual experiences quite as sensational and dramatic as any set forth with the accompaniments of stage scenery," remarked Mr. Luscome, as he closed the door of his private office behind a client who had sought his legal services in a particularly sensational case.

Returning to his chair with a deep sigh of relief that his office hours were over for the day, he opened a box of choice cigars and pushed it towards me, lighting one himself and settling down for a quiet hour of relaxation and social chat.

"I remember," he resumed, "one instance particularly perhaps because it occurred while I was still young and impressionable and somewhat inexperienced; anyhow, I thought it thrilling enough at the time.

"I was about twenty and was reading law in the office of an old friend of my father's.

"One morning Mr. Evans called me into his private room, and told me that he had some business of a confidential nature that would necessitate sending me to a small village twenty miles out, at once. He then went to the safe and took out a box containing what appeared to be a large amount of money in notes of various denominations, which he ran over, counting rapidly.

"'Here, you count it also,' he said, indicating the pile of bank-notes and nodding towards a chair, which I drew up to the desk in front of him. I then began running over the notes slowly and carefully, he watching the operation.

"There was exactly five thousand pounds.

"'How much do you make it?' he asked.

"'Exactly five thousand,' I replied.

"'Precisely,' he returned. 'Now, I place these notes in your care. You are responsible for them from now on. Here, you'd better put them in this bag, and put the wallet into an inside pocket; and don't remove them until you have given them over to old Mrs. Harlow. Here's her address, and here is a time-table; make it as early a train as possible. That's all; be as quick as you can.'

"I thrust the wallet into the breast pocket of my coat, and walked out of the private office and made for my own desk.

"I knew the old lady, Mrs. Harlow; that is, I had seen her many times, she having been a client of the firm ever since I had been in the office, but I knew only this about her—that she was the widow of an old and eccentric gentleman who had died some five years since, and that the firm had been engaged, off and on, ever since, in arranging the affairs of the estate.

"The old lady herself was exceedingly fussy, and it did not do to displease her. This was probably why I was being rushed so in regard to getting the money to her at just such a time, although, for the life of me, I couldn't understand why the old lady must have that sum of money in such haste; but it wasn't my business to know or understand anything about it.

"I let the bag remain in the inside pocket of my coat, where I had first placed it, donning my overcoat and taking a cab to the station just in time to catch the one o'clock train.

"The day was raw and chilly, and the outlook from the car window was anything but diverting, as a slow, wet snow had begun to fall, and melted as it came, sifting and swirling and clinging to the window-glass, making a bleak, disagreeable blur of the landscape.

"When I reached Stillwell Station, I looked about for a fly.

"No sort of conveyance was in sight. I walked up to the porter and asked him the nearest and most direct way to Mrs. Harlow's residence.

"'It's a good bit up from here,' he replied, eyeing me curiously. 'Never been there before?'

"I assured him that I had not, else I should not be asking questions about how to find the place.

"'About how far is it?' I repeated.

"'Oh, about six miles, I should say,' he replied.

"'Six miles!' I repeated aghast. Six miles in such weather!

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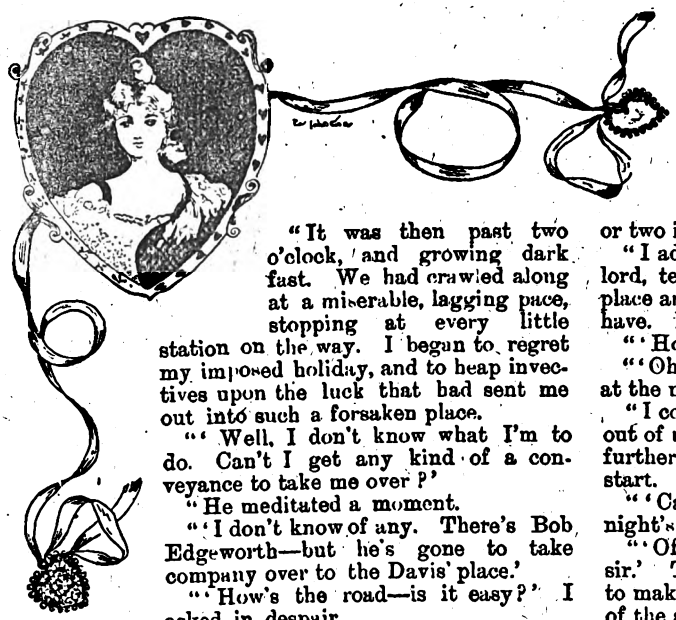

"It was then past two o'clock, and growing dark fast. We had crawled along at a miserable, lagging pace, stopping at every little station on the way. I began to regret my imposed holiday, and to heap invectives upon the luck that had sent me out into such a forsaken place.

"'Well, I don't know what I'm to do. Can't I get any kind of a conveyance to take me over?'

"He meditated a moment.

"'I don't know of any. There's Bob Edgeworth—but he's gone to take company over to the Davis' place.'

"'How's the road—is it easy?' I asked in despair.

"'Yes, the road's all right,' the porter replied. 'You want to take that one that leads up the hill for a couple of miles or so.'

"And then he launched into a full explanation.

"I pulled my collar up about my ears, drew my hat down and started. I tramped steadily on until dark, when I came to the junction of the road as the man had said.

"Not a person had I met in all the way, nor seen any signs of life. The snow had stopped falling, and the afternoon or evening was keen and frosty.

"As I travelled on with hastening steps I came finally to a small, two-storey house, built in what seemed to me a queer sort of way, as nearly as I could see, with rambling balconies and grass plots. I had half a mind to call and make inquiries about a conveyance to take me the rest of the way, but seeing no light, concluded the place was unoccupied, and went on.

"Finally I came to a large open space of broken ground, and discovered that I had either lost the road or else that the road didn't lead any further, but stopped a little way back. I tried to retrace my steps, but in the darkness could not see many feet ahead, and concluded I might as well push on in the hope of at last coming upon some habitation. The whole country so far appeared to have been deserted.

"On and on I laboured through drifts, now up and now down into ditches, it seemed to me for miles. I began to feel nervous, as there flashed across my mind all the stories I had ever read of travellers becoming lost in blizzards, for the wind was rising again and the snow began to fall and was driven into my face till it nearly blinded me.

"At length a faint ray of light in the distance, shining out upon my weariness and desolation, revived my spirits and hastened my steps.

"As I approached, I found that the light came from the small window of a little hovel like place that might have served as the habitation of some crank of a hermit.

"I walked up to the door and rapped loudly.

"'Who is it?' a gruff voice asked.

"'A traveller inquiring the way,' I responded: whereupon the door was opened and the swarthy face of a man peered out. He bade me come in, and glad to get within any kind of shelter, I obeyed with alacrity.

"The place seemed to be a sort of bar-room. This, then, must be the the wayside inn of which the porter had spoken. There were four or five rough-looking men and a woman or two in the place.

"I addressed myself to the one I took to be the land lord, telling him I was on my way to Mrs. Ha low's place and asked if he had any kind of a trap I could have. No, there was not.

"'How far is it from here?' I asked.

"'Oh, 'bout five or six miles or so,' he replied, glancing at the men sitting at the further end of the room.

"I couldn't believe it possible. I had wandered miles out of my way then. It was impossible to try to go any further; I must wait till morning and make a fresh start. I was done up.

"'Can I be accommodated with some supper and a night's lodging?' I asked.

"'Of course you can; sit down and warm yourself, sir.' The men about the fire pushed back their chairs to make room for mine, which the landlord set in front of the stove.

"After I had sat down, the conversation which my advent had evidently interrupted, was resumed, and I took the opportunity to have a look at my companions. I didn't like the look of them. They were, as I have said, rough-looking customers, and evil of countenance. They evidently cared no more for me, for after scrutinising me without taking pains to conceal their curiosity, they turned their attention to each other and said little to me.

"One of the women present was bustling about preparing supper, the fumes of which were most agreeable.

"I sat half dozing before the fire until supper was announced, when we all sat down to the table together, as the landlady seemed in no wise inclined to make any distinction in her attentions, evidently regarding me as no better than the others.

"The supper tasted good, and I ate heartily. After the meal was over, we resumed our seats by the fire and sat smoking comfortably. After finishing my pipe I withdrew, asking to be shown my bed, explaining that I was extremely tired, and must be up and on my way early next morning. The landlord lighted a candle, took my overcoat upon his arm, and led the way up a narrow flight of unarpeted stairs to a small dark room, where he set the candle down upon a table, bade me good-night, and withdrew.

"I sat down upon the side of the narrow uninviting-looking bed, and gazed about me. The room was quite small, bare and cheerless, and had a damp smell about it. I discovered that there was no lock on the door. I determined to take a nap without undressing, so blew out the candle and lay down across the bed.

"It was cold and uncomfortable. I could hear the preparations for the night going on downstairs, such as doors being closed and locked, or barred. Finally, chilled through, I decided to go downstairs myself and get a glass of whisky to keep me warm. I started down in my stocking feet.

"The lights were burning dimly, but the sullen-looking individuals, together with the landlord, were still

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sitting, smoking, round the fire, and conversing in low earnest tones. The creaking of the stairs under my feet warned them of my approach; and, glancing up and seeing me, they ceased talking, while the landlord advanced urbanely to see what I wanted.

"He procured the whisky and I drank it and retraced my steps upstairs to my room, but with a new determination not to sleep. Something in the manner of the men had put unpleasant ideas into my mind, and made me suspicious.

"I ought to have known better than to drink the whisky under the circumstances. Again I threw myself upon the bed, while a pleasant sensation of warmth, comfort and drowsiness crept over me. Before I knew it I was off in a doze.

"I was awakened by a soft, rustling noise outside my door, and the sound of breathing. A thrill of apprehension shot through me.

"I am not, and never was, a cowardly man. I had heretofore never known the sensation of fear, but now my heart was beating wildly, and I began to tremble all over. I waited a moment or so until thoroughly awake and confident; then I got up from the bed as softly as I could, and felt about for some weapon of defence.

"The storm was evidently over, for the moon was shining directly into the uncurtained window. I peered about in the light of it, but there was nothing at hand with which to ward off a possible attack.

"I had nothing in my pockets except a small pearl-handled paper-cutter in a morocco case, a dainty gift of recent date, and a silver match-box.

"All was silent. I pressed my ear to the crack of the door and listened. Presently there was a whispered consultation, and I heard the words in what seemed to be a woman's voice:

"'There's the knife! Where's Bill?'

"'Keep quiet—you'll wake him. Bill's gone after the rope.'

"Then all was silent again. I must do something and that quick. An idea seized me—the matches!

"I reached the bed and grasped a sheet; snatching it off I hastily wound it into a small roll, and crept to the fireplace. The place was old, and the wind blew down in great gusts. I pushed the roll of calico into the aperture and applied a match to it.

"It blazed furiously, but now blew up and now down the chimney, and out into the room. The bed was near by.

"The smoke came puffing out into the room from the burning sheet in the chimney, and, as it did so, I lit another match and held it to the mattress on the bed. In an instant the bed was ablaze.

"Then was the time for the last move in my desperate game. I came on to my feet with a bound intended to be heard, and springing to the door shouted:

"'Fire! Fire!'

"The smoke was pouring out from every crack of door and window.

"Again I raised the cry of alarm. I heard the sound of scuttling footsteps, and knew my host and his amiable associates in a would-be hideous crime were trying to escape from the vicinity of my door without my discovering them.

"Then my cry was repeated from below, and they came rushing upstairs and into my room while I passed them on the stairs with a volume of black smoke pouring after me. It choked them and they had to turn back.

"'Water! water!' I cried wildly, and snatching up a pail I rushed out into the yard.

"The landlord was shouting to the others, and I heard someone say the fire had caught in the chimney.

"They rushed down and out with pails and buckets to the well, but before they could regain the second floor they were driven back by the flames that by this time were encompassing everything; besides, they were so bewildered and distracted that they scarcely knew what they were about.

"'My wallet!' I cried, frantically feigning the greatest anguish and despair, and pretending to make a dash up the burning stairs. 'In Heaven's name, my wallet! It was under my pillow! A hundred pounds to the man who gets it!'

"The man designated as Bill looked at me for an instant bewildered, and then rushed by me and disappeared in the smoke, then, an instant later, dashed out again blackened and burnt, driven back by the flames.

"I was wailing and wringing my hands excitedly, when the sound of galloping horses' hoofs drew near, and several men on horseback and in carts came upon the scene.

"But it was too late. The flames were licking up everything, and all of us stood by shivering and watching it burn. In an hour all that was left of the wayside inn was a mass of blackened and charred ruins.

"One of the men who rode up to lend their aid took mine host and his wife and associates home for the night, while I rode away with another.

"As morning broke, I hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, borrowed a horse, and resumed my journey to Mrs. Harlow, and delivered up the money to her in person.

"'Dear me!' she simpered, as she counted the bank notes and wrote out a receipt, 'there wasn't any such great hurry for the money. I only wanted to know that Mr. Evans had it ready in case I *should* happen to want it.'

"I returned to my respected employer, and although I didn't tell him the whole story out and out (for arson isn't an agreeable word, and I didn't wish to make any trouble for myself or him either), still he understood, and in some way gave the old lady to understand that I had played the part of a hero in order to save her money.

"Of course, you know that I became acquainted with the only niece of Mrs. Harlow shortly afterwards and that lady is now my wife. When we were married the aunt insisted upon making me a present of exactly five thousand pounds, and the firm took me into partnership."

J. CLARKE.

JONES: "Which travels the faster, heat or cold?"

JONES: "Heat, of course. You cannot catch heat, but you can catch cold."

"MAMMA, I dess you'll have to turn the hose on me."

"Why, dear?"

"'Tas I've got my 'tockins on wrong side out."

"I WON'T have you," said the leading lady tragically to the low comedian. "Never approach me again on the subject. My mind's made up."

"So's everything else about you," and then he fell through a garden scene to dodge the withering glance she shot at him.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A Secret Mission.

Quetta is lively enough at all times. Perched upon the hills in that narrow province which keeps apart two savage and mysterious countries, it seems to look down upon them both like an alert and fearless sentinel, ready at a moment to give the alarm and call to action the sleepless army that guards our Eastern Empire. Quetta is the Metz of India.

This British outpost felt the thrill of its own power, and like a strong man, was full of life and movement, as the English troops began to muster within the cantonment, and camp upon the hillsides.

It was an extraordinary spectacle, surely, which no country in the world but one could afford. The opulent East, with her infinite variety of race and tongue, seemed represented here in endless confusion; and over all dominated the watchful Briton, impartially supreme, holding firmly in his hand the ends of all this perplexed entanglement of humanity, the one being who gave harmony and unity to a bewildering puzzle.

At the headquarters' mess were gathered officers of all degrees known to the staff and of all regiments, and the crowded room was alive with animated talk, as men sat or stood around the table, snatching a hasty meal, too preoccupied to eat heartily, and flushed with the excitement which the near prospect of fighting roused in them.

Youthful subalterns, rejoicing in the sabre-tache of the A.D.C., with the splendid certainty of youth, planned out a brilliant campaign and won a hundred battles against unheard-of odds; while the older men, anxious, though scarcely less excited, applied the fruits of their experience earnestly to the situation and speculated on the plan of attack.

At one of the tables there came a moment's lull in the conversation, and Captain Bradley, of the 2nd Gurkhas, leaning over to Graham, of the 5th Lancers, asked:

"What has become of Adams all this time?"

This seemingly innocent question attracted to him in a moment the attention of all in the vicinity.

"Adams!" exclaimed Captain Graham, a little startled. "Yes, it's very queer. He got leave two months ago, and he hasn't been recalled yet."

"What makes it singular," said Bradley, "is that exactly the same thing occurred to Hutchinson of Ours. He had barely come back from England when he asked for leave and got it, although there were definite rumours of war about at the time, and he's an awfully valuable man."

"Did he go home?" asked a subaltern.

"No, that's the funny part of it. Then there's Haughton of the 36th Sikhs, and Anderson gave me four cases the other day where some of the best officers in different regiments had been granted leave, all at the same time, and in not a single case did there seem the slightest cause for it."

Graham stroked his chin reflectively and meditated.

"It's a devilish strange case," he said after this effort had brought him back again to dubiety. "Where are they all gone? Why don't they come back? Why are they not ordered to rejoin their regiments?"

"Yes; and why are they all such particularly valuable men?" added Bradley.

"It's jolly hard luck for them, anyhow. I wonder what Hutchinson thinks of being left out of the fun."

Snatching a hasty meal.

"But is he?"

It was a meek lieutenant who spoke, and Bradley turned swiftly upon him in surprise.

"Why, what do you think is up?" he asked.

"Oh, I don't know," was the modest answer. "But it seems to me to be just a little too peculiar for a coincidence. There are about twenty of the best officers in the army, all of them of experience and peculiar fitness. They all take a holiday when they don't want it; and they all disappear and leave no traces behind them. If you think it's an accident, why, you are entitled to your

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opinion; but I say there's something mighty cute going on somewhere, and, you mark my words, they're doing their work somewhere, and will turn up all serene, just exactly when they have done it."

It was indeed a curious affair, but, after vainly trying to solve the mystery, the group of officers gave it up, pronouncing it to be inexplicable save in the higher logic of the Sirkar.

Perhaps their perplexity would have increased had they been witnesses of a little scene that was then in course of transaction in a small and wretched native village some sixty miles north.

As the Sibi-Quetta railway drags itself with difficulty up the rough and hilly country which stretches to the borders of Afghanistan, it leaps a terrific chasm in the Pishin Range, and disappears just as it is reaching its final stage, into a tunnel. The traveller has had his last look at India, for when the train emerges from the famous Khojack Tunnel, it is brought to a stand in the little terminus of Chaman, and the Kandahar valley is at his feet. Here the great iron road ceases abruptly and almost reluctantly, and the civilised arts, thus pressed to the uttermost limit, are bidden back by the triumphant barbarism, holding its savage stage beyond. The engine gives place to the camel.

But where sleeper and bolt and chain and rail may not pass, the pick and the shovel have forced their way, and a broad level road carries on the tale to Kandahar.

And this artery of commerce at every step whispers promise of the iron rails, for it has been made to carry them; and when the time has come, suddenly and swiftly there will spring up a new permanent way which will carry the engine to the gates of the city.

It was here, at Chaman, and in view of the high road that penetrated the country of the Afghan, that Major General Galbraith, commanding the Quetta district, stood in conversation with a tall, distinguished-looking officer, whose charger's reins were looped through his left arm. At some distance, prepared as for a long and arduous journey, were four men, one an Englishman, and three of Indian birth.

There was an unusually grave look on the General's face as he addressed his companion, Captain W. J. Peyton, of the 7th Bombay Lancers, the man who had earned the C.M.G. for leading the Egyptian troops out of Harrar.

"I have kept to the last moment, by instructions from headquarters," he said, "the orders which I have to transmit to you. My duty is simple, and I cannot say that I can throw any light on most of the questions you have asked me. My instructions are to associate with you an officer of experience and special knowledge and three thoroughly reliable native officers, such as you would care to take on a dangerous mission. You are, I understand, satisfied?"

"Most satisfied," answered Captain Peyton with a glance at the adjoining group.

"You could not have better assistance," agreed the General. "Captain R. G. R. de Vismes, of the 10th Bombay Infantry, is an instructor in army signalling, he has the certificates for higher standard Persian and Pushtu, he holds one for French, he is a qualified interpreter of German, and has a passed certificate for Russian. These qualifications, I am instructed, will be invaluable to you."

The Captain looked puzzled at this extraordinary recital. The General appeared to have been specially coached in de Vismes' many acquirements.

"Then there are not three better native officers than Risaldar Shah Nawaz Khan, and Jemadars Musa Khan and Gurdal Singh. They are proficient in tongues, and all three brave men," went on General Galbraith.

"But what am I to do with them?" asked Captain Peyton. "And why this costume?" and he looked down at his attire, which was of semi-native character, half uniform, half disguise.

"I do not know," replied the General, "you will find out later. Meanwhile, I am to hand you this packet. You will ride as hard as possible to Kandahar, and there open it. You will find a second sealed letter and instructions for yourself with certain safe-conducts from the Amir and others. Everything is there explained. You are not to divulge the contents of your letter to anyone save to Captain de Vismes, so that in case of accident to yourself he may be able to act for you. If you both fail then the mission is to be intrusted to the senior among the native officers. I am only at liberty to tell you that you must be prepared for very many days of hard riding. You are each provided with a second horse and this will greatly facilitate your journey. For the rest, have patience; at Kandahar everything will be clear."

"And you shall run there, dog and liar!"

Captain Peyton took the packet and buttoned it closely beneath his tunic.

"I understand perfectly," he replied gravely. "I am thankful for the trust and for being appointed to this special service and post of danger. Whatever my duty is, I will do it as far as a man may."

"Good-bye," said the General as he held out his hand, not without emotion; "good-bye—and come back!"

In a few minutes the little company had ridden off along the great highway, and were lost to view.

* * * * *

Sir George White, Commander-in-Chief in India, took the field in person at the head of the 1st Army Corps.

This consisted of 50,000 men, who were strategically grouped to afford the utmost possible rapidity in concentration upon Quetta. The 2nd and 3rd Army Corps of 50,000 men each were equally well prepared in mobilisation and transport, but as they must be collected and forwarded from Bengal, the Central Provinces, Lower Bombay, the Madras Presidency, and even far distant Burmah, they necessarily required more time to reach the frontier of Afghanistan.

Commissariat arrangements for each corps were quite complete, but owing to the limited capacities of the Sibi-Quetta line and the Bolan Pass route, Sir George White decided that an interval of a week should elapse between the departure from Quetta of the head of each of the three great columns.

By arrangement with the Ameer of Kabul, whose wishes were most ably and energetically carried out by Sir Salter Pyne, his trusted agent and engineer, vast quantities of forage and such stores as the country afforded were dispatched along the Hazara and Hari Rud valleys to Kandahar and Herat, which latter place, it was calculated, the advance guard of the British Army would reach about the 28th of June.

From Persia, too, it was confidently anticipated that the acute merchants of Khorassan would send supplies of grain and provender when such a good customer as the Government of India was in the field.

Both Amir and Shah were fully aware that the conquest of England by the allies meant the prompt absorption of Persia and Afghanistan into the Russian Empire. Although the timorous Persian potentate dared not, at first, take active steps to assist the English by troops, he quickly made it known that caravans might, with all safety, use the Yazdin and Khaf trade routes, which was all that the British Commander required.

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But Abdurrahman Khan, Amir of Kabul, was made of stronger metal.

Horse, foot, and artillery did he muster with all speed, placing them unreservedly at the disposal of Sir George White, and as a telegraph line now connected the Afghan capital with Peshawur, the Commander-in-Chief was, as we shall see, enabled to make use of these singular but valuable allies from the first moment that hostilities broke out.

The total British and native troops in India were 150,000, being almost evenly divided in racial numbers.

In addition to them were 60,000 Imperial Service troops, raised and armed by the different princes of high degree scattered throughout the Indian Empire.

The help of these levies, which for some years had been periodically inspected and approved by English officers set apart for the work, was promptly offered to and accepted by the Government.

From these sources, including the Afghan contingent, Sir George White calculated upon having nearly a quarter of a million of effective troops, all thoroughly seasoned to the climate and other conditions of Eastern warfare, under his command when he concentrated his forces at Merv early in July.

The loyalty of India had now been put to its first great test, and the country had passed through the ordeal exactly as most sensible men predicted would be the case.

It is not that the Mussulman and Hindu populations of that great dependency have, or pretended to have, any special reference for British domination.

If there be such a thing as patriotic feeling or national enthusiasm in the East—a very doubtful postulate—it could hardly be expected to burn furiously at the shrine of a strange land 7,000 miles away.

But that which certainly does obtain beyond the Exile's Gate is self-interest, and every personal and commercial instinct revolted against the idea of exchanging British for Russian Rule.

Every intelligent native of India laughed at the idea, and as the majority of the people neither know nor care who it is that governs them, the chance of Russian sympathies causing internal disturbances was slight indeed.

Nevertheless, to make quite sure, a number of Russian spies and some two thousand of the most dangerous fakirs were quietly lodged in gaol as a precautionary measure.

The only real danger to public peace arose from the *budmash* or disorderly classes among the population—that large and easily excited section of society which sees in rapine and revolution the opportunity for plunder.

Rich natives had more to fear from these gentry than the Europeans, as there is no pleasure in this world so keen for a Pathan dacoit as to cut the throat of a Bengali banker.

Special police precaution were necessary, and the volunteers, to the number of 28,000, were mobolised, armed with ball cartridge, and kept up constant patrols in the bazaars and along the main roads.

So successful were the measures taken by the authorities, that out of nearly 300 millions of people resident in the Indian Empire something like five-sixths of them never knew that a war had begun, or ended.

* * *

A commissariat of camels.

Lord Elgin was anxiously examining the transport and commissariat arrangements in company with the Military Member of Council, Lieut.-General Sir Henry Brackenbury, when the news came of the departure from Australia of the first contingent of 20,000 troops for home service.

"They are going by way of Vancouver and the Canadian Pacific," observed the Viceroy. "How long will it be before they reach England?"

"At best they cannot get there before the end of June," said the officer.

"And by that time Canada and the United States will have poured ten times the number of men into France and Germany," went on Lord Elgin.

"Yes," assented the military member. "These Cornstalks would be more useful to us, with our relatively small British forces than to England."

"Why should they not come to our aid?" cried Lord Elgin. "Arrange at once that the Governor of Hong Kong shall confer with Admiral Freemantle and Major-General Hutton with the object of diverting the fleet to Karachi and disembarking them there. Don't forget to promise the Australians that they shall have their fill of fighting before they see Moscow."

When the time came the Australian officers and men were delighted with the proposal. Thus it happened that Sir George White led into Central Asia the most mixed, and perhaps the strongest, armed force that the world had ever seen.

CHAPTER XXX.

The Crossing of the Helmund.

General Alikhanoff was the man ordained by fate to lead the Russian advance upon India.

Himself no Russian, being a Daghestanu named Ali Khan at birth, the Kismet of the East, which corresponds to Napoleon's Marshal's baton carried in the knapsack of every private soldier, led him to high command in Central Asia.

But the trusted representative of the Tsar must have a more distinguished title than ancestry provided, so Ali Khan became Alikhanoff, which is a fine-sounding name, and means a good deal on the Afghan frontier.

He was the central personage in Transcaspian politics, the wolf ever ready to pounce upon his prey, the living embodiment of the ceaseless creeping of Russia upon India.

But now the attitude of crouching watchfulness was abandoned.

Two words from St. Petersburg: "To Kandahar," set in motion the vast organisation which had of late been perfecting itself for the expected march, and the scar across Alikhanoff's forehead became livid with excitement as he gave the necessary order to his staff.

The imperial plan was boldly simple. No nonsense this time about armies crossing the Alps of the Pamir region, or cutting their way through the rocky fastnesses of the Balkh-Kabul route.

These things were well enough to serve as twister for the lion's tail in the piping times of peace. But when war with its rapid menace and fierce directness was meant, the easy, fertile, and well-watered country between Zulfikar, Herat, and Kandahar was the natural line of swoop for the human beasts of prey led by the ablest officer in Central Asia.

Transcaspian, Orenburg and Ural Cossacks, Turkestan and West Siberian artillery, the Third and Fourth Turkestan Infantry Brigades, with a number of picturesque looking cut-throats from Askabad, Merv, Ferghana, and the Syr Daria, formed the excellent irregular force of 100,000 men with which Alikhanoff made his dash from Zulfikar and Kushk upon Herat.

Nor did he pause there a day.

The small Afghan garrison fled at the mere news of his approach, and, disregarding the reports of spies who warned him of the massing of Afghan levies all along the Paropa-

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misus and Sufed Koh southern watershed, he dashed onwards with impetuous haste.

For his absolute and final orders were to seize and hold Kandahar at all costs, and not to move a step further until the real offensive expedition, consisting of 150,000 regular troops under the command of the Grand Duke Paul, had reached Kandahar from the Caucasus and Moscow.

There burst upon them the whole strength of the Royal Fusiliers.

All was in readiness for the *coup*—trains, waggons, supplies, on the lines of railway and at depôts, steamers on the Caspian Sea to ferry the army of the Caucasus from Baku to Usum-ada.

It was a magnificent scheme. It had no defect in calculation of fact or detail, and it only assumed that the British lion was asleep until he was rudely awakened by the events of May 1st.

Now, a man may catch a lion asleep, but he who says he has entrapped a slumbering tiger should be disbelieved. India crouched, it is true, but it was that she might spring the farther.

Alikhanoff's rapid march through Sabzawar and Farah, the chief towns between Herat and Kandahar, was of more interest to him than to this chronicle of events.

That it was a magnificent performance is assured by the fact that in the early days of June his advance guard of Ural Cossacks cleared a cloud of Afghan horsemen out of Chorab, which is twenty-five miles distant from Giriskh, on the river Helmund, and Giriskh is 100 miles from Kandahar.

The Afghans had been troublesome of late. They buzzed round the columns like flies round a carcass, and many a nomad's saddle was emptied, and many a Kirghese warrior bit the dust as they straggled on the outskirts, ever in quest of forage or booty.

But General Alikhanoff knew he must pay this toll in human lives when he passed the Gate of India, and he smiled as he glanced over the reports of his staff, showing the excellent progress of the troops.

"My dear friends in St. Petersburg will be pleased when they hear that I am already within striking distance of Kandahar," he thought, and the parting of the thin lips over the firmly set teeth suggested unpleasantness, for the "dear friends" alluded to were they at that moment anywhere near Chorab. The Central Asian commander had no cause to love the Court sycophants at the capital.

It was prudent to halt a little while, and pull his corps firmly in hand before he attempted to cross the Helmund, where the Afghans would surely oppose him in force.

"They are mere pariahs, these Shia dogs," said Alikhanoff, "yet they can bite. I must dose them well with lead when I get them packed together."

Not until June 10th could even his impatient eagerness decide that all was ready for the important step.

Many spies informed him of a large gathering of trained Afghan troops on the further bank of the Helmund, and one man, a Hindu fanatic, warned him that the English were behind them.

"Yes, fool," cried the General angrily. "It needs no wise priest to tell me they are at Quetta."

"Not Quetta, honoured one, but at Singbur." And Singbur is but a few miles on the south side of the Helmund.

Alikhanoff knew that this thing could not be. The Indian army, at best, must now be concentrating at Quetta. A few squadrons of cavalry, with a couple of infantry regiments, aided and abetted by the Amir, might perhaps have dashed through Kandahar.

"What woman's tale is this?" he growled. "The *lal coorti** at Singbur? Impossible!"

"Nay, it is true. They swarm on the hill-slopes and in the valleys. May they be accursed!" screamed the fakir. "You march to the sacrifice, O deliverer!"

"And you shall run there, dog and liar," thundered Alikhanoff, thoroughly incensed. A minute later the fakir was swinging from the bough of a tree as a warning to all spies who gave false news.

That night Giriskh was occupied and by daybreak the passage of the Helmund commenced.

Some Afghan guns and infantry that would have disputed the crossing were quickly silenced by the West Siberian and Turkestan mountain batteries. Cossacks from the Ural and Orenburg plunged through the three fords available at this place of season, and spread fan-like over the country in front and along the banks to the east and west. Infantry, guns, and transport prepared to follow.

This, then, was the passage of the Helmund so talked of by the English. How they boast, these Feringhis! Is there not an interval for breakfast?

Yes, an eternity, Alikhanoff.

Nearly one half of the Russian army had crossed the river, and in loose array advanced in the direction of Singbur. Before them the living dust-cloud moved, as the Afghans, with many a desperate Parthian shot, steadily retired.

And Alikhanoff, as he surveyed the advance of his troops and saw that already he held in his grasp the river which barred the way to Kandahar rejoiced in his heart.

"Raise your dust, ye Afghan vermin, the Cossack whip is scourging you!" he shouted in exultation, as he saw the slowly disappearing cloud.

But suddenly there was an uneasy swerve among these same Cossacks. Their loosely-knit ranks reeled as if from a sudden shock and came to a confused and disorderly halt. A new and terrible sound smote the air and came to the ears of Alikhanoff, a sound that must have been known of old and feared by him, for he started and changed colour.

For as the Cossacks pressed on wildly, the dust cloud parted to the left and right, and through the gap there came a frightful roar, and a hail of shrapnel rained upon the Russian advance, shattering it into ragged fragments.

There was no need to ask what new thing had happened. The English had arrived and now on the open plain were waiting to embrace the foe.

"It was no woman's tale after all!" exclaimed the Russian general as he ground his teeth. For he, Alikhanoff, subtlest of men, had walked into a trap. Half his army was helpless on the hither side of the river. And beyond it his irregular troops, in no settled order, and unprepared for serious action, were hemmed in between two deadly perils, the English guns and the dark flowing river of Helmund.

Perhaps this unexpected enemy was few in number.

He dashed along to the river, and made his way rapidly across, and then hastened to marshal his troops, throwing them out in a form best suited to meet attack, and to at least hold the enemy off till the remainder of his army had passed over the river and joined them.

But General Sir George White had no intention of assisting Alikhanoff in his admirable design.

The British army was not a large one. All told, the Commander-in-Chief had but 50,000 men, or one half the numbers of the enemy. But there were enough for his purpose. Generalship can dispense with multitudes when Asiatics are in front.

* Redcoats.

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The day before he had carefully selected a cavalry brigade of 5,000 sabres, consisting of the 5th Dragoon Guards, the 5th Lancers, the 5th Bombay Cavalry, and other picked native details, and, putting them under the command of Major-General H. F. Grant, ordered them to debouch to the right, cross the Helmund a few miles up, and occupy a hidden position of observation on the Kala Musa route.

"You will take no part in the engagement," he told the General, "until we have dealt our blow. I count on you to convert a victory into a rout."

To experienced officers this manœuvre was perfectly intelligible, but there was no little astonishment when it was found that a second brigade, of half the strength, consisting of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 11th Hussars, the 2nd Bengal Lancers, and the 13th Bengal Lancers, 2,400 sabres in all, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel P. K. Doyne, was ordered to the rear, in reserve, and that a commissariat of *sowari* camels, the most perfectly equipped of any that had ever been organised in India, was allotted to it. What purpose could this apparent waste of good men serve?

To the brigade itself the question was a bitter one, and there was much grumbling. For who that bears a sabre cares to see a fight afar off and stand like a child unable to taste of it. Colonel Doyle alone showed patience, as well he might, for he had his instructions, and much he smiled as he ran them over again and again with lingering fondness.

And now, as the Cossacks raced along, the main body of the army, hidden by the formation of the country, calmly waited their opportunity. It came when the wild Afghans, parting on either side, gave room for the British artillery massed in the centre.

The shock was terrible. As stream after stream of deadly shot poured impetuous into their ranks, the Russian lines reeled and fell. Nor did Sir George White give a moment's space for rallying. His infantry moved rapidly forward, sustained by the never ceasing guns, and flung itself with desperate courage upon the ranks of the enemy. The onset was as irresistible as it was unexpected. The Turkestan Brigades, without guns, unprepared for attack, broken up and disordered, hesitated a second, and then fell away in wild confusion. But there came no lull in the severity of the attack. The British infantry drove them back foot by foot, relentless and untiring, until, unable longer to sustain so deadly an onset, the Russians fled to the river and sought to cross it.

Alikhanhoff was in despair. Flinging himself wildly amongst the flying troops, he bade them rally at the ford.

"Dogs," he shouted, "are you to be beaten back by sticks?"

Stung by his words, a West Siberian regiment attempted to form up on the bank of the river. It was a desperate and useless effort. For like a thundercloud there burst upon them the whole strength of the Royal Fusiliers, who, at the edge of the bayonet, pierced through them and forced them into the river.

Crocodiles in the Helmund waxed fat for months.

And now the artillery, hastening up behind the infantry, took its place upon the shelving bank, and across the water there belched into the helpless remnant of the Russian army a storm of shot. Reply was useless. The Russian guns could only decimate their own ranks. Between them and the English was a panic-stricken border of flying soldiers, carrying with them the infection of their terror and breaking up the solid battalions, which, helpless and stricken, lined the northern bank.

It was impossible to withstand so deadly a storm; before the tireless British guns the remainder of the invading army, vainly struggling to retain its order, broke and fell away, and in half-an-hour it was in frantic and disorderly flight.

Now was General Grant's opportunity, and nobly he availed himself.

As the Russians spread themselves over the country beyond Girishk the 5,000 picked English and native cavalry dashed down from their post and precipitated themselves upon the enemy.

Mahomed Khan ran him through the heart.

It was the last and deadliest stroke. The Brigade struck the Russian force like a thunderbolt, splitting it up into a hundred helpless and scattered fragments. Disorganised, disunited, filled with the mad terror that knows no limits, caring only that it should be somewhere away from the terrific and unendurable onslaught, the once magnificent army of Russia betook itself to aimless and pitiful flight.

Sir George White, as he swept the scene through his glasses, could not help feeling a faint flutter of pity.

"Poor devils!" he exclaimed. "They had better have remained here."

For he knew the Afghan, and what manner of welcome was already prepared for the flying army amongst those treacherous hills and valleys to the north.

Foremost in the pursuit was Sirdar Mahomed Khan, who had been lent for the day to serve as native aide-de-camp to Major-General Grant.

The Sirdar was thoroughly enjoying himself. Every thrust and cut at a Cossack was accompanied by a choice expletive. "*Sug!*"* he roared as he drove his sword through the ribs of a gentleman from Orenburg. "Son of a pig!" and tumbled a Kirghese into a ditch. "Bazaar-born!" and a Ural nomad fell beneath his stroke.

At last his strong country-bred, sired by a Norfolk trotter from a half-bred Arab mare, brought him alongside a Russian officer vainly urging his tired horse to more strenuous effort.

It was Alikhanoff, desperate, pallid, frenzied with shame and rage, who, borne back through the Helmund by the press of the fight, now saw no alternative but to fly with the rest.

Mahomed Khan knew him in a second, even amidst the wild *mélange* of the rout.

"*Din! Din!*"† he shrieked. "Thou art running back to Penjdeh, then, O Ali Khan!" And he closed in to deliver a cut that should have cleaved the Russian commander to the chin had it struck him fairly.

Alikhanoff had no time to ask for quarter. But he tried to save himself. Rapidly wheeling his horse he disconcerted the other's aim and received the powerful cut on the forte of his sword. But the Sirdar was not to be denied.

By the force of his onset he was jammed up against his opponent. Quick as lightning he smashed the hilt of his sabre into Alikhanoff's face, and as the Russian reeled in the saddle beneath the blow Mahomed Khan ran him through the heart.

Calling two sowars the Sirdar bade them guard the corpse, but as he rode on he muttered: "I grow old, to use the point. There is more satisfaction in the cut!"

Meanwhile the cavalry brigade commanded by Colonel Doyne, now released from their inactivity, moved forward at the trot, crossed the Helmund, and advanced rapidly towards the north-west.

Many a fugitive Russian, seeing this compact force moving onward, and seemingly disregarding the pursuit, vaguely wondered, whilst he still had life, what its object could be, and when Mahomed Khan saw them he clapped spurs to his horse to rejoin his regiment. Russia heard of that brigade before she heard of Alikhanoff.

(To be continued.)

* The Persian for "hound."
† The Mussulman battle-cry.

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£20 Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See Illd. Guide (259 pages) 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000 Tobacconists Outfitting Co., 186, Euston Road, London. The largest and original house (50 years reputation. Mgr., H. Myers

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MUSIC STAND

Folding and Portable. Square legs, Gold bronzed, very durable.

3/-

3/- parcel post free. Two for 5/9, Three for 8 6. Carriage Paid.

Send for Catalogue A, Post Free, for Band Instruments, Fittings, Strings, &c.

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METAL POLISHER

The Lustre Lasts!

Pyn-Ka Leaves no Scratches!

Cleans and burnishes gold, silver, plate, copper, brass, nickel, tin, glass, etc., better, quicker, and at less cost of labour and money than any other polish known.

Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

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Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plan, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Riveted Hammers, Handsom Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

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Agents wanted where not represented.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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Works by hand or treadle. Guaranteed 4 years. Equal in quality and size to any machine To ensure satisfaction, we will send machine on receipt of 5/- P.O. for **ONE MONTH'S TRIAL.** Balance can be paid 5/- Monthly. Call or write for designs and Samples of work. **39/-**

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Toothache, Headache, Sciatica, and all Nerve Pains.

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Of all Chemists, 1s. and 2s. 6d. per Box.

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WOULD YOU LIKE A

£25 GOLD "TIMES" WATCH (Or £25 in Cash) FOR NOTHING?

We will Give Away, Absolutely Free, one of these Celebrated Watches to EACH PURCHASER of the

"DIDO" TOOTH PASTE

(In Collapsible Tubes),

who succeeds in filling in correctly the missing letters in the following words which relate to our "Dido" Dentifrice

1.—D - - O B - - - - - - - - G D - - - - - - - - E.
2.—C - - - - S AND P - - - - - - S THE T - - - H.
3.—R - - - - - - - - S AND P - - - - - - S THE B - - - - H.
4.—R - - - - - S THE GUMS S - - - - - - - - S.
5.—D - - - - - - - - - - - Y P - - - - - - - - - - - Y.

The "Dido" Benefiting Dentifrice, in collapsible tubes, cleans and Protects teeth, refreshes and perfumes the breath, and renders the gums salubrious, it removes tartar, prevents decay, and is delightfully preservatory. "Dido" Dentifrice is made of the finest possible ingredients, and is the best tooth paste ever offered to the public.

THIS IS A THOROUGHLY GENUINE COMPETITION.

PERFECTLY FREE. NO ENTRANCE FEE. NO DIVISION.

WHAT TO DO.—When you have found what you believe are the missing letters, write the words out on a sheet of paper, numbering them 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, as above, and send same to us, with a P.O. (not stamps) for 1s. 6d. and stamped addressed envelope for results, and we will forward to you, post free, a collapsible tube of the "Dido" Dentifrice (Foreign Orders, 3s., payable in London). We offer the above prizes to purchasers of our Tooth Paste, in order to make this remarkable preparation known to the public, and we are prepared to expend some thousands of pounds on this method of advertising our Dentifrice. We may say we give you not only full value for your money, but for 1s. 6d. post free, you will receive a ½lb. of the finest Tooth Paste, the largest quantity ever offered at the price.

REMEMBER EACH ONE who correctly fills in the missing letters will receive one of these celebrated "Times" Gent's Watches, or if a lady, a "Royal" Watch, value £25. These Watches are English-made, keyless, 7-plate Levers, fully jewelled, in solid 18-carat Hall-marked Gold Cases, and are manufactured by one of the largest and best known firms of jewellers in the City of London. These Watches cannot be purchased for less than £25 each. As a proof of this, should you be a winner, you can have a Watch or the £25 IN CASH, whichever you prefer.

DO NOT HESITATE, but send AT ONCE for the **"DIDO" DENTIFRICE,** and avail yourself of this exceptional opportunity to obtain one of these beautiful Watches, as this offer may not be repeated. Write your name and full address very distinctly, and put the name of this paper at the top of your letter. Keep a note of the number of your Postal Order in case it goes astray. This Competition will close on December 31st, 1898. Prizes will be awarded and results posted a week later. The solution has been sealed, and deposited with Messrs. E. W. Seir & Co., 118 Fleet Street, London, E.C.

YOU CAN HAVE THE WATCH AT ONCE

before the Competition closes. Full particulars regarding this will be sent you with the Dentifrice. Address all letters,

THE "DIDO" DENTIFRICE CO., Sidney Avenue, Milton Street, London, E.C.

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SHORT TRUTHS.

SHAVER writes to ask if there is any health value attached to a beard. ——Decidedly; they are better respirators than science could ever make. The hair of the moustache not only absorbes the moisture and miasma fogs, but it strains the air from the dust and soot of our great smoky cities. It acts also in the most scientific manner by taking heat from the warm breath as it leaves the chest and supplying it to the cold air taken in. It is a respirator and a comforter as well, so that with a good thick, bushy beard, a man might face a blizzard with less chance of taking cold.

C. T. F.—The peculiarly offensive odour of eggs when they reach the stage in which they are considered to be most suitable for the purposes of public meetings is due to the combination of sulphur and hydrogen, as the result of decomposition, forming sulphuretted hydrogen, a gas which is both malodorous and poisonous.

BOOK-WORM.—Generally speaking, the best print for reading is that known as long primer. In the case of artificial illumination, a white light is to be preferred. The form of the letters is of less importance than the thickness of the strokes, and there should be a fair space between the lines. Most of the matter in *S.S.* is set in bourgeois.

P. G.—The highest lighthouse round our coast is that which stands on the Skerryvore rocks. It towers 138 feet into the air, is 42 feet in diameter at the base, and 16 feet at the top.

MISS G. wants to know of a suitable expression by which she can refer to her lover to mere acquaintances. She considers "my lover," "my friend," "my young man," and such like expressions "too awful for words." ——I quite agree with you, MISS G. Unfortunately there does not appear to be an equivalent in our language for the French *"fiancé."* Under the circumstances, however, I do not think you can do better than borrow from that language, unless you refer to the gentleman in question as "Mr. So-and-So."

W. D. G.—The Queen has thirty-six chaplains in her English establishments, who are known as "chaplains in ordinary to her Majesty." Besides these there are twelve "honorary chaplains." The monetary value of the appointment is merely nominal. Each chaplain receives £30 annually.

H.W.K.—The nest which is made into soup and eaten by the Chinese is that of a bird similar to the swift. The nests are made of a golatinous secretion from the mouth of the bird.

H. G.—No, the Japanese do not take to fiction; they consider life too short for that sort of thing. Of 27,000 books published in that empire in one year, only 462 were of that class. Works on philosophy, arts and science and religion stood the highest in the list.

BEAUTY.—Every description of veil affects the eyesight more or less. The most objectionable kind is the dotted veil, although the influence of this variety for evil is more marked in some samples than others. The least objectionable veil is that without dots, sprays, or other figures, but with large regular meshes made with single compact threads.

ROMEO asks why a strong emotion of any sort takes away one's appetite for the time being.——Because it stops the formation of the digestive juices, and the stomach for the time ceases to be an active and a craving organ. Why an emotion should have such an effect is unknown, but it seems to be an arrangement of Nature to prevent the stomach being overloaded when there is anxious work to be done by the body.

LIBRARIAN.—Twice as many books are printed in Germany as are turned out in France.

R. N. H.—The greater part of the cast-off uniforms of our soldiers find their way into the shops of dealers in second-hand clothing. The coats are then either cut up, sold to theatrical managers, or exported to Africa and elsewhere for trading purposes with the Kaffirs and other uncivilised people.

M. A.—It is very rare for a person with blue eyes to be colour-blind.

W. W.—The hardest wood used by the Japanese is *kiyaki*. It resembles oak in colour, and is capable of being very highly polished. It is employed for very fine work, and for boat-building and other purposes where strength is required. It is now becoming scarce.

H. H.—In Norway, where a broken-winded horse is rarely seen, a bucket of water is always placed within reach of a horse when he is feeding, and the animal alternately takes a mouthful of hay and a draught of water. You might do worse than imitate the practice.

DOWN.—More than 10,000lb. of eider-down is collected annually in Iceland, 7,000 of which are exported. The price at one time was a guinea a pound.

EPICURE—Those who have partaken of peacock declare that it is decidedly tough eating; the same may also be said of the flesh of the swan. The fact of the latter bird ever having been a favourite dish in this country speaks volumes for the digestive organs of our forefathers.

B. P. R. puts the question: "Why do we hear best with our mouths open?" ——Because we place the Eustachian tubes in free communication with the atmosphere through which the waves of sounds are propelled. This gives a freer and more equable vibration to the drum of the ear on which the waves strike.

GOURMAND.—Larvae or caterpillars eat more than any other creature in proportion to their size.

H. S.—You must carry a purse deep and capacious if you have any idea of travelling in China. For a start, if you exchange two English half-crowns for their equivalent in the money of the Celestial Empire, you ought to receive some twelve hundred brass coins of various weights and sizes, every one pierced with a square hole in the centre and strung on a string.

W. M.—The language with the greatest number of letters in its alphabet is the Abyssinian, which has 208 distinct characters.

M. P.—A very good plan to prevent sea sickness is to tie a shawl tightly round the waist and sit upright on the cabin floor or on the deck until the body has got accustomed to the sea air and the motion of the vessel.

FELIX.—No. It is a mistake to suppose that the tip of the tongue is the most sensitive part of the body. Those engaged in polishing substances that require a very high degree of smoothness always use the cheek-bone as their touchstone for detecting any roughness.

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100 BICYCLE PRIZES!

All Prizes in Former Competitions have been taken up; eight machines not being claimed in time were passed on.

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"Knowing the method on which the A.B. Cycle Company's business is done, we can honestly recommend the firm."—*Athletic Record*, September 3rd, 1898.

Send Answers Early.

Make up the best sentence you can out of Seven words, the first letter of each word beginning with a letter of "BICYCLE" in proper order. Thus: "But, Indeed Cycling You Can Learn Everywhere." It will be seen that the initial letter of each word in the foregoing sentence spells the word "Bicycle." Make up a different sentence and forward to us.

AN ABSOLUTELY FREE COMPETITION. We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. Neither after you have won a Prize (if you are fortunate enough to do so), do we compel you to purchase any accessories. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office get the benefit of. Thus we can truthfully assert of this thoroughly genuine Competition that it is **ABSOLUTELY FREE TO ALL.**

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The following ladies and gentlemen are amongst the number of persons who have recently received Free Bicycles, each of whom has signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected, either directly or indirectly, with this Firm. We will forfeit £1,000 if this statement is incorrect. A FEW FREE CYCLE WINNERS: Mr. George A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary-Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. Arthur J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. Maria Fraser, Haglefort, Shinrone, Ireland; Mr. Robert Hughes, Llanidan, Anglesey, North Wales; Mr. L. Horne, 101 London Road, Oldham; etc, etc., etc.

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TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.—COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN and **closes Monday, November 15th, 1898.** Results will be declared as soon as possible, although it may be a fortnight afterwards before all replies are posted.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Prizes may be considerably increased in all or any one class. Unless stamp (*not a stamped envelope*, as our catalogue is a large [outside] size) is enclosed for postage of Catalogue and Result of Competition, the Company will not guarantee to inform Competitors of their success. Prize-winners need not purchase any accessories with their machines, unless they so desire. As the majority of the competitors may not be able to call and inspect the machines, **WE GUARANTEE TO REFUND THE FULL AMOUNT** paid for a second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, or for one of our consolation prizes, **IF THE OWNER IS NOT PERFECTLY SATISFIED** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any prize liable to forfeiture.

£100

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Never known to Fail. **KILLCORN**
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TRY IT ON A PENNY. Dab a small quantity of Polish on a penny & leave it overnight. If it contains ACID, it will turn quite green by the following morning. BUT "MATCHLESS" WON'T!

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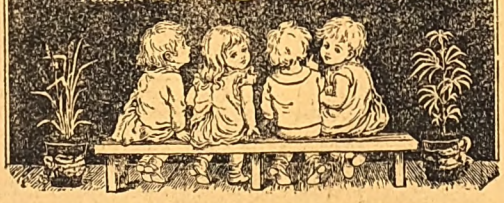

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EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 515. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 12TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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"Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa gives every satisfaction, and I shall not fail to recommend it to my friends and patients."

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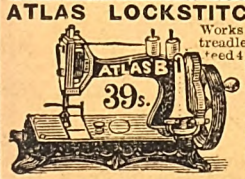

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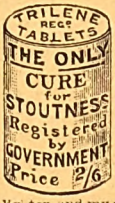

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No. 515. For the Week ending November 12, 1898. ONE PENNY.

KING ELIJAH'S ACCESSION.

By ARCHIBALD MARSHALL.

The first story, describing how Elijah P. Jopp slew the Dragon, which had infested the country of Dummeleutia, appeared in the first number of *The Royal Magazine*.

I.

ELIJAH P. JOPP having slain the dragon that had infested the country of Dummeleutia, and having accepted half the kingdom as his reward, was crowned with the pomp that befitted his lofty station. He was cheered to the echo whenever he appeared in the public streets, and the Parliament of Dummeleutia carried a unanimous resolution that his bicycle should be cleaned and kept in order at the public expense.

The details of the coronation festival were carefully laid down and carried out by the Lord Chamberlain. There was some little difficulty about the crown, because there was only one, and that one King Ferdinand refused to give up under any consideration, even for the time necessary to put it on to Elijah's head, and take it off again. But Elijah said he did not take much stock in crowns anyway, and the one in use for pageants at the Theatre Royal would do quite well for him if it was rubbed up a bit, and the Court glazier was directed to replace the Koh-i-nor that had got mislaid some how, so that he need not have to wear it hindside in front.

Elijah said a few words after the coronation. This sort of thing was new to him, he said, and he hoped his loyal subjects would forgive him if he hadn't quite caught the hang of it (cheers). In the great country where he came from, monarchs were considered rather in the light of "funny business;" but he would say this, that he thought a monarch's berth would suit him very well, and that a little new blood in the concern would enable him and his partner to push things along a bit. He looked forward to a period of enlightened progress (cheers), and his subjects might bet their boots that their constitutional privileges, whatever they were, would be respected (loud applause and shrill laughter from a group of Members of Parliament). He would not keep them any longer from the entertainments provided for them, as they would probably have plenty of opportunities of hearing his views on subjects in general (renewed laughter from the Members of Parliament). He would only add that if they behaved well to him, he would behave well to them, and that now they might run away and play.

There was a scene of unparalleled enthusiasm. Elijah was hoisted on to the shoulders of four stalwart men, and carried round the town, somewhat to his discomfort, but as he said himself, a man wasn't crowned king every day, and he would put up with it for once. The band played "Was für ein lustige Kerl," and "Wir gehen nicht nach Hause bis Morgen." When Ferdinand and Elijah went home to supper the festivities continued.

The public holiday was an unmixed success, and the whole of the working portion of the populace went back to their business the next day thoroughly unsettled for the rest of the week.

With one exception. Elijah P. Jopp, who had been crowned King George VIII. of Dummeleutia, woke up the morning after the coronation alert and brisk, and eager to set about the task of raising his kingdom from a comparatively low place among the nations of Europe to a position which would enable its monarch to afford the expense of sending telegrams all over the world, and perhaps in time to gain a little piece of seaboard, so that Dummeleutia might build a ship or two and call herself mistress of the seas.

There was a great deal to be done. King Ferdinand had always played the part of a constitutional monarch for reasons which will shortly be explained. As long as his weekly allowance was paid to him regularly, and nobody interfered with his simple pleasures, which were not so very disreputable, all things considered, he allowed his counsellers and his Parliament to govern the kingdom. King George Elijah had very different ideas, and as he jumped out of bed the morning after the coronation he was all on fire to put them into execution.

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The first thing to be done was to come to an understanding with Ferdinand, so after a light breakfast he walked across from the hotel where he was still "located," as he would have said, to the Royal Palace to interview his brother monarch. The palace was one of a row of semi-detached villas, each with quite a nice little strip of garden behind it, situated in a quiet surburban road, not far from the public park. There was another palace in the country called Annaslust, but it was at present let furnished to a rich wine merchant. The reason for this state of things must now be explained.

King Ferdinand's father had begun to reign at a time when the kingdom of Dummeleutia was in the prosperous state alluded to above, and he had reigned for forty years. *His* father had been all that a king should be, and King Otto had begun his reign with two or three fine palaces, a handsome retinue, and sufficient means to keep up a considerable amount of state. He was only twenty-two when he came to the throne, and had immediately begun a career of folly and extravagance which eventually landed him in the bankruptcy court. He had mortgaged every one of his palaces, which all had to go, with the exception of Annaslust, which had been settled on his wife.

Elijah was hoisted on the shoulders of four stalwart men and carried round the town.

By the time the crisis came, King Otto had lost his place in the world's esteem. He had never taken any interest in the affairs of the kingdom, which went on very well without him. There was a talk of deposing him and running Dummeleutia as a republic, but the populace rose and vetoed that proposition. There was the usual state of jealousy in Dummeleutia between the classes and the masses, and King Otto, by his tastes and his social connections, had allied himself to the masses. The common people looked upon him as one of themselves, and they weren't going to have him deposed at any price.

However, they didn't want him raised again to such a pinnacle as to place him out of their reach, so eventually it was arranged that the semi-detached villa in Parkstrasse should be taken for him and the rent paid out of the taxes, and here he had lived during the rest of his reign, spending what money he could get and running into debt whenever he could obtain credit.

Here Prince Ferdinand had been brought up, and as he had never known anything better, was comparatively contented in the lower middle-class society, which was the best that was open to him.

II.

KING FERDINAND was not up yet, said the servant who opened the door. He had had his breakfast in bed and had sent it down almost untouched, with the exception of the tea, and he had ordered another pot of that, which he was drinking now. She never saw such goings on, she said, and if that was the way a respectable house was going to be conducted, she should find another situation, and so she told him, king or no king.

King Ferdinand did not look at all royal as he made his appearance a quarter of an hour later, in a shabby dressing-gown and slippers very much down at heel. He bore rather a battered appearance, and did not appear to advantage beside his brisk and dapper brother king.

"Excuse our late appearance," he said, as he came into the room. Elijah looked at him critically, and made up his mind to induce him to join the Young Rechabites No-Liquor League, of which he had been a member ever since his boyhood, in the near future. Just at present, however, there was more important business to be done.

"Come to talk shop?" he said shortly.

"Oh, don't," said Ferdinand, passing his hand wearily across his brow. "We can't stand it at this time in the morning; we can't really, brother King."

"Swaller some aerated water, and listen to me," said Elijah.

Ferdinand did as he was told, and resigned himself to listen with a melancholy air.

"You ain't been carrying on this business as it oughter been carried on," said Elijah.

"What business?" asked Ferdinand.

"The kingdom," said Elijah. "Look at you living in this yer low down hole. You ain't used your power."

"Our dear fellow," said Ferdinand, "we have no power; Parliament has got it all."

"Oh, has it!" said Elijah. "Presoomably it thinks it has. I guess it's going to find out that it's made a mistake. What do you draw?"

"What do we——?"

"What do you take a week out of the concern?"

"You mean how is our privy purse replenished?"

"You've hit it. What's the figure?"

"Well, Parliament allows us £2 a week and a furnished house. Then there's the rent of our royal residence at Annaslust; that comes to another £5 a week. That is all we have to live upon, and it's very little, George, very little."

The tears came into the king's eyes as he disclosed his state of dire poverty.

"Cheer up," said Elijah cheerfully. "I'm going to alter that for you. But ain't there any pickings?"

"*No* pickings," said poor Ferdinand pitifully.

"Oh, come now, what do you charge for making a dook?"

"We don't charge anything," said Ferdinand. "The Prime Minister settles who is to be ennobled, and we sign the patents."

"Oh, do you?" said Elijah, and he made his entry in his notebook. "Got many other papers to sign?" he asked.

"A great many," said Ferdinand. "It sometimes takes us a whole hour to get through the work."

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"And you don't get nothing for that?"

"Only the £2 a week. That is what it is paid for. Nothing the Parliament settles can become law unless I sign the papers."

Elijah made another note.

"Now, I'll tell you what I'm going to do, Ferdy," said Elijah. "I'm going to act straight about this business.

The tears came into the King's eyes.

We go shares on what we make. You've halved whan you got with me, and it's worth more than you thought it was. It ain't legally in the bargain, but to show you what a white man's like when you come across one, I'm going to halve what I've got with you. And I'm going to do it right now. I figure out at a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and there's a cheque for seventy-five of 'em made out to you." He took a signed cheque out of his pocket, and handed it across the table to Ferdinand, who took it with tears in his eyes.

"We didn't expect this," he said with deep emotion.

"Put it there," said Elijah, holding out a sinewy hand. Ferdinand gripped it.

"Now we're square," said Elijah. "You're worth seventy-five thousand dollars as well as your screw from the Government. You do what you like with your money. That's understood. But if you take my advice, you'll pay the best part of that cheque into joint account. I'll do the same with what I've got. There'll be plenty to do with it. And it ain't all the money you're going to get neither. With regard to these yere papers—I've got to sign them now as well as you, and I ain't going to do my part of the job under five dollars a sign. You stick out for the same, and we'll pick up a bit that way."

Ferdinand's eyes and mouth opened wide.

"With regard to dooks," continued Elijah, "there's going to be 'en more dooks made this day month at a thousand dollars a dook."

"Why, there'll be a revolution!" gasped Ferdinand.

"Jesso," said Elijah. "And we lead the Popular party. We ain't going to have no aristocracy lording it over us. This is going to be a free country, and King Ferdinand and King George are going to run it. Ever kissed a baby?"

Ferdinand rolled his head helplessly "We should like a little more money," he said pathetically, "but otherwise we're very well contented as we are. *Don't* upset things, George. Don't do it."

"Bosh!" said Elijah tersely. "You leave things to me. You've only got to keep quiet and spend the dollars when I get 'em for you. I'm going to put this business through, and you lay your boots I ain't going to make a mess of it. Not if you do what you're told."

"What are we told?" asked Ferdinand.

"Don't sign a paper unless I tell you to. That's one thing. Take me round and introdooce me to your pals; that's another. Keep your mouth shet. That's the third and last."

"We will do all that you tell us," said King Ferdinand.

"That's right," said Elijah. "We're going to forment this yer revolootion, and when we've put it through you won't be lowered any longer in a hundred dollar shanty in a black lot."

"We are deeply touched," said King Ferdinand, with tears in his eyes. "We will follow your instructions to the letter, George. We haven't been much of a fellow—we haven't had a chance. But restore us to our rightful position, and we'll try and make a new start. After all, we are the descendant of a long line of kings, and born to better things."

"That's all right," said Elijah kindly. "You're no nigger. And now I must set to work."

III.

THE Parliament of Dummeleutia was divided into two parties, the Aristocratic and the Popular. The former was in office at the time of Elijah's accession, and held the field by a large majority. The Prime Minister was a certain Count Pilsenheim, who was a young blood of about twenty-six, beautifully dressed, and possessed of a very fair idea of his own importance. He knew very little about politics; in fact, the business of the state was practically carried on by permanent officials; but Count Pilsenheim was a good figure-head, which was all-important in a community where royalty was socially non-existent.

Count Pilsenheim was sitting at breakfast in his town house one morning about a week after the conversation

He handed it across the room to Ferdinand.

between the two Kings of Dummeleutia, already recorded. The Countess Pilsenheim was pouring out tea; the Prime Minister was reading the morning paper.

"I believe," said the Countess, "that new king is up

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to some mischief. Parker tells me that he and Ferdinand have been driving all about the town in a landau with a

The royal summons was delivered to the Prime Minister by the club waiter.

pair of horses, and the people cheer them wherever they go."

"Let 'em cheer," said the Prime Minister. "I don't think Master Ferdy can do us much harm. I'll give him what for if he tries any of his little games on."

"I'm not so certain about Master George," said the Countess. "You know what these pushing Americans are. Parker's sister, who is a dressmaker and lives in the next house to Ferdinand's in the Parkstrasse, told her that George is boarding with Ferdinand now, and that people are going in and out all day long. She says that Johann Busch was there for the whole afternoon the other day."

Now Johann Busch was the leader of the Popular party in the parliament of Dummeleutia.

"The deuce he was!" said the Prime Minister. "I'll soon stop that. I've to go and see Master Ferdy this morning. Wellstein tells me that there are some papers that require his valuable signature. You might just drop him a line to say that I shall be there at eleven, will you? Tell him if I don't turn up by a quarter past to come round to the club. I'm going there to have a game of billiards, and I may not have finished in time. I'll take the papers with me."

When the Countess Pilsenheim's note reached King Ferdinand he was engaged with Elijah in drawing up a list of people who were to be ennobled—for a consideration received—when the present government should have been ousted in favour of one more in sympathy with royal aspirations. Johann Busch stood at the head of the list.

"He's a swollen-headed bag o' wind," said Elijah, "but he's got the people behind him, and he's going to do what he's told, although he don't know it yet." Johann Busch would not have dared to submit his own name for a title when he was in office, the people would not have liked it; but Elijah had promised that he should be ennobled during the premiership of Count Pilsenheim, and Johann Busch thought that that was rather a good joke, and well worth paying five thousand marks for. He had been so far won over by Elijah as to promise that if his party came into power the Government would bring in a Bill for making suitable grants to the reigning monarchs, and Elijah had promised in his turn that all available places at Court should be distributed among the Popular party. Ferdinand demurred at this, but Elijah explained that such a plan would break the back of the Aristocratic tyranny, and when they had learnt to behave themselves and accept the Royal supremacy, they might come back and be humble servants where they had been accustomed to consider themselves masters.

The Countess Pilsenheim's note was brought in by Ferdinand's housekeeper. It ran thus:

To His Most Gracious Majesty, King Ferdinand.

SIRE,—The Prime Minister will have the honour of waiting on Your Majesty with important documents of State at eleven o'clock. Should the Prime Minister not arrive at Your Majesty's house by a quarter past eleven, please go at once to Weiss's Club, Jacobstrasse, and inquire for Count Pilsenheim, who will wait on Your Majesty there when disengaged.

I have the honour to be,
Your Majesty's most obedient servant,
B. PILSENHEIM.

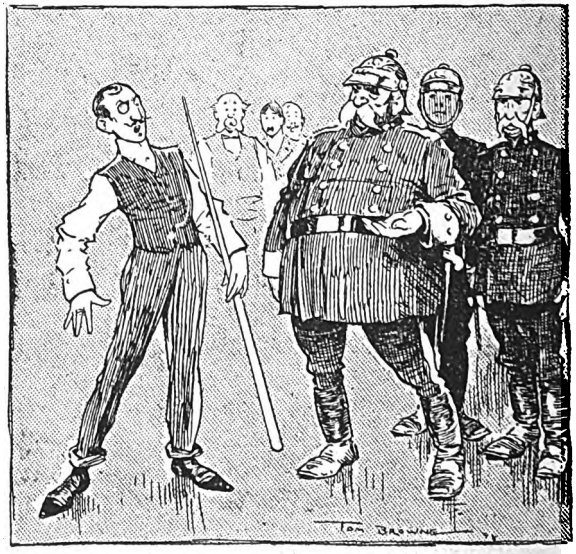
King Ferdinand read the note and looked nervously at his watch.

"It's half-past ten already," he said. "We wish he would give us longer notice. We don't believe there's a glass of sherry or a biscuit in the house. We bet Sarah hasn't dusted out the best parlour, and we haven't shaved this morning. We must go and see about it."

"Wait a minute," said Elijah. "Who is the billy-doo from?"

He took it up and read it.

"Well now, that's what I call real nerve," he said.



"I arrest you in the name of their Majesties the Kings."

"That young man is going to find out that he ain't so big as he thinks himself, not by some sizes. Say, Sarah, is that flunkey still on show on the sidewalk?"

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But Count Pilsenheim's footman, having done his duty in Parkstrasse, had taken himself off to a more aristocratic quarter of the town.

"You put on your shawl and bonnet, Sarah, and carry

He found himself in the grasp of two policemen.

this note round to Weiss's," said Elijah. "We'll have my lord out of that in no time."

Sarah was not disinclined for a little outing, and went to prepare herself for her walk while Elijah wrote:

Their Majesties, King Ferdinand and King George, desire the attendance of the Prime Minister at their palace in Parkstrasse without delay.

"Do you think he'll quite like it?" asked Ferdinand anxiously. "He's a tremendous swell, you know, George. We should be careful if we were you."

"'Tain't me that's got to be careful, it's him," said Elijah, "and so he'll find out before he's half an hour older"

The royal summons was delivered to the Prime Minister by the club waiter as he was in the middle of a game of pool. He read it and threw it into the grate. "Oh, they do, do they?" he said as he prepared himself for his stroke. "Well, it won't do them any harm to go on desiring it for another hour or so. Tell the messenger to say I shall be round about twelve o'clock, waiter—or, no, say I'm too busy to come, but the Kings are to come round here in half an hour and wait in the hall till I'm ready. That'll take 'em down a bit, I think." Then he neatly pocketed the previous player's ball, failed to do the same with the nearest, but left himself safely up under the cushion and was glad.

The game went on tranquilly for another half-hour, when a considerable commotion was heard on the stairs outside. The door burst open, and a stalwart Inspector of Police, followed by two constables, entered the room and came straight towards the Prime Minister.

"Carl Pilsenheim, I arrest you in the name of their Majesties the Kings," he said, in a loud voice, and then in a lower key: "Warn you anything say now used evidence 'gainst you."

"What's the meaning of this?" exclaimed the astonished Prime Minister, while the rest of the players stood round in the utmost consternation.

"Ordered to take you at once into the presence of their Majesties," said the Inspector. "Better come quietly, sir. Got a cab outside."

"Presence of their Majesties!" exclaimed the irate Prime Minister, throwing down his cue. "By George, yes! That'll just suit me. Come along, Fritz. If I don't give Master Ferdinand and Master George——" but the rest of the right honourable gentleman's remarks were lost as he made his way down the staircase, two steps at a time, thirsting for the fray with his liege lords and masters.

The two Kings sat waiting for him in the dining-room of 8 Parkstrasse, Ferdinand quivering with excitement, Elijah cool and collected. Two tall policemen stood motionless just inside the door. The Chief Inspector of Police had been put on the list of those to whom titles were to be given at an early date, and the whole Metropolitan Police force of Putzenheim was now at the bidding of the Royal and Popular party. A cab drove rapidly up to the door, and the enraged Prime Minister jumped quickly out of it followed by his cousin young Fritz von Fiddledorf, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (£2,000 a year), and the police inspector who followed them into the house.

"Look here, Ferdinand," began the Prime Minister, furiously, as he burst into the room. "I'm blowed if I'm going to put up with your——" At this point he found himself in the grasp of the two policemen, one of whom laid a heavy and not over clean hand upon his mouth, while the calm but penetrating voice of Elijah was heard from the other side of the table.

"Look here, if you ain't pretty careful what you say, you'll find yourself locked up mighty sharp. Comprenny? I'm King of this country and so's Ferdinand

"Make 'em out yourself!" he cried.

here, and we're going to be treated as such. Don't leave go of him, policeman, till I've said what I'm going to say. I've got to inform you, Mr Count Pilsenheim, that King Ferdinand and King Me are going to take up our

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positions as rulers of this yer realm right now, and disrespectful speech from a subject is going to be punished with imprisonment. Give him his head, Robert."

Something in Elijah's aspect—some hint perhaps of the divinity that doth hedge a king, even in Dummeleutia—took effect upon the Prime Minister. When the two policemen released him he did not break out into that torrent of abuse to which his outraged feelings and his contempt for Ferdinand prompted him. He stood and glowered silently instead.

The Prime Minister was led struggling from the room.

"Got the papers?" inquired Elijah.

"Yes," said the Prime Minister.

"Yes, what?"

"Yes, sire."

"Thank you. Fetch 'em right here."

Fritz von Fiddledorf handed the documents to his chief, and without any further preface the four men proceeded to business. Elijah took complete charge of it. The Prime Minister sulkily explained the purport of each paper, prompted by young Fritz. Sometimes he knew nothing of what the paper was about, and then Elijah told him to take it away, and find out, which did not sweeten his temper. Elijah signed what he had a mind to, and handed the documents on to Ferdinand, who did the same without asking any questions.

When the business was over the Prime Minister gathered up the papers, his lip curling, and his brow bent. He was evidently about to say something, but Elijah forestalled him.

"I've got another little job for you," he said. "Here's a list of dockships you can make out patents for, and let me have 'em by to-morrow morning at eleven o'clock."

The Prime Minister glanced at the list. The first name that met his eye was that of Johann Busch. He read no further.

"Make 'em out yourself," he cried, as he threw the paper down, "and be hanged to you! Think I'm going to be ordered about by a mere American showman? You come outside, and I'll mark you. I'll make things so hot for you, my fine fellow, that you'll find yourself over the frontier in a week's time, with your tail between your legs. And as for you, Ferdinand, let me tell you——"

But at this point the Prime Minister was once more gagged by the policemen, and, although he struggled furiously, he could only emit meaningless sounds which scarcely expressed the thoughts that burnt hot within him.

"Take him off to chokee," said Elijah cheerfully. "He'll revile his liege Majesty, the King, will he? We'll see about that."

And so the Prime Minister was led struggling from the room, and locked up in the city gaol.

"And now the fat's in the fire," said Elijah. "Ferdy, you and me have begun our glorious reign."

"The Laughing Princess" next week.

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MISS JOHNSON'S PLAN.

One of the most striking characteristics of woman is her cheerful perseverance in looking under the bed for a thief. No man in his senses ever looks under his bed for a burglar but there are millions of women in this country who would find it quite impossible to sleep in any bed under which they had not previously searched for a concealed man.

Experience is lost upon them. The average unmarried woman, of forty years of age, has usually looked under the bed at least 7,500 times, without ever once finding the expected man; but she is not the least discouraged by so long a course of failure, and it would be easy to find women, eighty or ninety years old, who still nightly search for the man they have never found.

Miss Johnson will hereafter be famous as a woman whose long perseverance has been signally rewarded. It would be indelicate to inquire into her precise age—had she not described herself in a recent affidavit as having been born in the year 1855?—and we may therefore take it for granted that she is at least forty-three years old.

If we presume that she began to look under the bed at the age of fifteen, it follows that she has performed that ceremony more than 10,000 times.

Until the other Friday night, she never found the smallest fragment of a man under her bed; but on that eventful night her perseverance was rewarded, and the long-sought man greeted her astonished gaze.

Miss Johnson, being an unmarried lady, not wholly unconnected with the milliner's trade, and full of womanly independence, resides entirely alone, in a small house containing but three rooms—a kitchen, shop, and bedroom.

Dogs she despises, and cats she mistrusts; while, as for men, she regards them as poor creatures who may possibly have their uses in the time of hard frost, when water must be carted from the nearest stream, but who, as a rule, make more trouble about a house than their necks are worth.

Holding these views, it naturally follows that Miss Johnson lives alone, and the cool bravery with which she locks up her house at night, and seeks her solitary couch (no matter if a first-class thunderstorm is in progress) has for years been the admiration of the more timid of her sex.

It was about eleven o'clock on that Friday night when Miss Johnson stooped down and looked under the bed for a possible man, precisely as she had done on 10,000 previous nights.

Whether she was or was not astonished at perceiving a large-sized man lying under the bed, with the back of his head towards her, will never be known, but at any rate, she gave no sign of astonishment, and did not even inform the man that she saw him.

On the contrary, she resumed with great deliberation the nocturnal twisting of her back-hair, and even softly hummed, "Come into the garden, Maud," with as much distinctness as could be expected of a woman while holding a comb between her teeth.

Her back hair being finally finished, she opened her window, turned down the lamp until it gave forth a dim and modest light, and then stepped gracefully into bed, but not to sleep.

That sagacious woman was perfectly aware that the man under the bed, not suspecting that he had been discovered, would creep forth with a view to plunder as soon as he thought that she was asleep.

The bedstead stood in a corner of the room, and from the position of the man it was plain that he would creep out at the side of the bed. Miss Johnson, therefore, changed her usual manner of composing herself to rest, and lay, as she subsequently expressed it, "flat as a pancake," with her head projecting over the side of the bed at the precise locality where she expected the man to appear.

For at least half an hour she lay perfectly still, watching for the man with a steal hy vigilance that would have done credit to an astute and experienced cat.

Not a muscle or a hairpin of her frame moved, and her breathing was as slow and regular as that of a profound sleeper. At engthe man, confident that she was asleep, softly began to worm himself from under the bed.

Little did he imagine that a pair of pitiless grey eyes were awaiting for the appearance of his head, while a pair of lithe and nervous hands were ready to pounce upon his ears.

It was not many minutes, however, before each ear was suddenly caught in an inexorable grasp, and his head began to oscillate with remarkable speed between the floor and the edge of the bedstead.

Von Moltke himself could not have surpassed Miss Johnson's tactics. She had the man completely at her mercy, and he was helpless as though his head were in the stocks.

At first his captor maintained a grim silence; but after she had bumped him sufficiently to ease her mind, she addressed him on the wickedness and folly of seeking to rob her.

In vain did the man protest that his motives were innocent, that he had mistaken the house, and had merely intended to take a quiet nap under his own bedstead where the flies could not find him out.

Miss Johnson sternly told him that he could not make her believe any such nonsense, and that she would "let him know," and would also "show him."

These threats were carried out by a renewal of the bumping process, until the man yelled for mercy so loudly that the neighbours were aroused, and rushed to Miss Johnson's house with the firm conviction that a gang of burglars had murdered that excellent woman, and were quarrelling over the division of her spoils.

It was not until a strong force, armed with clubs and hatchets, had recklessly entered the room, that Miss Johnson surrendered her captive, with the remark that the sooner they took themselves off the better, and that if any other man would like to hide under the bed, she was entirely ready to knock a little sense into him.

Thus the intrepid woman not only defended herself with the most signal success, but she pointed out the true way to deal with a man under the bed. W. A.

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HIS VINDICATION.

"LET'S see, Wilkins; it's about seven years since you left Mayton, is it not?"

"Yes, seven years this spring."

"I suppose that by this time you have become such an excellent newspaper man that you feel far above we country editors now, eh?"

"Oh, by no means, Grimes. Of course, the country newspaper business is not to be compared with metropolitan journalism, but it's a fairly good business after all.

"Country journalism is all right in its way, but a man could work on a country paper like the *Mayton News* for a century and never broaden out. The field is is too narrow; nothing about it to develop a man."

Mr. William Wilkins, of the *London Daily Messenger*, spoke with the air of a man to whom success had come. He puffed away at his cigar and looked rather disdainfully at his companion, Simon Grimes, editor of the *Mayton Weekly News*.

"That may be your idea, Wilkins, but it is a mistaken one," said Grimes.

Wilkins shook his head.

"Well, have your way about it, Wilkins. But you will doubtless admit that the lessons you learnt while serving your apprenticeship on the *Mayton News* were a great factor in the success you have met with in metropolitan journalism."

"Yes, I suppose it did help me a little. But my success is due to the fact that I worked hard and tried to succeed."

William Wilkins looked as if he were satisfied with himself, and as he sauntered down the one business street of Mayton he knew that he was the observed of all observers.

Members of the staff of the *Daily Messenger* had been heard to say that Wilkins was over-estimated, but this was laid to jealousy. That Wilkins had a high opinion of himself was beyond question, for he acted it. And when he went back to Mayton, the place of his birth, for a short visit, he felt that he was conferring a favour upon the denizens of that sleepy little village by giving them an opportunity of clasping him by the hand and calling him Wilkins, as they did in the years gone by.

Everyone thought a lot of him in Mayton, and when Grimes remarked that he was clever, but still had a lot to learn, people said Grimes was envious.

Each day, when Wilkins dropped into the *News* office, he would begin talking about the dignity of daily journalism, and Grimes, who had founded the *News* a quarter of a century before, would manfully defend the country editor.

"Look here, Grimes," said Wilkins one day, "for fifteen years your party has not been in it in this county, and the result is a ring at the county seat that is waxing rich off the taxpayers. If I had control of the *News* I would go to work and get up an exposure of the crookedness. There's a great field there."

"Yes, I rather believe there is some crookedness in county affairs, but I am not looking for fame in that direction."

"What will you give me, Grimes, if I go to work and get up an exposure of that court house ring?"

"Don't want it. If I did I'd get it up myself."

Mr. William Wilkins laughed loud and long. The idea of old Simon Grimes wr ting anything but little personal items was too humourous.

"Well, that's good, Grimes. I imagine that you'd get up a mighty spicy story."

"I fancy I could write one that would be interesting if I tried," was Grimes' calm reply.

"Well, if there is a murder in Mayton before I go back to London I'll write it up for you, old man," said Wilkins patronisingly as he prepared to go.

"Thank you for nothing," said Grimes.

"By-the-way, Grimes, I'm going home on Tuesday, and Colonel Waring is going to have a little social gathering at his home the night before in my honour. I want to write it up myself. It will be rather a swell affair for this village, and I want it done decently, especially as it is in my honour."

"All right, my boy," remarked Grimes. "We'll do it all right."

Colonel Waring, who was the wealthiest man in Mayton, occupied a handsome residence on the outskirts, and his home was the gathering place of all Mayton young folks. He and Mrs. Waring lived alone save for the companionship of a young girl who was more daughter than maid. Folks hinted that Mary Scott would inherit the Waring fortune, but Mary went about her household duties just like a servant.

The young people of the village, with true democracy,

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overlooked the fact that she was a housemaid, and Mary was a welcome guest at all the social gatherings.

When the Monday night came on which Wilkins was to be tendered a farewell reception, the Waring mansion was a blaze of lights, and by eight o'clock was filled with merry young men and women. Wilkins, the guest of honour, moved about with a condescending air and distributed his favours with an impartial hand. Simon Grimes was there, for Simon was a bachelor, and bachelors were eligible to Mayton society despite accumulated years.

"Good evening, Grimes," said Wilkins, when the editor of the *News* came in.

"All ready to make the write-up of your life, eh?"

"We'll get it up all right, my boy," was the cheery rejoinder.

And the evening was spent in merry games and laughter, music and good cheer, and the Mayton girls declared that Mr. Wilkins was just too clever for anything. Several went so far as to wish that a clever journalist like Wilkins would purchase the *News*. Old Grimes didn't know how to write up anything.

If Grimes heard these comments he said nothing, but patiently secured a list of names of those present, for the *News* always printed the names of the guests at Mayton's social functions.

And at last the guests had departed and the lights in the Waring mansion were extinguished.

William Wilkins walked home with one of the Mayton girls, and after bidding her good-night at the gate, went to the village hotel and retired for the night. He did not sleep well, for he was thinking that he would like to show these Mayton people how a live journalist could handle a great news item. And in a fitful slumber he dreamt of solving a deep mystery and receiving the plaudits of a wondering people.

Just as he was dreaming of being tendered a public reception for exposing corrupt practices, he was aroused by a loud knocking at his door.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed the half-awakened journalist.

"Get up, Mr. Wilkins," shouted the landlord. "There's been an awful murder committed."

"What's that!" shouted the now thoroughly aroused Wilkins. "Who has been murdered?"

"Colonel Waring, sir."

"Great Heavens!" ejaculated Wilkins, and he hurried into his clothes and down the stairs.

"I don't know anything about it, sir," said the landlord in response to Wilkins' inquiries, "any more than the Colonel was found in the library this morning with a knife wound in his heart."

Wilkins swallowed a hasty breakfast and hurried to the Waring mansion. Despite the early hour the news had spread over the village and most of the inhabitants were gathered about the place.

The village constable stood guard at the door of the house and refused admission to all. But when Wilkins appeared the constable opened the door for him to pass in. It was not often that a representative of a great metropolitan journal appeared in Mayton, and when one did appear he was to be treated with due deference. As he entered the door Wilkins saw Grimes walking about and conversing with the awe-stricken people.

"Here's my chance to show the old duffer how to work up a good story," muttered Wilkins.

Wilkins walked directly to the library. The Colonel's body had not been disturbed, The constable had given orders that it was not to be touched until the authorities had taken the case in hand.

Wilkins made a hasty examination of the room. In a bow window on the south side was the Colonel's desk. The old man had been stabbed while sitting in his easy chair at the desk. The head had dropped over upon the desk, disturbing a little pile of papers. In the Colonel's hand were some folded papers, and the other hand grasped the arm of the chair. Wilkins looked for the wound and found it.

From a rent in the left breast of the Colonel's coat a stream of blood had oozed, trickling to the floor and branching out into two or three small streams.

Wilkins saw at a glance that the wound was caused by a dagger of some kind, and that the blade had pierced the heart. Death must have been instantaneous. The young man gazed about the room, but saw no signs of confusion. The window blinds were drawn and the lamp on the Colonel's desk was still burning.

Wilkins examined the window fastenings and discovered that all of them were locked. It was evident that the murderer had not entered by one of the library windows. Then he stepped to the library door and called for Mary, the housemaid.

Mary, pale, but possessed, answered his call and the two stood in the hall, while Wilkins questioned her about the awful affair.

"Mary, when was the murder discovered?"

"A few minutes after six, sir."

"Who discovered the body?"

"I did, sir."

"Tell me all about it, Mary."

"Well, sir, it was just this way. After the people had all gone last night Colonel Waring told Mrs. Waring and me that he was going to take the 5.20 train this morning, and told us not to call him, for he would lay down on the couch in the library instead of going to bed. He bade us good-night and went into the library. Before I went to bed I fastened all the windows in the house and locked the doors."

"Are you sure the windows were all fastened?"

"Yes, sir. That was about the first thing I learnt to do after I came to live with the Colonel and Mrs. Waring."

"Were the doors locked when you got up this morning?"

"Yes sir."

"Well, go on with your story."

"I got up about a quarter to six and lighted the kitchen fire. While waiting for it to burn, I thought I would open the library windows and air the room. You know that's where the men smoked last night. You can see that the Colonel's desk is right across the room from the door.

"When I opened the door I saw him sitting at the desk. I said 'good morning,' but as he didn't answer me I thought he was asleep. I saw the lamp was burning and I thought I'd better blow it out, so I slipped across the room to do it. Just as I leant over to blow it out, I saw blood on the Colonel's clothes; and then I screamed."

As she spoke the last words, Mary covered her face with her hands and began to weep.

"Don't cry, Mary," said Wilkins. "Brace up and tell me the rest."

Mary dried her tears and told the rest of her story. She ran out of the library and called Mrs. Waring. Mrs. Waring ran to the library, and when she saw the body of her murdered husband, she promptly fainted. Mary

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dragged her into the hall and revived her, and then hastened out to give the alarm. That was all she could tell.

Wilkins walked into the library again and made a careful examination of the body. The Colonel's purse and watch were untouched, and it was evident that the desk had not been disturbed, as it was still locked. It was clear that the murderer had entered by one of the doors. But if that was the case the murderer had a key, for Mary was sure both doors were locked when she got up.

Wilkins left the house and hurried to the telegraph office to send a wire to the *Daily Messenger*. In a short time he received instructions to remain in Mayton and work up the case. When he returned to the Waring mansion he again saw Grimes walking about the grounds.

"Come in the house, Grimes, and examine things," said Wilkins.

"No, I think I've got all there is to get for a while," replied Grimes.

Wilkins muttered something about old fogies and clodhoppers and entered the house. A detective was on the spot.

Mary told her story to the officer just as she had told it to Wilkins, and Mrs. Waring corroborated it. The window fastenings about the house were examined and found to be locked, and there was no trace of the knife that had penetrated the Colonel's heart. But nothing more could be learnt.

Wilkins walked up to the *News* office and found Grimes writing away at his disordered desk.

"Well, Grimes, here's where you and I will have a chance to show which is best, country or town methods. I am going to remain here until this mystery is cleared up."

"I don't want to see you leave, my boy, but I hope it will be cleared up soon."

Grimes did not look up while addressing Wilkins, but went on with his writing. After resting a few minutes Wilkins went again to the Waring mansion and made a minute examination of the grounds. He could find nothing that offered a possible clue, and after spending an hour or more, went to the hotel and wrote a long story for the *Daily Messenger*.

The next day he made another examination of the house and grounds, and talked again with Mary and Mrs. Waring. But it was no use; the mystery only seemed to grow darker, and William Wilkins, special reporter for the London *Daily Messenger*, was puzzled. He went to the *News* office and asked Grimes if he had learnt anything.

"You certainly know as much about it as I do," said Grimes. "I've had to do a hundred things since the murder, while you have nothing to do but work it up. What have you found out?"

Wilkins was forced to admit that he had not discovered anything.

"That's strange," said Grimes. "A city newspaper man like you should have discovered the whole thing by this time."

Wilkins imagined that he discerned a covert sneer in Grimes' remark.

"I wonder if the old fossil has struck a clue," he muttered. "It would be just my luck if he stumbled on to the truth of the matter and upset my reputation here."

But if Grimes had a clue he kept it to himself. He refused to let Wilkins see a proof of the *News'* murder story when that worthy asked for them, and was even rude when Wilkins offered to help him write the murder report for the *News*.

In the meanwhile Wilkins had written a graphic account of Colonel Waring's life, and the *Messenger* had printed the Colonel's portrait and a picture of the Waring residence.

The managing editor had wired Wilkins to send something each day, and to remain on the spot as long as necessary.

Just before noon on the Friday after the murder, Grimes stopped Wilkins in the street and handed him a copy of the *News*, fresh from the press.

"You'll find the whole story of the murder in that paper," said Grimes.

Wilkins opened the paper—he fairly gasped, for there under black headlines that were truly metropolitan in appearance, was a long account of the Waring murder.

Wilkins read the story with an astonishment that brought forth strong words.

It was written by a master hand. It was rich in detail, and nothing seemed too small to be mentioned if it was in any way connected with the affair. It told the whole story of the murder. It began with an account of the reception in Wilkins' honour and told of everything that had happened.

The murderer (so it ran) had been a guest at the Colonel's home that night, but, for reasons apparent to all, his name could not be given. While the Colonel was bidding his guests good-night the murderer had stolen into the library and concealed himself behind a curtain at a window. He had heard the Colonel mention his trip of the following morning and knew that he would enter the library before taking the early train. He remained there until the Colonel came in and seated himself at the desk. Then the murderer had slipped up behind him and driven the dagger into the heart of the unsuspecting old man.

The motive? There was none. The murder was the freak of a maniac, and the fatal blow was struck with the strength of a madman. Drawing the dagger from the wound the murderer had calmly waited until the household had retired and then effected his escape. He had gone down to the hall and into the kitchen. Then he raised a trap-door that led to the cellar, and from the cellar had escaped through an opening.

While crawling out of the cellar he had left a small bloodstain. Crawling carefully round the house, the murderer hastened to the front gate, the knife still clutched in his hand. Hesitating before passing through the gate, the murderer stuck his knife into the gate post and, crawling on his hands and knees, peered out into the road. Seeing no one he had walked back and secured the knife and then disappeared in the darkness.

Wilkins could scarcely believe his eyes. But he rushed to the Waring mansion with the speed of a race horse and asked permission to examine the cellar. Yes, there was a faint bloodstain. Then Wilkins examined the gate post and found the mark where a knife had been stuck into it. Back to the *News* office raced Wilkins.

"Grimes, tell me who it was that killed Waring."

Grimes looked up from that morning's copy of the *Daily Messenger* and smiled.

"I can't do it now, my boy. You'll have to wait till to-morrow morning."

"How on earth did you find that bloodstain on the cellar opening?"

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"I didn't find it, my boy."

"Who told you it was there, then?" asked Wilkins.

"Nobody. Look here, don't ask me any more questions. Come to the office to-morrow morning at seven o'clock and I'll tell you the name of the man that murdered Waring. I won't say another word till then."

"But I want to get it into the *Messenger* to-morrow morning," urged Wilkins.

"The *Messenger* will have to do just as you will have to do—wait," said Grimes.

Bright and early in the morning, Wilkins hastened to the *News* office. The front door was open but there was no one in. Wilkins walked back to the door leading into the press room and opened it.

He started back with a cry of horror, for in a chair in front of the door sat Simon Grimes. There was a gaping wound in his left breast, and in his right hand was a long dagger dripping with blood. It was a clear case of suicide. The body was still warm, but life was extinct.

Wilkins made sure that the old editor was dead before giving the alarm. When the astonished inhabitants crowded in there was a perfect bedlam of noise. Wilkins was the only cool man in the lot. He laid the body out on the floor and closed the dead man's eyes.

As he folded the dead man's hands across the breast, he saw a note in one of them. Taking it from the stiffened fingers Wilkins saw that it was addressed to him.

He walked into the front office, and while the crowd waited he read it to himself.

"I killed Colonel Waring," ran the note. "I have been editing the *News* for more than twenty years, and I have always tried to make it a good local newspaper. You, William Wilkins, after learning your profession under me, come back after a few years of city life and taunt me with your superior ability. You ridicule the country editor's business and make sport of country papers. I believe the country editor is the peer of the town editor, and the country newspaper a mightier engine of right than the city newspaper with its columns of sickening details of crime.

"In your metropolitan egotism you cast reflections upon me and my profession, and I sought to show you that you were a cad; that you were not such a great newspaper man as you imagined yourself to be. How could I do it?

"The question bothered me until the night of Colonel Waring's reception in your honour. Just as I was ready to leave the house it flashed through my mind.

"I went out of the front door, but entered again by the back door and made my way to the library unobserved. The rest you know. The knife that killed Waring is in my hand. With that knife I vindicated the honour of country journalism and humbled the pride of a haughty metropolitan journalist.

"People will say that I was crazy. That is not true. I only offered my life as a sacrifice for the honour of my profession."

Wilkins silently handed the note to one of those present and hastened to the telegraph office.

"Poor crazy fellow!" muttered Wilkins.

But the special representative of the London paper did not feel particularly proud of the figure he cut in the Waring murder mystery.

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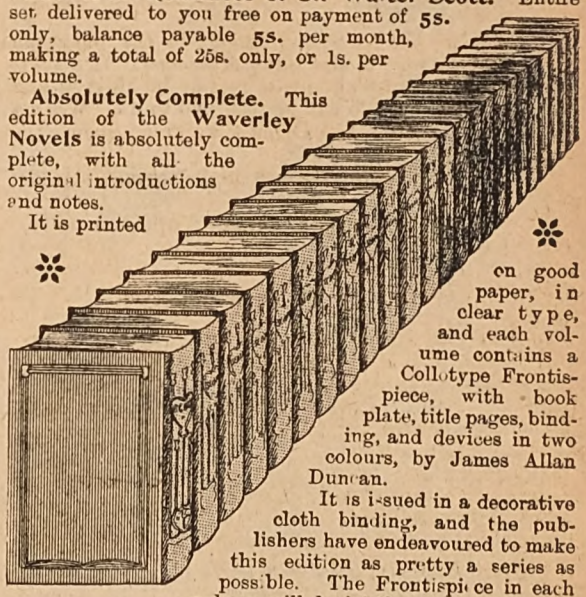

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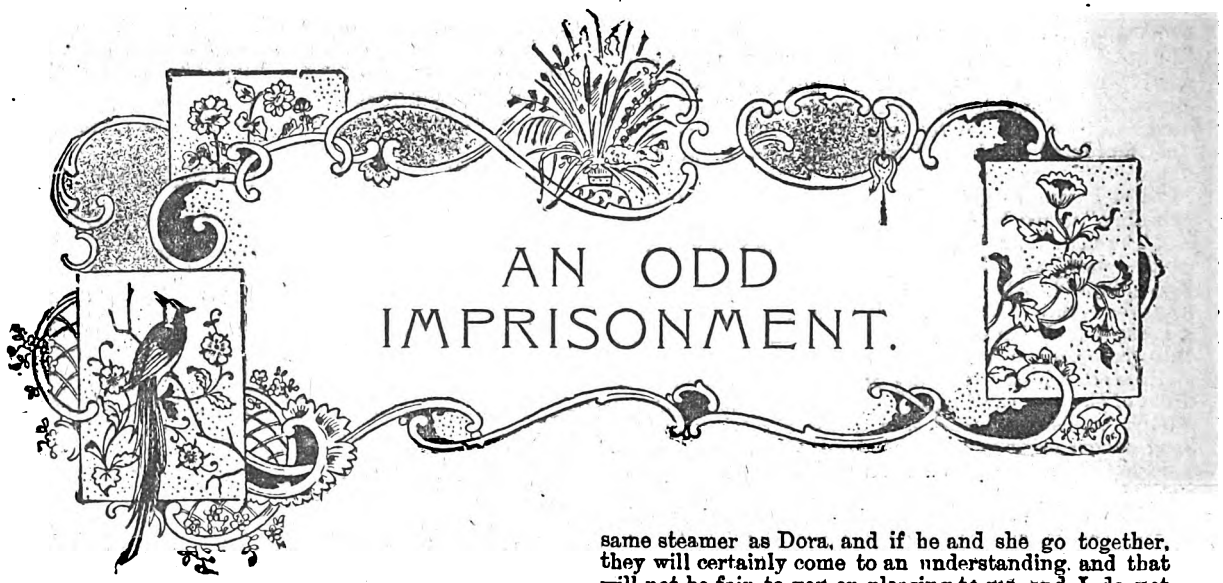

AN ODD IMPRISONMENT.

I AM a young physician of limited practice and great ambition. At the time of the incidents I am about to relate my house in London was shared, greatly to my own pleasure and convenience, by a clever young German whose acquaintance I had made in the hospital, and to whom I had become, in the one short year in which we had practised together, most unreasonably attached.

I say unreasonably, because it was a liking for which I could not account even to myself, as he was neither especially prepossessing in appearance, nor gifted with any too great amiability of character. He was, however, a brilliant theorist, and an unquestionably reliable practitioner; and for these reasons, probably, I entertained for him a profound respect and, as I have already said, a hearty and spontaneous affection.

As our specialities were the same, and as, moreover, they were of a nature which did not call for night work, we usually spent the evening together. But once I failed to join him, and it is of this night I have to tell.

I had been to Ealing, for my heart was sore over the trouble I had had with Dora, and I was resolved to make one final effort towards reconciliation. But, alas for my hopes, she was not at home, and what was worse, I soon learnt that she was going to sail the next morning for Madeira, where some relations of hers were staying.

This news, coming as it did without warning, affected me seriously, for I knew if she escaped from my influence at this time I should certainly lose her for ever, for the gentleman concerning whom we had quarrelled was a much better man for her than I, and almost equally in love. However, her father, who had always been my friend, did not look upon this same gentleman's advantages with as favourable an eye as she did, and when he heard I was in the house, he came hurrying into my presence with excitement written in every line of his fine face.

"Ah, Dick, my boy," he exclaimed joyfully, "how opportune this is! I was wishing you would come, for do you know Appleby has taken passage on board the same steamer as Dora, and if he and she go together, they will certainly come to an understanding, and that will not be fair to you or pleasing to me, and I do not care who knows it."

I gave him one look, and sank quite overwhelmed into the seat nearest me. Appleby was the name of my rival, and I quite agreed with her father that the *tête-à-têtes* afforded by an ocean voyage would surely put an end to the hopes which I had so long and so secretly cherished.

"Does she know he is going? Did she encourage him?" I stammered.

But the old man answered generally:

"Oh, she knows, but I cannot say anything positive about her having encouraged him. The fact is, Dick, she still holds a soft place in her heart for you, and if you were going to be of the party——"

"Well?"

"I think you would come off conqueror yet."

"Then I will be of the party," I cried. "It is only six now and I can be back at my place at seven. That gives me five hours before midnight, time enough in which to arrange my plans, see Richter, and make everything ready for sailing in the morning."

It seemed wild, this scheme, but I determined to pursue it. I loved Dora too much to lose her, and if three weeks' absence would procure me the happiness of my life, why should I hesitate to avail myself of the proffered opportunity? I rode on air as the train I had taken shot from station to station, and by the time I had arrived at Paddington my plans were all laid and my time disposed of till midnight.

It was, therefore, with no laggard step that I hurried home, nor was it with any ordinary feelings of impatience that I found Richter out; for this was not his usual hour for absenting himself, and I had much to tell him and many instructions to give. It was my first check, and I was fuming over it, when I saw what looked like a package of books lying on the table before me, and, though it was addressed to my partner, I was about to take it up, when I heard my name uttered in a tremulous tone, and turning, saw a man standing in the doorway who, the moment I met his eye, advanced into the room, and said:

"Oh! doctor, I have been waiting for you an hour; Mrs. Warner has been taken very bad, sir, and she prays that you will not delay a moment before coming

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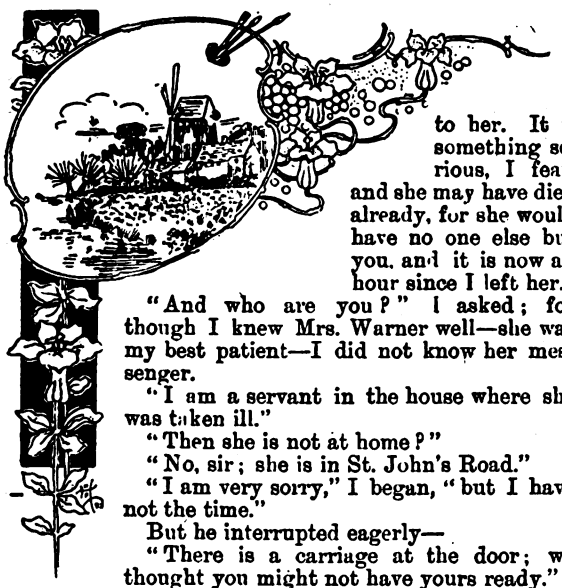

to her. It is something serious, I fear, and she may have died already, for she would have no one else but you, and it is now an hour since I left her."

"And who are you?" I asked; for though I knew Mrs. Warner well—she was my best patient—I did not know her messenger.

"I am a servant in the house where she was taken ill."

"Then she is not at home?"

"No, sir; she is in St. John's Road."

"I am very sorry," I began, "but I have not the time."

But he interrupted eagerly—

"There is a carriage at the door; we thought you might not have yours ready."

I had noticed the carriage.

"Very well," said I, "I will go; but first let me write a line."

"Oh, sir," the man broke in pleadingly, "do not wait for anything. She is really very bad, and I heard her calling for you as I ran out of the house."

"She had her voice, then," I ventured, somewhat distrustful of the whole thing, and yet not knowing how to refuse the man, especially as it was absolutely necessary to see Mrs. Warner that night and get her consent to my departure before I could think of making further plans.

So, leaving word for Richter to be sure and wait for me if he came home before I did, I signified to Mrs. Warner's messenger that I was ready to go with him, and immediately took a seat in the carriage which had been provided for me. The man at once jumped up on the box beside the driver, and before I could close the carriage door we were off.

As we went the thought came, "What if Mrs. Warner will not let me off?" But I dismissed the fear at once, for this patient of mine was an extremely unselfish woman, and if she were not too ill to grasp the situation would certainly sympathise with the strait I was in and consent to accept Richter's services in place of my own, especially as she knew and trusted him.

When the carriage stopped it was already dark, and I could distinguish little of the house I entered, save that it was large and old, and did not look like an establishment where a man-servant would be likely to be kept.

"Is Mrs. Warner here?" I asked of the man, who was slowly getting down from the box.

"Yes, sir," he answered quickly, and I was about to ring the bell before me when the door opened and a young German girl, curtseying slightly, welcomed me in, saying:

"Mrs. Warner is upstairs, sir, in the front room, if you please."

Not doubting her, but greatly astonished at the barren aspect of the place she was in, I stumbled up the faintly-lighted stairs before me and entered the great front room. It was empty, but through an open door at the other end I heard a voice saying, "He has come, madam." And anxious to see my patient, whose presence in this desolate house I found it harder and harder to understand, I stepped into the room where she presumably lay.

Alas, for my temerity in doing so! for no sooner had I crossed the threshold than the door by which I had entered closed with a click unlike any I had ever heard before; and when I turned to see what it meant, another click came from the opposite side of the room, and I perceived, with a benumbed sense of wonder, that the one person whose somewhat shadowy figure I had encountered on entering had vanished from the place, and that I was shut up alone in a room without visible means of egress.

This was startling and hard to believe at first, but after I had tried the door by which I had entered, and found it securely locked, and then bounded to the other side of the room, and tried the opposite one with the same result, I could but acknowledge I was caught.

What did it mean? Caught! and I was in haste—mad haste! Filling the room with my cries, I shouted for help and a quick release, but my efforts were, naturally, fruitless, and after exhausting myself in vain I stood still and surveyed, with what equanimity was left me, the appearance of the dreary place in which I had thus suddenly become entrapped.

It was a small, square room, and I shall not soon forget with what a foreboding shudder I observed that its four blank walls were literally unbroken by a single window, for this told me I was not in communication with the street, and that it would be impossible for me to summon help from the outside world.

The single gas-jet yet burning in a fixture hanging from the ceiling was the only relief given to the eye in the blank expanse of white wall that surrounded me, while as to furniture the room could boast of nothing more than an old-fashioned black walnut table and two chairs, the latter cushioned but stiff in the back and generally dilapidated in appearance.

The only sign of comfort about me was a tray that stood on the table, containing a couple of bottles of wine and two glasses. The bottles were full and the glasses clean, and, to this appearance of hospitality, a box of cigars rested invitingly near, which I could not fail to perceive, even at the first glance, was of the very best brand.

Astonished at these tokens of consideration for my welfare, and confounded by the prospect which they offered of a lengthy stay in this place, I gave another great shout, but to no better purpose than before. Not a voice answered, and not a stir was heard in the house.

But there came from without the sound of suddenly moving wheels, as if the carriage which I had left standing before the door had slowly rolled away. If this were so, then I was indeed a prisoner, while the moments so necessary to my plans and perhaps to the securing of my whole future happiness, were flying by like the wind.

As I realised this, and my own utter helplessness, I fell into one of the chairs before me in a state of perfect despair. Not that any fears for my life were disturbing me, though one in my situation might well question if he would ever again breathe the open air, from which he had been so ingeniously lured.

I did not in that first moment of utter downhearted-

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ness so much as inquire for the reason of the trick which had been played upon me. No, for my heart was full of Dora, and I was asking myself if I were destined to lose her after all, and that through no lack of effort on my part, but just because a party of thieves or blackmailers had thought fit to play a game with my liberty.

It could not be, there must be some mistake about it. It was some great joke, or I was the victim of a dream, or suffering from some hideous nightmare. Why, only half-an-hour before I was in my own house, among my own familiar belongings, and now—but alas, it was no delusion. Only four blank, whitewashed walls met my inquiring eyes, and though I knocked and knocked again upon the two doors which guarded me on either side, hollow echoes continued to be the only answer I received.

Had the carriage, then, taken away the two persons I had seen in this house, and was I indeed alone in its great emptiness? The thought made me desperate, but notwithstanding this, I was resolved to continue my efforts, for I might be mistaken; there might yet be some being left who would yield to my entreaties if they were backed by something substantial.

Taking out my watch I laid it on the table; it was just 7.45. Then I emptied my trousers pockets of whatever money they held, and when all was heaped up before me I could count but £3, which, together with my studs and a seal ring which I wore, seemed a paltry pittance with which to barter for the liberty of which I had been robbed.

But it was all I had with me, and I was willing to part with it at once, if only someone would unlock the door and let me go. But how make known my wishes, even if there were anyone to listen to them? I had already called in vain, and there was no bell.

Yes, there was; why had I not seen it before? There was a bell, and I sprang to ring it. But just as my hand fell on the cord I heard a gentle voice behind my back saying, in good English, but with a strong foreign accent:

"Put up your money, Mr. Atwater; we do not want your money, only your society. Allow me to beg you to replace both watch and money."

Wheeling about in my double surprise at the presence of this intruder, and his unexpected acquaintance with my name, I encountered the smiling glance of a middle-aged man of gentlemanly appearance and courteous manners. He was bowing almost to the ground, and was, as I instantly detected, of German birth and education, a gentleman, and not the blackleg I had every reason to expect to see.

"You have made a slight mistake," he was saying; "it is your society, only your society that we want."

Astonished at his appearance, and exceedingly irritated at his words, I stepped back as he offered me my watch and bluntly cried:

"If it is my society only that you want, you certainly have taken very strange means to procure it. A thief could have set no neater trap, and if it is money you want, state your sum and let me go, for my time is valuable, and my society likely to be unpleasant."

He gave a shrug with his shoulders that in no wise interfered with his set smile.

"You choose to be facetious," he observed. "I have already remarked that we have no use for your money. Will you sit down? Here is some excellent wine, and if this brand of cigars does not suit you I will send for another."

"Send for the hangman!" I cried, greatly exasperated. "What do you mean by keeping me in this place against my will? Open that door and let me out, or ——"

I was ready to spring, and he saw it. Smiling more atrociously than ever, he slipped behind the table, and before I could reach him had quietly drawn a revolver, which he cocked before my eyes.

"You are excited," he remarked, with a suavity that nearly drove me mad. "Now, excitement is no aid to good company, and I am determined that none but good company shall be in this room to-night. So, if you will be kind enough to calm yourself, Mr Atwater, you and I may yet enjoy ourselves; but if not——"

The action he made was significant, and I felt the cold sweat break out on my forehead through all the heat of my indignation. But I did not mean to show him that he had intimidated me.

"Excuse me," said I, "and put down your revolver. Though you are making me lose irredeemable time, I will try to control myself enough to give you an opportunity for explaining yourself. Why have you entrapped me into this place?"

"I have already told you," said he, gently laying the weapon before him, but in easy reach of his hand.

"But that is preposterous," I began, fast losing my self-control again. "You do not know me, and if you did?"

"Pardon me, you see I know your name."

Yes, that was true, and the fact set me thinking. How did he know my name? I did not know him, nor did I know this house or any reason for which I could have been beguiled into it. Was I the victim of a conspiracy, or was the man mad? Looking at him very earnestly I said:

"My name is Atwater, and so far you are right; but in learning that much about me you must have also learnt that I am neither rich nor influential, or of any special value to a blackmailer. Why choose me out, then, for your society? Why not choose someone who can talk?"

"I find your conversation very interesting."

Baffled, exasperated almost beyond my power to restrain myself, I shook my fist in his face, notwithstanding I saw his hand fly to his revolver.

"Let me go!" I shrieked. "Let me go out of this place! I have business, I tell you—important business which means everything to me, and which if I do not attend to to-night will be lost to me for ever. Let me go and I will so far reward you that I will speak to no one of what has taken place here to-night, but go my way, forgetful of you, forgetful of this house, forgetful of all connected with it."

"You are very good," was his quiet reply, "but this wine has to be drunk." And he calmly poured out a glass while I drew back in despair. "You do not drink wine?" he queried, holding up the glass he had filled between himself and the light. "It is a pity, for it is of most rare vintage. But perhaps you smoke?"

Sick and disgusted, I found a chair and sat down in it. If the man were crazy there was certainly method in his madness. Besides, he had not a crazy eye; there was calm calculation in it, and not a little good nature. Did he simply want to detain me, and if so, did he have a motive it would pay me to fathom before I exerted myself further to insure my release? Answering the wave he made me with his hand, by reaching out for the bottle and filling myself a glass, I forced myself to speak more affably, as I remarked:

"If the wine must be drunk, we had better set about

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it, as you cannot mean to detain me more than an hour, whatever reason you may have for wishing my society."

He looked at me inquiringly before answering; then tossing off his glass, he remarked:

"I am sorry, but in an hour a man can scarcely make the acquaintance of another man."

"Then you mean——"

"To know you thoroughly, if you will be so good, I may never have the opportunity again."

He must be mad—nothing else but mania could account for such words and for such actions—and yet, if mad, why was he allowed to enter my presence? The man who brought me here, the woman who received me at the door, had not been mad.

"And I must stay here?" I began.

"Until I am quite satisfied. I am afraid that will take until morning."

I gave a cry of despair, and then, in my utter desperation, spoke up to him as I would to a man of feeling.

"You don't know what you are doing; you don't know what I shall suffer by such cruel detention. This night is not like other nights to me. This is a special night in my life, and I need it—I need it, I tell you—to spend as I will.

"The woman I love"—it seemed horrible to speak of her in this place, but I was wild at my helplessness, and madly hoped that I might awake some answering chord in a breast which could not be devoid of all feeling, or he would not have the benevolent look in his eye—"the woman I love," I repeated, "sails for Madeira to-morrow. We have quarrelled, but she still cares for me, and if I can sail on the same steamer we will yet make up and be happy."

"At what time does this steamer start?"

"At nine in the morning."

"Well, you shall leave this house at eight. If you go directly to the steamer you will be in time.'

"But—but," I panted, "I have made no arrangements. I shall have to go to my lodgings, write letters, get money—I ought to be there at this moment. Have you no mercy on a man who never did you wrong, and only asks to quit you and forget the precious hours you have made him lose?"

"I am sorry," he said. "It is certainly quite unfortunate, but the door will not be opened before eight. There is really no one in the house to unlock it."

"And do you mean to say," I cried, aghast, "that you could not open that door if you would, that you are locked here as well as I, and that I must remain here till morning, no matter how I feel or you feel?"

"Will you not take a cigar?" he asked.

Then I began to see how useless it was to struggle, and visions of Dora leaning on the steamer rail, with that serpent whispering soft entreaties in her ear, came rushing before me until I could have wept in my jealous chagrin.

"It is cruel, base, vile," I began. "If you had the excuse of wanting money and took the opportunity of wringing my all from me, I could have patience; but to entrap and keep me here for nothing, when my whole future happiness is trembling in the balance, is the work of a fiend, and——" I made a sudden pause, for a strange idea had struck me.

What if these men and this woman were in league with him whose rivalry I feared, and whom I intended to supplant on the morrow. It was a wild surmise, but was it any wilder than to believe I was held here for a mere whim, a freak, a joke, as this bowing, smiling man before me would have me believe?

Rising in fresh excitement, I struck my hand on the table.

"You want to keep me from going on the steamer!" I cried. "That other wretch who loves her has paid you."

But that other wretch could not know that I was meditating any such unusual scheme as following him without a full day's warning. I thought of this even before I had finished my sentence, and did not need the blank astonishment in the face of the man before me to convince me that I had given utterance to a foolish accusation. "It would have been some sort of motive for your actions," I humbly added as I sank back from my hostile action. "Now you have nothing."

I thought he bestowed upon me a look of quiet pity, but if so he soon hid it with his uplifted glass.

"Forget the girl," said he. "I know of a dozen just as pretty."

I was too indignant to answer.

"Women are the bane of life," he now sententiously exclaimed. "They are ever intruding themselves between a man and his happiness, as, for instance just now between yourself and this good wine."

I caught up the bottle in sheer desperation.

"Don't talk of them," I cried, "and I will try and drink. I almost wish there was poison in this glass. My death here might bring punishment upon you."

He shook his head, totally unmoved by my passion.

"We deal punishment, not receive it. It would not worry me in the least to leave you lying here upon the floor."

I did not believe that, but I did not stop to weigh the question then. I was too much struck by a word he had used.

"Deal punishment," I repeated. "Are you punishing me? Is that why I am here?"

He laughed, and held his glass to mine.

"You enjoy being sarcastic," he observed. "Well, it gives a spice to conversation, I own. Talk is apt to be dull without it."

For reply, I struck the glass out of his hand. It fell and shivered, and he looked for the moment really distressed.

"I would rather you had struck me," he remarked, "for I have an answer for an injury like that; but for a broken glass——" He sighed and looked dolefully at the pieces on the floor.

Mortified and somewhat ashamed, I put down my own glass.

"You should not have exasperated me," I cried, and walked away beyond temptation to the other side of the room.

His spirits had received a damper, but in a few minutes he seized a cigar and began smoking. As the wreaths curled over his head he began to talk, and this time it was on subjects totally foreign to myself and even to himself.

It was good talk—that I recognised, though I hardly listened to what he said. I was asking myself what time it had now got to be, and what was the meaning of my incarceration, till my brain became weary and I could scarcely distinguish the topic he discussed.

But he kept on, for all my seeming and, indeed, real indifference—kept on hour after hour in a monologue he endeavoured to make interesting, and which probably would have been so if the time and occasion had been fit for my enjoying it

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As it was I had no ear for his choicest phrases, his subtlest criticisms, or his most philosophic disquisitions. I was wrapped up in self and my cruel disappointment, and when, in a sudden excess of frenzy, I leapt to my feet and took a look at the watch still lying on the table and saw it was four o'clock in the morning, I gave a groan of final despair, and throwing myself on the floor, gave myself up to the heavy sleep that mercifully came to relieve me.

I was roused by feeling a touch on my breast. Clapping my hand to the spot where I had felt the intruding hand, I discovered that my watch had been returned to my pocket. Drawing it out, I first looked at it, and then cast my eyes quickly about the room. There was no one with me, and the doors stood open between me and the hall. It was eight o'clock, as my watch had just told me.

That I rushed from the house, and took the shortest road to the steamer, goes without saying. I could not cross the ocean with Dora, but I might yet see her and tell her how near I came to giving her my company on that long voyage, which now would only serve to further the ends of my rival.

But when, after torturing delays and incredible efforts to pierce a throng that was equally determined not to be pierced, I at last reached the wharf, it was to behold her, just as I had fancied in my wildest moments, leaning on the rail of the ship and listening, while she abstractedly waved her hand to some friends below, to the words of the man who had never looked so handsome to me, or so odious as at this moment of his unconscious triumph.

Her father was near her, and from his eager attitude and rapidly wandering gaze, I saw he was looking for me. At last he spied me struggling aboard and immediately his face lighted up in a way which made me wish he had not thought it necessary to wait for my anticipated meeting with his daughter.

"Ah, Dick, you are late," he began effusively, as I put foot on deck.

But I waved him back, and went at once to Dora.

"Forgive me—pardon me," I incoherently said, as her sweet eyes rose in startled pleasure to mine.

"I would have brought you flowers; but I meant to sail with you, Dora. I tried to; but wretches—villains—prevented it, and—and——"

"Oh, it does not matter," she said, and then blushed, probably because the words sounded unkind. "I mean——"

But she could not say what she meant, for just then the bell rang for all visitors to leave the ship, and her father came forward, and, evidently thinking all was right between us, smiled benignantly in her face, gave her a kiss and me a wink, and disappeared in the crowd that was now going rapidly ashore.

I felt that I must follow; but I gave her one look and one squeeze of the hand, and then, as I saw her glances wander to his face, I groaned in spirit, and stammered some words of choking sorrow, and was gone before her embarrassment could let her speak words which I knew would only add to my grief, and make this hasty parting unendurable.

"Scared off by a frown? I wouldn't have believed it, Dick."

I shook my head, but could not tell him just then that it was not through any lack of pluck on my part that I had failed him.

When I left the dock I went straight to a restaurant, for I was faint as well as miserable, not having had any supper the night before or any breakfast this morning. But my cup of coffee choked me, and the roll and the eggs were more than I could face.

Rising impatiently, I went out. Was anyone more wretched than I was that morning, and could anyone nourish a more bitter grievance?

Should I let such an interference as I had received go unpunished? No; of that I was determined.

Turning aside from my former destination I went immediately to a police station, and when I had entered my complaint was astonished to see that all the officials had grouped about me and were listening to my words with the most startled interest.

"Was the man who came for you a German?" one asked. I said "Yes."

"And the man who stood guarding over you and entertained you with wine and cigars, was not he a German, too?"

I nodded acquiescence, and they at once began to whisper together; then one of them advanced to me and said:

"You have not been home, I understand; you had better come."

Astonished by his manner, I endeavoured to inquire what he meant, but he drew me away, and not till we were within a stone's throw of my house did he say:

"You must prepare yourself for a shock. The impertinences you suffered from last night were unpleasant, no doubt, but if you had been allowed to return home you might not now be deploring them in comparative peace and safety."

"What do you mean?"

"That your partner was not so fortunate as yourself. Look up at the house; what do you see there?"

A crowd, that is what I saw first; but he made me look higher, and then I perceived that the windows of my room, of our room, were shattered and blackened and part of the casement of one had been blown out.

"A fire!" I shrieked. "Poor Richter was smoking——"

"No, he was not smoking. He had no time for a smoke. An infernal machine burst in that room last night, and your friend was its wretched victim."

I never knew why my friend's life was made a sacrifice to the revenge of his fellow-countrymen. Though we had been intimate in the year we had been together, he had never talked to me of his country, and I had never seen him in company with one of his own nation.

But that he was a victim of some political revenge was apparent, for though it proved impossible to find the man who had detained me, the house was found and ransacked, and among other secret things was discovered the model of the machine which had been introduced into our room and which had proved so fatal to the man it was addressed to.

Why men who were so relentless in their purposes towards him should have taken such pains to keep me from sharing his fate is one of the anomalies in human nature which now and then awake our astonishment. If I had not lost Dora through my detention at their hands, I should look back upon that evening with sensations of thankfulness; as it is, I sometimes question if it would not have been better if they had let me take the chances.

Have I lost Dora? From a letter I received to-day I begin to think not.

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The Bite of the Pichu-Guate.

CLEARLY Claudio was tired, and it took a deal to tire this big, rough-headed young Mexican. But it was not to be wondered at after his morning's work. The lambs in his barns are now five days old, and at that age a New Mexican lamb is smart enough in body and impish enough in mind to upset the most patient-minded man.

Then the mothers, whose age might have been expected to give them discretion, were as crazy as the lambs. To add to the worry, the snakes were beginning to come out of their winter nap.

The opening of May at the 8,000 feet altitude of San Miguel is rather early for these long sleepers; but the spring was unusually warm, and though none had been seen, yet there was no doubting their presence. The hungry sheep were wild for the tender blades of grass that began to show about the mouths of the prairie dogs' burrows, and nowhere else.

But in some burrows were other tenants than prairie dogs lying in the sunny mouths of the holes, and savagely resentful of interruption. Already that day Claudio had found three dead ewes, lying close beside a burrow, fearfully swollen, and upon the nose of each were two tiny black marks such as one might make with a tattooing needle.

Late in the afternoon the ewes, with a chorus of strange whistles, went tearing and galloping over the hillside and disappearing over the brow of the ridge, as if the very wolves were after them.

Claudio started in pursuit, but the lambs hung at his heels, in spite of a bombardment of words and pebbles that he directed at them, and whenever he paused they pranced up to him and snuggled against his legs, and dropped contentedly at his very feet.

Pulling off his coat, Claudio swung it vigorously about him to clear a space, leapt over the backs of a few loiterers, and went running up the slope at a pace it was a wonder to see.

The coat dropped from his hand as he jumped a gully, and as the lambs came stumbling along several tripped on it, and finding it warm, promptly sprawled upon their knees and began to nurse at whatever rag or tag they first found. And the others, fancying that they were being robbed of their dinner, crowded and jostled about, butting, falling down, and clambering over one another.

Claudio might have laughed at the sight; but when he came back fifteen minutes later, he saw about the coat only a lot of little white patches, smeared with blood. Here and there a lamb was to be seen, wandering disconsolately about or fallen exhaustively over a shrub. And over the further hillside was just disappearing a big, dark, shambling figure with two white objects shining on it.

It was all plain enough. The ewes, scenting the bear from afar as he sneaked through the woods, had fled incontinently; for the actual presence of no other wild beast so terrifies sheep as the mere smell of a bear. And taking advantage of Claudio's brief absence, Bruin had sallied from the junipers, played havoc among the lambs (which were too stupid to fear even him), and were now making off with a couple "for future reference."

The bear, like bears always, was only anxious to get away, if he decently could, and ran his best. Ordinarily that would have been far better than Claudio's best—or a very fair horse's best, for that matter. But greediness is costly, even for bears. The lamb in his mouth was no handicap whatever; and having eaten two or three besides, he might have been contented with that.

But the one he persisted in carrying hugged under his forearm did seriously impede him. Even then, in the long run, he was more than a match for his pursuer. When Claudio came in full view of him and only a hundred yards behind, he whipped from his belt the revolver he carried in lieu of a rifle.

"Throwing down" in the swift, instinctive motion of those who really know how to use a revolver and never stop to ask whether it has sights or not, he sent a leaden proxy running for him. It was a good shot, tired and out of breath as he was, the kind of shooting one has to learn on the frontier, and cannot learn in a gallery.

The bear turned a complete somersault; and gathering itself again, began biting viciously at its rump.

Claudio had not stopped at all; but now, when he was within thirty yards, he halted and watched for the brute to give him a shot at a vital part. But at that very instant the bear, with a snuffle of rage, wheeled and came galloping at his late pursuer.

Claudio sent a square shot at the skull—not by any means under the impression that he could bore that sloping forehead, but hoping the rap might startle the

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beast into rising, so that he could get a chance at the throat, the best of all shots at a bear. But the heavy ball merely ploughed a red furrow up the skull, and the bear came lurching on. It was worse than useless to run. Slender as was the chance of life now, it all lay in standing firm.

When it was within six feet, the huge brute reared upon his haunches, and, springing back a step, Claudio was bringing down his weapon like lightning to "let go" when it should be on a level with that mighty throat, now fully exposed. But the bear was no innocent; and cleverly judged as was Claudio's move he had met his match in quick wit. Even the sweep of his swift arm was slow beside the flash of that great paw as it swooped far forward, met his descending hand with a calculation an Indian eye might have envied, and sent the heavy revolver spinning forty feet, going off as it flew. And in another instant the shepherd was on his back, and the bear upon him.

The great claws had struck only the revolver, and Claudio's hand was unhurt, save where the violent wrenching of the trigger had cut and twisted his fingers; and instinctively he gripped deep in the thick fur where his hands first lighted. Neither had he been hurt by the fall, for here was soft grey sand—which a little relieved, too, the fearful pressure upon his legs. But none of these things comforted Claudio; and he fought only as a man fights blindly to the end. His last faint hope had gone when the revolver went whirling far beyond his reach.

The bear, which had gone to bed in his cave in the canyon of Acebache, rolling fat, in November, had but a few days ago come forth from that long nap, the shadow of his proper self. His long heavy fur was sadly rusty, and his huge frame lean as a rail. He had been interrupted in the first square meal he had enjoyed in five months, and from that long fast came two strange results.

One was, that he was not half himself in strength, and that the powerful young Mexican was therefore, something more that a puppet in his paws.

Of the end, certainly, there could be no doubt; but meantime Claudio wrestled mightily, and even succeeded in struggling to his feet hugging close, to give those paws no chance for one of the swipes that would make an egg-shell of his head. His face he snuggled into the bear's chest, and so kept clear of the dripping jaws. And despite the fearful pressure under which his ribs creaked and sprung, he hunched and tugged and swayed blindly and desperately, as if he were wrestling with some tall man whom he might hope to pitch at last. But it was not for long.

Finding the close quarters unsatisfactory, the bear brought up its muscular arm, and clapping its paw upon Claudio's mat of hair, forced his head resistlessly back. The great claws were buried in his scalp, and little streams of red spurted out. The bear's left arm was round his waist, while the right was giving him the "break hold" as scientifically as any wrestler could have done.

And now a villainous, warm breath came sickening in his face, and he could see the red jaws and white teeth within six inches. He even noticed, with that strange inconsequence which comes upon one in these moments, that blood from the scalp wound had run down and tinged the froth which dripped from that great mouth.

In a frenzy of terror he made a clutch under the throat, to hold back that terrible head, and the strongest man could scarce have bent against Claudio's desperate arms; but the big jaws, working grimly, drew nearer. A deadly faintness began to spread over him, and Claudio shut his eyes.

Just then a sudden jerk ran through the body of the bear, and there was a sharp snort as of rage and pain.

Claudio opened his eyes. He could see nothing but the demoniac face, but in it he fancied there was a new expression.

Then there was a sickening movement of the great claws which had sunk deep into his back and scalp. Surely they were relaxing!

Their withdrawal was far more painful than their entrance had been; but even with the faintness of the new pain, a sudden wave of joy swept through the shepherd—for the first time, now, he hoped, though he knew not why.

He shook his head savagely to clear the blood which streamed down over his eyes (the paw had dropped from his scalp), and dug his fists into the deep furred throat, and fought with the strength of two Claudios—fighting no longer as a dying rat fights, but like a man for hope of life.

Then a very wonderful thing befel. The bear was groaning and panting heavily; and suddenly it lurched and fell to the ground, carrying Claudio with it. But it was no longer trying to get his head between its jaws. For a moment it lay upon him, writhing and grinding its teeth, and then flung itself to one side biting up a great mouthful of sand.

Claudio leapt to his feet, ran to his revolver, and fell upon it, crying like a child. It was ten minutes before he could get up, for the loss of blood—and, more than all, the frightful strain—had left him limp as a rag. At last he staggered to his feet, clutching the weapon, and walked unsteadily towards the bear.

Laying down his revolver he caught the heavy fur of the rump, to turn the bear over. Ordinarily he would have succeeded. Four hundredweight is no fool of a lump, but Claudio, as you have seen, was an uncommonly powerful young man. Now, however, worn out with his fearful struggle, and with nerves so unstrung that he trembled all over, it was too much for him.

Still the mystery would not let him rest; and hunching his shoulder against the bear's back, he ran his hand under, feeling for the wound. He groped and groped, but suddenly in a hollow felt the touch of something very different from fur or sand, and in the same instant an inconceivable pang. And when he jerked his arm away a tiny snake less than a foot long, grey-backed, an coppery on the stomach, was hanging from his thumb.

The last vestige of colour faded from the brown face and left it as grey as ashes between the drying streaks of blood—for Claudio knew the pichu-guate, the only real asp in the New World, the deadliest snake in North America.

So he had escaped the bear only to die by this tiny foe—for never yet had one been known to recover from the bite of the pichu-guate. A rattlesnake was nothing; but this, well see what it had done for such a monster as the bear, and in the space of less than a minute!

Evidently in their struggle. Brain had stepped too close to this unsuspecting danger—that great lump on his hind leg explained all. Had he carried his usual coat of fat, the venom would have taken far longer to operate, and he would have had abundant time to settle accounts with Claudio. But he no longer looked gaunt.

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He was still swelling—already he looked fat, as if July were here.

Claudio was reeling. Fearful pains shot up his arm and went forking through his body. Upon the thumb were only two black dots, right at the tip, but the hand in these five seconds had become double its size. If he could only cut it off! But alas! his knife was in his coat—and before he could get half-way to that he would be a dead shepherd.

All this had taken not so long as it has for you to read it—nay, scarce the time in which one might spell the longest word in it; for in those crises things and thoughts move swiftly, and one lives fast.

Claudio was still squeezing his thumb and crying aloud for a knife, when his eye lit on the revolver. Quick as a flash he sprang and caught it up and cocked it. There was just one cartridge left.

His nerves were steady now. He held his hand arm's length before him, the wounded thumb erect; drew the revolver back right up to his eye, that the ball might not mangle too much, and thus stop the blood, which must flow; and with a hand as firm as if it had been carved of stone, pulled the trigger.

There was a dull, numb sensation, hardly a pain in all that side, and when the smoke cleared from his eyes, his right hand was black and bleeding. The thumb was gone clean at the lower joint.

There is one man in New Mexico who has been bitten by the pichuguate and lives to tell of it—a tall, powerful, good-natured shepherd, with four grim grey furrows in his hair, and the thumb of the right hand missing. But Claudio seems rather proud of these disfigurements, and often says:

"Who talks of bargain? For so cheaply I bought my life twice in an hour."

H. R. BENTLEY.

ONE of the new schools, that which does not permit of the use of adjectives which do not date back to the thirteenth century, claims that the young widows were buried with Scribes. This claim, however, is totally without foundation, as the statistics will triumphantly show.

What I know is that there was still one a short distance from here not long ago in a hotel of the Rue Nonceau—a hotel ten metres square, entirely hidden by a clematis vine. Her name was Louise and the marriage ceremony had made her the Comtesse de Viry.

The Comtesse was twenty-two years of age. Her principal accessory was a little white and curly dog, the sole nourishment of which consisted of a lump of sugar in the morning and a biscuit in the evening. This dog's name was Bally.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon. Louise was skimming along the gravelled walk in the garden, circling about the rose bushes like a butterfly, and pausing from time to time to breath through her pink nostrils the delicate perfume of a newly-blown flower.

Bally, full of joy, was pursuing his mistress with merry barks; he seized with all his teeth the ounce of the blue muslin dress, which Louise seemed to have cut out of a rainbow, and, propping himself on his claws, pulled away to the full extent of his strength.

It was at the height of these amusements that M Jacques de Beauchamp entered the garden. The little widow, on perceiving him, hid herself behind an orange bush, but Jacques ran to her, and, surprising her, kissed her on the forehead.

"Oh, M. de Beauchamp!" cried she, "that's really too bad."

Louise was of medium height. How well she bore her title of widow, and in a way to do herself honour. The young girl is generally timid and stupid. She blushes, following her mother's directions, at a word that is said to her, and always lowers her eyes at the proper moment, which is bad for those who don't like to study eyebrows. The widow, on the contrary, has the right to hear everything, and when one talks to her of love she, at least, knows what love means.

Louise leant on the arm of M. de Beauchamp and they went into the parlour, followed by Bally, who cast jealous glances upon his mistress's suitor.

Louise and Jacques made a fine pair and the marriage was settled. Still, they had each a defect: M. de Beauchamp was jealous and Mdme. de Viry was a coquette.

"Louise," said he to her, "you fill me with despair. You say that you love me; that confession has come from your cherry lips; but how can I believe you when

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you smile on everybody? You have too kind a reception for the first man who comes along, and when I see you in Society, lively, vivacious, and gay, always laughing heartily in the midst of a circle of eager flatterers, it is impossible for me to say what tortures and agonies I endure."

"What can be done, my friend?" responded Louise. "I am gay, that is true; but is that a crime? And why should I snub men who approach me, and say things agreeable to be heard?"

"You are a coquette, and your laughter completes my despair, for if you laugh thus persistently it is only to show your teeth. You know how adorable you are when, laughing affectedly, you display your snowy throat by throwing back your head."

"But what must I do to prove my love to you? It's distracting; that's the whole of it. Ask of me what you will, but don't ask me not to laugh."

M. de Beauchamp assumed a solemn air.

"You told me one evening," said he, "that you would sacrifice your life for me. I do not ask so much as that of you; but, you see, will you make me the happiest of men?"

"You have but to speak."

"Even at the price of suffering?"

"Even at that price."

"Well, make me the sacrifice of one of your teeth."

"Do you know what you're asking? It's a piece of barbarity."

"A single tooth—the very smallest—in front, and afterwards you can laugh as much as you please."

"But you'll think me ugly. You won't have anything more to do with me!"

"I swear to you that there is no other means of assuring my happiness!"

The Comtesse rang.

Saint-Jean, her valet de chambre, took her order and returned, a quarter of an hour later, followed by a gentleman who carried a box of instruments.

"Who is that person?" demanded M. de Beauchamp.

The little Comtesse answered:

"He is Mr. James the English dentist."

The little Comtesse passed into her boudoir, Bally followed her with drooping tail, as becomes a dog when it is aware that something grave is about to happen.

Louise returned a little later, ashamed and humiliated, and handed M. de Beauchamp a small tooth as white as milk, which the latter raised to his lips and covered with kisses. Then she fled and shut herself up in her chamber.

Jacques had the tooth framed in a tiny medallion and wore it religiously about his neck like a sainted relic.

From that day on the little Comtesse was so gloomy that they took her for a nun. Very rarely did even a faint smile light up her countenance like a furtive ray of sunshine during the rain. She fled from Society, and when by chance she ventured into it she was soon apart seated in a corner, as serious as an owl, with her mouth shut as closely as a prison door.

Jacques no longer recognised her, and, to tell the truth, she was unrecognisable.

"The poor Comtesse is ageing," said malevolent people. "She has greatly changed; she is as solemn as a funeral procession."

And Jacques felt his love flowing away drop by drop, like the water from a vase of flowers.

He realised that what he had loved in her were, above all things, her smiles, her sprightliness, and her gaiety. And he also grew gloomy. Then he made efforts to retain his fleeting love; then he sought to reason with himself and intoxicate his brain, but only the more did he realise that he himself had slain his passion.

One day he reached Mdme. de Viry's house in a state of complete desperation.

"Louise," he said as he cast himself at her feet, "do you still love me?"

"I have sworn to love you always," answered she.

"Will you prove to me the sincerity of your word?"

"I ask nothing better."

"Well, if you love me have your tooth put back."

"What folly is this?" said Louise, weeping. "I told you that you would love me no longer. You're just like all the rest of the men. And yet they reproach we women with being capricious."

"Louise, I supplicate you to pardon me. I revile my blindness—my idiocy."

"So you deplore the weakness with which I consented to yield to your caprice?"

"I am filled with sorrow, tortured by remorse beyond endurance."

"You admit the cruelty of your exaction?"

"I shall reproach myself with it until the day of my death."

"You would have been happy had I disobeyed you?"

"I would give anything, no matter what, had you done so."

The little Comtesse gave a hearty laugh, which disclosed all her teeth, not one of them was missing.

"What does this mean?" demanded M. de Beauchamp, turning about with his fingers the medallion in which was encrusted like a sainted relic, the little pearl of sacrifice.

The Comtesse opened Bally's pouting lips, saying as she did so:

"Behold the victim."

"Ah," cried M. Beauchamp, "you never loved me, Louise, I see it plainly now. You never loved me."

They never married.

C. SUTHERLAND.

Now, Mr. Smith, is the Time to Try for One of Pearson's Fivers!

THE Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* is offering five £5 notes to all those named Smith. Applications must be made on post-cards addressed to the "Note Editor" of *Pearson's Weekly*, and must reach the office of that paper by November 12th at latest.

Of course it may happen that the note is not addressed to you at all; on the other hand, it may be that your name is lying in the editorial safe in an envelope containing one of those crisp and crackling £5 notes, the possession of which makes life so pleasant.

WE all admit that marriage is a lottery, but we are also all convinced that we know the lucky combination.

HAL COUNTER: "So she did not accept you?"

Sam Shoeseller: "No—got down on my knees to propose—then forgot what I was there for and asked her what size shoe she wore."

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A Stab at Russia.

A hundred miles in twenty hours is not a bad performance over such a country as Afghanistan, even if the road be a good one like that which links Chaman with Kandahar.

Both men and horses were weary when Captain Peyton announced that they would make their first prolonged halt on a wooded slope which commanded a view of the famous Afghan city.

Under the peculiar conditions of travel all distinctions of rank disappeared in this small party. The leader attended to his two chargers as zealously and thoroughly as did the junior Sikh jemadar, and by rapid arrangement Englishmen and natives equally divided the other duties of the bivouac. The unusual circumstances of their yet unknown mission rendered it imperative that self-help and equality of labour should be the order of the day, and all shared alike in mounting guard, cutting wood, and the rest.

Culinary operations were the most difficult. The two Mussulmans necessarily ate by themselves, the Hindu soldier made shift to observe caste prejudices, and when dinner came to be thought of, Peyton and de Vismes gazed blankly at each other.

"Do you know anything about cooking?" said Peyton to his companion.

"Lots—theoretically."

"Ha!" The qualification sounded suspicious.

"I have learnt the names of various dishes in ten languages," explained de Vismes. "For instance, the Russian for Irish stew is——"

"Look here, old chap," broke in Peyton. "I will cut a double share of grass for the gees, if you will undertake the stew in any language you like."

"Agreed," cried de Vismes. "To-day it shall be Étuvée à la Kandahar."

A young goat which they had bought at a village for a few annas supplied the meat, and the Mohammedans had already secured some sweet potatoes, of which de Vismes obtained a share. Salt they had brought with them, and the result of an hour's assiduity produced an excellent meal and a liberal supply of grass-roots for the horses.

It was then that Peyton was able to open his sealed packet and learn the full extent of the task intrusted to him. An autograph letter from Sir George White was quite explicit.

"You will proceed," wrote the Commander-in-Chief, "with the utmost possible dispatch to Turbat-i-Shaikh-Janni, on the Herat Meshed road. There you will find Captain Adams of the 5th Lancers, who is awaiting you. If not he, Captain Hutchinson of the 2nd Gurkhas will be in his place. Should you arrive safely, either of these officers will acquaint you with the intentions of the Government of India. You will be in supreme command, and it is left to your discretion to act at the right moment. This you will easily determine when you have reached your destination.

"Communicate the contents of this letter to the British officer selected to accompany you, so that in the event of accident to yourself he may fulfil your mission. In the latter event the command at Turbat and during subsequent operations will be settled by seniority.

"Should it be an open question whether or not either of you can reach Turbat, your destination only must be told to the native officers in your party, so that if any one of them gain the desired end of the journey, the officer he meets will understand what has happened, and may be trusted to do what is best fitted in his judgment.

"The native officers should be individually instructed to deliver a message to that effect.

"When you have read this document to your companion, burn it. I inclose a sketch map of your best route, with all possible information marked thereon by the Intelligence Department, and you will also find herewith safe conducts signed by the Amir of Afghanistan and the Shah of Persia.

"You must allow neither your own life, nor the lives of your companions, nor of your opponents, to stand in the way of the accomplishment of this mission.

"I have only to wish you success, and to assure you of the keen appreciation that will be manifested by the Government of India, if you and your companions are able to fully carry out their desires."

Peyton read this remarkable document twice slowly, and then he called de Vismes, and went through it again, aloud.

"We seem to have got a tolerably tall order," was de Vismes' comment.

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"Why do you think so?" said Peyton. "There surely need not be more than ordinary difficulty in getting through to Turbat-and-the-rest-of-it—unless——"

"Yes. Unless the Russians are already in the way. That's exactly what the chief expects; hence your burning the letter in case it should fall into their hands."

"The presence of a few sotnias of Cossacks between us and the frontier of Persia will certainly complicate matters," replied Peyton with a smile. "Meanwhile pass a cigar. I am going to burn this thing, and we must not waste matches."

"It seems to me," went on de Vismes thoughtfully, "that even when we reach Turbat the business is only beginning. We have got a great chance, old man. Let's have a look at the passports."

Peyton . . . went through it again aloud.

He examined the two documents whilst the cigar and the letter were being ignited. They were written in the Persi-Arabic character, which he readily deciphered. Then he laughed.

"These safeguards are typical of the men," he explained. "The Shah uses a lot of circumlocution and flowery phrases, and explains that we are engaged, so far as he knows, on a peaceful mission, the nature of which he doesn't state, but he enjoins all his servants to help us with food and forage for the horses if necessary. The Amir, on the other hand, comes to the point at once. Here is what he says: 'The bearer is my friend. He who refuses to assist him is my enemy. Signed,—ABDURRAHMAN KHAN.' Quite explicit, isn't it?"

"Yes, to those who know the ways of Kabul," said Peyton, and the two officers then carefully scrutinised the map. By travelling fifty miles a day, which would be a phenomenal performance in such country, they would be in Turbat-i-Shaikh-Janni in eight days. And the Cossacks were already in Herat—but this they did not learn until later.

Their second halt was at Maiwand.

The swiftly-flowing waters of the treacherous river, though sparkling and iridescent in the declining light of the hot May evening, did not fail to evoke bitter thoughts in the hearts of the Englishmen, whilst the natives condemned the stream in the choicest phrases of the Urdu language—a tongue particularly rich in the vocabulary of objurgation.

Indeed they were relieved to quit the place and its painful memories of British disaster when the first faint streaks of dawn gave light to show the road. Thence they crossed the Helmund at Haidrabad and took the direct if difficult route to Taiwarah.

By this means they hoped to gain Kuhsan on the Persi-Afghan frontier by an unfrequented road and without attracting undue observation.

Towards the close of the fourth day, whilst they were travelling rapidly through the valley of a tributary of the Farah-Rud river, one of the horses fell dead lame. He was stripped, his trappings thrown into a nullah, and turned loose, but the poor beast continued to hobble after them, and was not driven off until the rissalder had laid about him with a heelrope.

They halted in a tope of trees about a mile farther on, and as was their invariable custom, selected a spot which commanded a good view of the surrounding country.

Not expecting any immediate danger, they were about to kindle a fire when the Sikh uttered a warning cry, and at once the eyes of the whole party were riveted upon an irregular crowd of horsemen coming down the valley on the watershed of which they had bivouacked.

Peyton knew that he and his companions were hidden from observation by the trees, but as a precautionary measure the horses' girths were tightened again, and then the proceedings of the new-comers were watched with interest.

They did not long leave the British soldiers in doubt as to their identity.

"Cossacks from the Ural," whispered de Vismes. "I know their head-dress well, as I once lived among 'em for a month."

"Then the Russians are advancing on Kandahar," said Peyton. "Thank Heaven our fellows will be there to meet them!"

The enemy came momentarily nearer, and were evidently about to pass them at a distance of half a mile, close to the banks of the shallow river which ran north-west towards the Farah Rud.

"It's a jolly good job they don't go in for scouting on the hillsides," murmured Peyton. "Otherwise we should be in trouble."

The Cossacks had reached the nearest point to the concealed party when the unexpected happened. The discarded charger, who had made his way to the water, seeing a troop of horsemen, had cantered off to them on three legs, and whinnied his delight at again falling in with his own kind. Instantly the three native officers sprang to their blankets in order to smother the cries of any of their animals that might choose to give tongue in reply, but, old campaigners as they were, the other troop-horses were too busy with their feed to indulge in conversation.

The Cossacks halted at the somewhat singular encounter, and some of them dismounted to examine the prize. At once a great deal of gesticulation and excitement arose in their midst.

"They have found the regimental number on his hoof," growled De Vismes.

"Yes," said Peyton grimly. "We must spare no more lives," and he thought of the concluding words of the Commander-in-Chief's letter.

"It's a good job we didn't shoot him."

"True, but we might have stabbed him. I trust they won't find the saddlery."

Dismounted to examine the prize.

The Cossacks deliberated for some time and then pushed on rapidly southwards, whilst they now detached scouting parties on the hills.

"That was a close call," observed De Vismes, drawing a deep breath.

"Very. In half-an-hour's time we will drop over into the next street," said Peyton, meaning that they would traverse the ridge and try the neighbouring valley as a safer route.

Nothing happened that night or the next day when they crossed the track leading from Herat to Zulfikar. As the evening of the seventh day came on they cautiously, approached the Kuhsan Pass. Once safely through this they had only two days of hard riding before them, as they would be in Persian territory.

But although the goal was so near, Peyton resolved to leave nothing to chance.

The country was well wooded up to the mouth of the pass, so he halted his little company in a secluded spot some two miles distant from the cleft in the hills through which ran the caravan route, and sent Gurdal Singh forward on foot to reconnoitre.

The Sikh was absent three hours, and Peyton was becoming anxious; darkness came, and there was still no

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sign of the jemadar. At last he returned, breathless but imperturbable.

"What news, jemadar?" said the Commander.

"Ill news, sahib," was the reply. "A hundred Cossacks are eating round their fires about a quarter of a mile from the pass, and a sentry is placed where the road enters the hills."

The annoyance and amazement of the two officers at these tidings were best signified by silence. At last Peyton said: "We must get through to-night."

"Of course," answered de Vismes. "But how? To attempt to rush it means death for the lot of us."

"We must think of some means," said the other, and he called to him Rissaldar Shah Nawaz Khan, who knew this part of the country thoroughly, having served on an escort for a boundary commission in the locality.

The Mohammedan, having questioned the Sikh, explained that the Cossacks were encamped on a piece of level ground on one side of a small stream which issued from the pass. It would be possible in the night to reach unobserved the entrance to the pass by the other side of the stream, crossing the water at the nearest point, and making a dash for the road.

But there was the sentry.

"Leave him to me," said Shah Nawaz Khan, with a complacent grin. "I have often crept into a keddah, sahib, when a boy, and thrown a noose round the leg of an elephant. A Cossack's neck is not nearly so thick."

"This sounds deuced like murder," said Captain Peyton in English. "Remember, Shah Nawaz Khan," he continued, "I would not have the man killed if it can be avoided. Can you disarm and gag him quietly?"

"Protector of the poor, it is done."

Shortly before midnight the five men, having selected the best of the horses, and hobbled the others to prevent them from following, reached the further side of the stream, whose noisy progress effectually drowned the sounds of the horses' feet. They cautiously examined the Cossack encampment, which was plainly visible in a flood of brilliant moonlight. They could also see the sentry, and whilst they were arranging their final plan of action the relief was effected.

"His hour has not come," murmured Shah Nawaz Khan to his compatriot, as they watched the Cossack whose turn of duty had expired returning to the bivouac.

An idea now occurred to Peyton. Not only must they get safely into the pass but the Cossacks must be sent off on the wrong scent, or the gagged sentry must soon be discovered and a pursuit established.

"Gurdal Singh," he said to the Sikh. "Take your horse and return. Cross the stream lower down, and in half-an-hour ride openly toward the encampment. Go as near as you can with safety, fire your carbine at them, yell as loud as you are able, and then do your best to escape. Here is a letter from the Amir if you fall in with any Afghans. You must endeavour to return to Kandahar and report our progress. I will see to it that you are rewarded."

"Salaam, sahib!" returned the Sikh gravely, and he led off his horse without another word.

At the same moment Shah Nawaz Khan slipped away into the shadows like a ghost, having divested himself of his boots and most of his clothing. He only carried a heel-rope and a knife.

A cloud passed over the moon, plunging the landscape into darkness, and for fifteen weary minutes the others waited in ill-sustained suspense.

Then a dark form crept up from the river bank and a gruff voice said:

"It is done, sahib. Give me a minute to clothe myself."

"Is he bound and gagged?" said Peyton, leaning towards the place where Shah Nawaz Khan was wriggling into his accoutrements.

"He is bound, sahib, but the gag slipped." Then, after a tug at a boot, the rissalder added. "Nevertheless he will not speak."

Peyton remembered the Commander-in-Chief's instructions and asked no more questions.

To cross the stream and quietly glide into the gloom of the pass was now an easy matter. This was hardly accomplished when a couple of rifle shots rang out in the still air in quick succession, and they could plainly hear the shouting of the Cossacks as they sprang to arms.

All armed and mounted.

Silently and doggedly the four soldiers urged on their tired horses. The ascent was short but steep. By two o'clock they were nearing the summit of the pass when they heard an unmistakable sound some distance in the rear. The crack of the Cossack whip, and cries of encouragement to animals as a party of pursuers rode after them, came up from the cavernous depths of the defile.

"They have found the sentry," said Peyton. "Only a few of them must have followed the Sikh."

"Allah has permitted it," said Shah Nawaz Khan, "but the prophet himself could not make their sentry tell that which he saw."

Then the full and terrible significance of his orders came to Peyton's mind for the first time.

"You must remain here and bar the way as long as you can," he said to the two Mohammedans.

"It is done," they both replied.

Shah Nawaz Khan continued, without the slightest tremor in his voice: "I have a wife and three little ones in the cavalry bazaar at Shikarpur."

"My aged father and mother live at Delhi," said Jemadar Musa Khan, "and I send them a quarter of my pay every month."

"They shall not want whilst the Sirdar reigns," replied Peyton, choking down his emotion. "May God guard you!"

"Salaam, sahib," cried both men, and they dismounted.

The last that Peyton and de Vismes saw of them they were striving to prise a big rock into the middle of the narrow and precipitous mountain path, which here overhung a steep gorge.

The officers rode forward in silence, and in a little while they heard rapid firing in the rear. This continued in a desultory manner for some time, and then died away; but there appeared to be no further pursuit.

"The majority of those shots were from Lee-Metford carbines," said de Vismes.

"Well they might be," replied Peyton, who was bitter with grief at the loss of the two brave men he had been compelled to leave to certain death.

"The last shots certainly were," persisted the other.

"It is impossible that they should escape. Why, there were probably fifty Cossacks!"

"True, but the fifty don't know how many they are facing."

Further conversation was, however out of the question. The road in the descent became momentarily worse. Fortunately the sky had cleared again and the moonlight enabled them to pick their way, else they would inevitably have blundered down into the rocky abyss through which a new stream was now threading its way into Persia. Judging by the roar which came up out of the depths, there must be a considerable volume of water, and it was evident that several torrents, converging from other spurs in the hills, had here found a common channel.

Their horses were now almost dead beat, and they were practically in the same condition themselves, but they kept doggedly on until dawn came, and they neared the Persian

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end of the defile. But who can picture their dismay, when, on emerging into a comparatively open valley, they plainly saw another Cossack encampment about a mile distant.

"Alikhanoff must have had some inkling of a counter move from Persia," said de Vismes. "He has evidently seized every caravan route."

"It is to stop supplies reaching our troops from this side," said Peyton. "There is nothing for it but to cross the river and try to escape towards the north before we are seen. It will be a nasty job, especially with horses so done up as ours are."

True enough, this was their only resource. Taking advantage of the cover of some trees they boldly advanced into the stream, and their chargers, freshened by the water dashing against their flanks, gallantly essayed the difficult passage.

In such a turbulent and fierce rushing current it was useless to dismount and cling to mane or tail. They must either gain the other side with comparative ease, or be swept away by the force of the swirling and eddying river.

For a few moments all went well. Then de Vismes' horse, slipping on a loose stone, plunged violently, rolled over, and Peyton saw animal and rider hurled headlong by the current into a vortex of foam. They disappeared momentarily, but he caught glimpses of them as they fought madly for life when they rose again many yards further on.

Horrified beyond expression he seemed to lose all muscular power, and would infallibly have met the same fate if his gallant Waler had not scrambled into safety on the opposite bank.

It was hopeless to think of helping de Vismes, or seeking for him. One of the five was left, and he still had sixty long miles before him.

Peyton rode forward as in a dream until he reached a friendly wood, where he fell rather than dismounted from his charger, and lay for a little while on the ground utterly powerless.

And the only concrete idea he possessed seemed to be fixed in his brain in letters of fire. Had not the Commander-in-Chief written:

"You must allow neither your own life, nor the lives of your companions, nor of your opponents, to stand in the way of the accomplishment of this mission."

* * * * *

"Chicken broth and warm milk are all very well, old chap, when a man is as *fin de siècle* as you were on Wednesday, but I think the time has really arrived when a peg would do you good. I have saved a whole bottle of the best for three hot weeks in expectation of your coming, and there's half-a-dozen of soda swinging in wet towels in the veranda."

It was Captain Adams, of the Royal Irish Lancers, who spoke, and he affected a merriment he was far from feeling as he gazed at Peyton, stretched listlessly on a charpoy beneath an awning rigged up in front of the principal abode in Turbat-i-Shaikh-Janni.

Not a word had Peyton spoken for thirty-six hours after he fell senseless at Adams's feet muttering before consciousness fled: "Russia—war—come from Quetta—search for de Vismes—carried away river."

By careful treatment the lancer had succeeded in saving Peyton's life, and believing that some tragedy had occurred, he sent out a large party of Persian horsemen to scour the country, but they returned to report that they had discovered nothing save the presence of some Cossacks at the mouth of the Kuhsan pass.

It was now the evening of Sunday.

Peyton was much better and able to grasp the tremendous importance of his journey when Adams had explained why he and nineteen other British officers had been living for six weeks on the Persian frontier, close to the Central Asian Railway.

"Come," said Adams, "a small dose of whisky and soda will give you an appetite. I must pack you into a *palki** to-morrow, and carry you off to Mahommadabad, which we have made our centre. There you will find six or seven other men, who have charge of sections. It is a great scheme, I can assure you."

"I will be ready," said Peyton. Then he added gravely: "Is there any news of de Vismes?"

"Not the slightest. Heaven knows where that beastly river would carry him to. It runs into nowhere."

Whereby Adams meant that the torrent was one of those numerous Central Asian streams which, rising in the hills, finally lose themselves in the midst of desert wastes of sand.

Peyton was much cast down for a while. But thorough soldier as he was, he knew that his brave comrades, Englishmen and natives, had succumbed to the lottery of war.

He declined the proffered peg, but asked for a cheroot. Adams and he were lighting their cigars when they noticed three wretched-looking men, attired in a remarkable manner, and mounted on small ponies, coming through the bazaar, attended by a furious crowd.

Peyton suddenly forgot his weakness. He leapt to his feet and yelled: "By——, its de Vismes and the two sowars!"

And it was.

De Vismes had been deposited on a sandbank, and had thence crawled, with a sprained wrist and a bruised knee, to a Persian village, where he lay quite prostrate for the best part of two days.

Here he was found by the Ris aldar and Musa Khan, who had driven back the Cossacks by first firing at them briskly in the darkness, and then causing their own two chargers, by lashing them with their sabres, to gallop madly down the narrow path and precipitate nearly a dozen of the astounded pursuers into the ravine, where they were found by the kites next day.

Some 70,000 men were placed on board transports.

The two Mohammedans crossed to the north of the stream higher up than the officers, and thus escaped the second batch of Cossacks in their turn.

And these things formed but a feeble prelude to the events that followed.

CHAPTER XXXII.

The Bridge over the Oxus.

Russia is popularly supposed to be impregnable and unassailable. Vast though her bulk, she apparently offers few openings for attack. Napoleon once drove an army like a lance into her breast, but the lance was shattered by its own blow. England and France and Turkey combined, spent all their strength against a puny peninsula in the Crimea. Russia, therefore, say the people who make war in words, cannot be invaded.

In India, however, a different opinion prevails. There, in the past, it was sufficient for a place to be impregnable to render it a fitting locality for a British cantonment. Chitral was unassailable until Colonel Kelly and his sepoys dragged guns through six feet of snow and over a 12,000 feet pass in order to mount them upon the fort of that name.

England was not, as we have seen, unprepared for sudden attack by the Continental powers, and when the Government of India were apprised of the threatened danger they

* A covered litter.

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at once took steps to checkmate any move on the part of the only foe they had reason to suspect.

Twenty British officers, fully conversant with the Russian and Persian languages, were dispatched early in April to Khorassan, *viâ* the Persian Gulf and the Karun River. They were accompanied by a trusted representative of the Foreign Department, who used some remarkably convincing arguments with the Shah, as that excellent descendant of the Prophet thenceforth professed the utmost ignorance of any events occurring on the Meshed-Astrabad frontier.

The range of hills running from the Caspian to the north-west corner of Afghanistan is occupied by Persian and Turkoman robber tribes. These, for the most part, have been driven out of Russian territory by successive wars and the vigorous application of the knout.

They are a nomad population, all armed and mounted, and all ready to enter into any scheme wherein bakshish, pillage, and a reasonable amount of throat-cutting are judiciously blended.

For twenty Englishmen, skilled in the manners of the East, and well supplied with money, to rapidly gain considerable ascendancy over these easily-led people was a simple matter of time and careful treatment.

When Captain Peyton reached Mohammadabad, therefore, he found that he was commandant of an irregular but mobile force of some 40,000 horsemen, each batch of 2,000 being under the special care of an English officer, and the whole body filled with malicious glee at the thought of striking an effective blow at their hereditary enemy.

The force was scattered at considerable intervals along a line of country which ran parallel with and some sixty miles south of the Transcaspian Railway, and the sealed orders delivered to the commandant by Adams, instructed him to advance upon the railway, sieze simultaneously as much of its length as was possible between Dushakh and Kizil Arvat, and endeavour to hold the two latter places.

If the strength of the enemy was such as to render the concluding part of this programme impossible, he was to retire, having thoroughly destroyed the line before relinquishing it.

His attack was to be timed to fit in with the destruction of the first Russian Army Corps, the advance of which upon India he would be certain to hear of.

If able to maintain his ground, he should strengthen both ends of his extended line of operations, and remain immovable until help came from India.

The principle underlying the scheme was at once apparent to an able soldier like Peyton.

By capturing or destroying Russia's means of rapid communication with the Afghan frontier in the neighbourhood of Penjdeh, and assuming that her Asiatic provinces were practically denuded of troops to supply the first expeditionary corps for the descent upon India, her European and really reliable army in the Caucasus was placed in a far worse position for quick movement than the Anglo-Indian troops at Quetta.

In a word, the battle-ground was shifted from Herat and Kandahar to a vulnerable portion of Russian territory.

Lord Wolseley and Sir George White had other cards to play after winning the first *coup*.

The Commander-in-Chief at home, as a precautionary measure, communicated with Lord Roberts as to the state of affairs in France.

That gallant officer replied that he could do without reinforcements until after the approaching battle on the outskirts of Rouen, as the supports could not possibly reach him in time to be of any use in this engagement, and if things happened to his liking he thought the French would be satisfied until he was a little nearer Paris.

Over one half of the Third French Expedition, as it was called, was converted into a fifth Army Corps for attack upon Russia. Some 70,000 men were placed on board transports and sailed for Gibraltar. Of the Canadian troops 25,000 were diverted off Queenstown for the same destination, and a South African contingent of 15,000 men was also sent there by cabled instructions, which reached the commander at St. Helena.

A number of British ships left Gibraltar, and, by way of preliminary, threatened Marseilles and Toulon.

Peyton himself led the first squadron.

It was consequently believed in France that all these preparations, which, in due course, became known, foreboded a second invasion of the southern provinces, and Germany and Russia shared this view.

They were, however, all mistaken.

When the Viceroy cabled home the tidings of the battle of the Helmund, Lord Wolseley, in conjunction with the Admiralty, issued orders to the following effect:

The strong fleet at Gibraltar, now nearly doubled in numbers by reason of the captured ships of the enemy having been hastily repaired, was to advance through the Mediterranean with the transports containing 110,000 home and Colonial troops. The regiments at Malta and in Egypt were to be picked up *en route*, and the force must then pass the Dardanelles, with or without the consent of Turkey.

The Russian Black Sea fleet should be either captured or driven into Sevastopol and held there, whilst the expedition proper must proceed to and occupy Odessa, thence forcing its way along the Danube and seizing the railway to Tiraspol and Balta.

Contemporaneously with these events, a combined American and Canadian Corps would cross the Pacific and attack Vladivostock, in Eastern Siberia, and preparations would rapidly be made for a determined assault upon St. Petersburg and the Neva by an Anglo-American naval and military force.

It will be seen that the words of a sporting subaltern were fully justified when he said that we were going to "serve it up hot for Russia."

Fortunately, Commandant Peyton was not embarrassed by any knowledge of the gigantic scope of the project of which he was such an integral factor.

He set about his business promptly and effectually.

Having accurately gauged the date of the encounter between Alikhanoff's host and the British, he ordered that all arrangements should be made for a forward movement on June 11th, to culminate on June 14th.

To de Vismes he assigned the command of the right attack, that is, upon Dushakh.

Rightly judging that this would be a vulnerable point by reason of a possible Russian advance from Merv and the Oxus, he sent two divisions, those of Adams and Hutchinson, to effect the capture.

He personally decided to be carried by bearers, so that he might fully recover from his fatigue, to the extreme left, at Kulun Kalassi, where he would lead the advance on Fort Poltawskoe, and thence strive to reach Kizil Arvat.

It would be necessary to travel in a litter night and day in order to gain Kulun Kalassi in time, and he dispatched mounted messengers to warn all the officers *en route* to meet him and discuss details.

Peyton was distinctly a man of action. He conferred with each of the remaining officers whom he had not seen at Mohammadabad, gave them their instructions, and in case of success, told them to proceed to right or left, as

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the case might be, along the line to strengthen the two bases.

Rolling-stock and engines were to be carefully preserved, but, above and beyond all else, at the first note of danger, after the original design had been achieved, the line must be completely destroyed.

The two Mohammedan cavalry officers accompanied Peyton, and at midday on the 11th the little party reached Kulun Kalassi, where they found Captain Applin, of the 7th Bombay Infantry, expecting them.

This was the first contingent of his strange command that Peyton had time or opportunity to inspect, and he was immediately impressed with the marvellous effect which a few weeks of skilled European training had had upon the motley crew which he anticipated meeting.

Drawn up in five regiments of four squadrons each, the Goklan Turkomans, who composed this particular detachment, constituted a really excellent body of irregular horse. They stood stolidly in their ranks as Peyton rode up and down their lines, proud of their unwonted steadiness and parade-like uniformity.

They blurted out all the information they were asked for.

"How on earth did you get those chaps to obey you?" he said to Applin.

"Well, you see, I came here six weeks ago, and at once called a meeting of the elders. I lied like a Chinaman. I said that a great Jehad was to be declared against the Russians, who, by-the-way, drove this crowd out of Geok Tepe in Skobeleff's time, and promised them plenty of bakshish and loot if they followed my advice. More than that, I gave their palms a liberal greasing at the start, and said that this was nothing to the treasure which would flow when the Queen came to see the Shah. And this is the result."

"It's all very well, Applin, for you to put it that way," said Peyton kindly; "but it is easy to see that you have almost worked miracles to lick them into such shape in so short a time. I only hope that every other man on the frontier has been as successful."

The younger officer flushed with pleasure at hearing these words from his senior.

Orders were given for an immediate start. When a moment's interval occurred for a mouthful to eat, Applin said:

"By-the-way, I've been out of the world for over two months. What's the favourite for the Derby?"

"Rothschild's horse, I believe."

"Good, I've backed him. It's time the blue jacket had a turn; and I've taken ten tickets in the Turf Club Lottery."

Applin's mind was now at ease. He had "got on" at a good price, so he devoted his energies with much cheerfulness towards assisting the downfall of Russia.

After a three days' march through the hills the force came within striking distance of Poltawskoe. The night of the 14th had been appointed as the time of the combined attack, if possible, at midnight.

Rissaldar Shah Nawaz Khan and Jemadar Musa Khan were detached at the head of a flanking party to the west, with orders to stop any train which might be proceeding towards Kizil Arvat, but not to interfere with one coming into the interior. They were also to prevent mounted messengers from reaching the next station on that side, Aschaman.

Precisely at twelve o'clock Peyton himself led the first squadron at the gallop into the station, and his first care was to unship the telegraph instrument.

At the same moment Applin dashed at the fort, where, beyond a mere scuffle, there was no fighting. The garrison, such as it was, consisting of a couple of elderly staff officers and a few Russo-Turkomans, could not have been more unprepared for attack if a meteorite had fallen on top of them.

Within five minutes Peyton and Applin were expressing their astonishment at the completeness of the surprise, and whilst they were talking the whistle of an engine sounded across the desert.

They were standing in the station, and they compelled the station master, under pain of instant death, to properly adjust the signals, whilst they disposed their men on both sides of the rails, there being no platforms, to capture the train when it drew up.

Here again the operation was simplicity itself.

The Russian engine-driver and native stoker were too astounded to do anything when Peyton jumped on to the engine. They were promptly seized and bound before they knew that an enemy was at hand.

The rest of the train contained, as it transpired, commissariat officials who had been convoying stores to Geok Tepe, Askabad and Merv.

In their amazement they blurted out all the information they were asked for. Both Peyton and Applin had difficulty in restraining the expression of their joyful surprise when they learnt that the accumulations of months of secret preparation by Russia had fallen into their possession, if the attack had been similarly successful all along the line to Dushakh.

It seemed, too, that the rolling stock blocked the way, and it was with difficulty that two trains daily now traversed the system.

The Russians detailed these highly important facts without hesitation, apparently believing that refusal to answer would mean summary execution, and, indeed, it was with some difficulty that the British officers made their fierce followers understand that they must not strangle or behead every Russian they encountered.

A wild project now entered Peyton's head, and he in vain strove to repress it.

Why, if a nominally fortified place merely requiring walking into in order to be at his mercy, should not the whole line be seized to its Caspian terminus?

At last he communicated the idea to Applin and the latter agreed that, unless unforeseen obstacles, such as the presence of a strong body of troops at Kizil Arvat or Usun-Ada, were encountered, two hundred men could do the job quite as efficiently as two thousand.

The outcome of their deliberations was that in a couple of hours' time, Applin and a selected body of his levies started in the train for the west, with the native stoker, bribed beyond his wildest dreams, acting as driver.

Not until thirty hours later did the train return, bearing the following note from Applin:

"After being nearly annihilated by those two Mohammedan ruffians you brought with you, I at last was able to make them understand that we, and not the Russians, were in possession of the train. They are useful fellows, so I took the liberty of bringing them along with me. I have captured no end of places whose names I can't remember. Kizil Arvat is one of them. My principal occupation was in kicking station-masters to make them comprehend the situation, and in unfixing telegraph instruments. I am now in Usun-Ada where I have seized fourteen fairly-sized steamers. It appears that every available man has gone with Alikhanoff, and the line has been given up entirely to transporting stores and ammunition prior to the arrival of the Grand Duke's army. If he puts in an appearance I am afraid that my 250 vagabonds won't last long. I would, therefore, suggest immediate reinforcements. Fortunately I got to the submarine cable office before any news was sent to Baku. I have found a native here who swears he will wire anything I tell him, and translate all messages received. I

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must trust him, because no news at the other end would be almost as bad as the actual facts. So I propose to amuse the Grand Duke a bit before the thing leaks out from the Bokharan side. By-the-way, I do believe they have no telegraph line northwards from the frontier except that which passes through here. If so, we are in luck. There are some Frenchmen in the employ of the Caspian Maritime Company, whose steamers I have seized, and they have given me no end of trouble. My cable expert says he can get some men to repair the telegraph line, and work the instruments. I am sending them back on a smaller train; they will put things straight as they go, and you may expect them some hours after you receive this."

Within three days Peyton, with 10,000 of his strange auxiliaries, was in Usun-Ada, and started constructing earthworks to defend the harbour, whilst Applin sent long messages to the Grand Duke Paul, detailing the magnificent progress made in the forwarding of stores, and imploring him to expedite the departure of everything but men, as the line was not ready for the passage of troops yet. Besides, there was no news from Alikhanoff.

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(To be continued.)

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☞ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 6 distribution must reach us by November 14th addressed to The 6th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Third Distribution appears on the next column.

RESULT OF No. 3 DISTRIBUTION.

FIVE persons have this week successfully applied for a sovereign each. Their names and addresses are as follows:

W. WILLIAMS, 459 High Road, Tottenham, N.

G. JONES, 26 Yorkington Street, Edgeley, Stockport.

TAYLER WILCOCK, Danes Avenue, Roundhay, Leeds.

H. WOODYARD, 53 Longfellow Road, Walthamstow.

W. WEDGBURY, Church Cottages, Chelmarsh, near Bridgnorth.

Below you will find the names and addresses of those who would have had a £1 each if they had applied:

J. A. Robinson, The Glen, Torquay Road, Newton Abbot; W. Winter, 24 Rhondda Street, Swansea; C. B. Stokes, Belle Vue Terrace, Malvern Link; J. Allan, 12 Sydney Street, Glasgow; J. B. Corner, 8 Mathieson Road, Glasgow; Miss Freeman, 5 Beauchamp Avenue, Leamington; E. E. Garman, 5 Surrey Grove, Norwich; A. Rooke, 13 Egerton Road, Plymouth; Tho Wilson, 39 Plymouth Road, Penarth; Mrs. Spicer, 19 Richmond Road, Worcester; W. Hall, 43 Burnaby Street, Splotts, Cardiff; R. Loan, 3 Farley Terrace, Truro; S. Houlson, Alverton Street, Penzance; John Marshall, 167 Bank Street, Coatbridge; J. E. Keates, 5 Holmer Street, Hereford; W. Page, 44 Warwick Street, Wolverhampton; A. R. Ward, 13 Maria Street, Neath; W. Mair, Albany Place, St. Andrews; Chas. Lloyd, 37 St. Mary's Street, Bridgnorth; Miss M. E. Wycherley, 10 St. Julian's Friars, Shrewsbury; W. Thomas, 8 Richmond Terrace, Aberavon; W. Scott, 9 Shrubbery Street, Kidderminster; W. H. Adams, 37 Randall Street, Sheffield; C. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.; W. Gibbons, 7 Church Grove, St. Andrew's Road, Small Heath, Birmingham; J. P. Endered, Evesham Road, Headless Cross, Redditch; Thos. Boddy, Heighington R.S.O., County Durham; W. J. Lavers, Fortescue Hotel, Plymouth; Geo. Philip, 3 Sandquay Terrace, Dartmouth; R. Davis, 15 Smith Street, Hanley, Staffs.; G. V. Wood, 2 Woodside Terrace, Onchan, Isle of Wight; H. Boston, 407 Old Chester Road, Rock Ferry; W. M. Garner, 5 Gladstone Terrace, Brighton; W. Eaton, Holm Villa, Cathcart, Glasgow; Mrs. Williams, 2 Picton Place, Haverfordwest; J. Matthews, 2 Elmfield Villas, St. Mary Church; J. Hazeldene, Middle Class Schools, Sheffield; Robert Leslie, 6 Albert Street, Shrewsbury; E. F. McCalmont, 115 Sugarfield Street, Belfast; Rev. Alex. Brown, 94 Hamilton Place, Aberdeen; W. Collins, 24 Oglander Road, Maxted Road, E. Dulwich; Chas. Hayes, Laurel Cottage, Norwich Road, Bournemouth; J. Mitchell, Lerryn, Lostwithiel; W. F. Campton, 49, Upper Townsend Street, Belfast; G. Gordon, 18 Hartland Road, Kilburn, N.W.

TO EVERYBODY NAMED JONES!

I shall have something of importance to say to you next week.

To Everybody who is not Named Jones.

Take this copy of SHORT STORIES and show the above paragraph to all your friends named Jones.

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The Blood Mirror

"WHAT in the name of goodness is this thing, Grant?" asked Alden, holding up an oddly-shaped thick vial, stained on one side with some dull red colour, and covered with the accumulated dust of years. The elder man lowered his newspaper and directed his quiet gaze at the article which had excited his friend's curiosity, and which he had come upon while rummaging in Grant's cabinet of odds and ends.

"There; hold it a little more in the light, old man," said the latter, and then, as his guest did so, a quick frown passed over his pleasant face, and he added: "I thought that infernal thing was destroyed long ago. It is all that is left of my blood mirror."

"Your what?" asked Alden, in mild astonishment, turning from the vial to the man.

"My blood mirror—the one Venzeni once had. Did you never see it before?"

"Never," replied Alden decidedly, replacing the vial carefully, and observing it from a respectful distance. "What is a blood mirror, if I may ask?"

"A blood mirror," returned Grant shortly, "is an abominably artistic invention of a most savage set of men—the Maoris of New Zealand."

"Come," said Alden, drawing up a chair to the table and preparing to listen, "this sounds interesting! What is the story? I can see one in your eyes, and the title is certainly gruesome enough."

"Perhaps so; but not half so gruesome as the last experience I had with the mirror," returned Grant grimly. "Do you care to hear about it?"

"Oh, no," replied Alden, with mild, friendly sarcasm; "I never care to hear your stories; you ought to know it by this time! I only let you tell them so you'll be amused and not break the furniture, or mark on the walls, or pull the cat's tail. If you think I——"

"Very well," said Grant, interrupting and smiling good-naturedly at the younger man, "you shall have it then. You remember, perhaps, poor Venzeni's body-servant—that howling dervish, half Maori, half Zulu (though how he became so I never knew), and wholly a crude magician of no mean order. He died the same night that Moore murdered Venzeni, and, among the other strange contrivances of his art, he left this mirror. And as Venzeni had willed me all his things, or nearly so, and because no one else wanted the savage's dried skins and bones and other disagreeable things, I took them, the mirror along with the rest. And having heard of the marvellous power attributed to the uncanny thing, I determined to try it some night.

"The power which this mirror possessed, according to what Venzeni had told me, was that of reflecting events as they happened, anywhere in the world, for the person who looked into it, and who willed it. The absurdity of this was so evident that I only laughed when he mentioned it. But Venzeni was always a hot-tempered chap, you know, and this made him flash up like powder in the pan. 'If you will come here to-morrow night,' said he, 'I will have him prove what I say, for your amusement.' But though I promised to do so, to smooth his ruffled feelings down, he was called away that afternoon, and, by the time he returned home, we had both forgotten the incident.

"One day, while reading, I came across a little article on this very subject, written by as firm a believer in the occult as ever Venzeni had been, however, and there I learnt the unnatural heathenish manner in which these mirrors are manufactured. It seems that the blood used is that of an enemy killed in a hand-to-hand conflict, and after a lot of disgusting conjuring, it becomes endowed with its wonderful power. Some other liquid is also put with it to prevent its evaporation, and it is tightly corked, and there you are. Of course, horrible as the whole thing was to contemplate, this interested me, and, thereupon, I got out my specimen of a savage magic, and pouring it carefully into a saucer, I passed my hands over it, once or twice, thought earnestly of a certain street-crossing, and looked into the mirror.

"The result, I acknowledge, startled me, for there, before me plainly as if I were looking at the scene itself through the wrong end of an opera-glass, say, was the street I had thought of, with cabs and drays passing up and down, and pavements lined with people, and everything just as I knew it would be at that time of night. Suddenly, however, as I stared down, fascinated by this new, if uncanny, toy, I observed a strangely familiar figure turn the corner, and, looking steadily at him, I recognised—myself.

"Before I could begin to puzzle my own mind as to the meaning of this, however, two maddened horses attached to a carriage seemed to dash wildly down the street, and, in endeavouring to save a child I saw crossing

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it from being run over, the miniature figure of myself sprang in front of the excited animals, and the next moment I was being trampled beneath their feet.

"Then the mirror cleared, and I saw nothing but the dark, dully-shining blood before me.

"To say that I was satisfied with my experiment would hardly be truthful, for I was not. the thing worried me, and when, two weeks later, this very scene that I had looked upon really happened, as I was being carried bruised and pretty well done up, to my rooms, I remembered with very little satisfaction that Venzeni had had once said this particular mirror was different from the usual sort.

"Evidently it was, for not only did this little pool of blood shadow what had happened, but, in my case at least it had foretold the future, and had I been smart enough at the time and given to taking hints, I would probably have been more careful. Thinking thus, I mentally resolved to let the uncanny affair severely alone, and then fell to patching myself up as best I could. In a few days I was fully recovered, and, having dropped the accident from my mind, I soon forgot both it and the mirror. A month passed and another, and then one night that weird possession of mine fairly thrust itself upon me, and in an unlucky hour I took it out again. Would now that my hand had withered as I touched it, for it cost me the best friend of my life!

"You will remember Kenneth Hardesty, I know; kind-hearted, good-natured, noble old Kenneth, with a soul as big as his athletic body, and friends by the score. But none of these loved him as I did, and for years we had been inseparable. We were hard working young fellows then, and life was not a bed of roses to either of us, especially him, for not only was his salary small and the work hard, but the poor chap was desperately in love with a girl who couldn't have appreciated him had she lived twice as long as she did.

"One night he came to my room with a more than usually tired look upon his handsome face, and, dropping into the chair, he said:

"'Grant, I'm about done for. This strain is killing me, and I can't see the end anywhere. The work grows harder and harder, and though, Heaven knows, I try my best, I don't get on—I don't get on! For one look into the future I'd sell my very soul, I believe.' As he spoke some miserable thought suggested that mirror of mine, and without answering him I took it out, poured the liquid into the saucer, and set it before him.

"'Look into it then!' I exclaimed.

"'What is that stuff?' he asked, drawing back instinctively. Then I told him about it as briefly as possible, and showed him how to manipulate the things; and, though he laughed at what he chose to call my imagination, he passed his hands over it and looked down. And a moment later Kenneth Hardesty was realising his idle wish.

"I watched him curiously as scene after scene shifted in rapid succession before his eyes; and from the deep breathing and the intense expression on his face. I knew that he had overcome his momentary repugnance of the mirror, and was reading with spell-bound fascination the story the dull liquid before im related. Presently he looked up, with a great sigh, however, and passed his hand over his face in a dazed way, 'It is wonderful! wonderful!' he cried, springing to his feet. Then, with a quick wring of my hand, and murmuring something about being everlastingly indebted to me. he rushed out of the room and up the stairs, where I heard him whistling and singing softly for hours after he ought to have been in bed.

"From that hour Kenneth was a changed man. Where he had been moody and dreaming of late, he was now alert and quick, cheerful, hopeful, making more friends than ever, and creeping steadily up in his business. Once or twice I wondered if, after all, that strange little vial contained the elements of happiness for some mortal; but I did not ask Kenneth's opinion on the subject.

"The fact was, his actions began to trouble me now. Every evening, as regularly as the clock struck ten (as he had done ever since the first night I put the thing before him), he walked into my rooms, and, with a hazy greeting for me, walked straight to where the vial stood, and, pouring its contents out into the saucer, fell to studying it as if his very life depended on it. Once or twice I tried to draw him away from it, but he always shook me off impatiently. Plainly enough my poor friend was bewitched by the mirror. And then one night, a month after he had first looked upon it, there came a change.

"He had been bending over the little pool of blood not more than half-an hour, when I saw him turn white suddenly, and, rising quickly, he muttered something about a lie, and passed hastily out of the room without his customary good-night. I followed him to the door, but he did not hear my question as to what was troubling him, and went upstairs to his own room, where I heard him pacing restlessly up and down for the greater part of the night. There was evidently something radically wrong with him, and I worried long and uselessly that evening over his strange conduct for the last month. The following night I learnt the cause of it.

"Ten o'clock came and Kenneth did not put in an appearance.

"Eleven, and half-past that hour, crept by and still he did not turn up. This was unusual, and from the odd manner in which he had been acting, I feared something serious might have happened to him; so, taking up my coat and hat, I was just starting out in search of him, when the door was suddenly thrown open with a violent motion, and a man strode into the room. It was Kenneth; but what a terrible human being he was now!

"His clothes were torn and disarranged, as if he had just left off struggling for dear life with an enemy, and his usually immaculate shirt front—he was in evening dress—was covered with drops and splashes of blood, while his rumpled hair and pale face were flecked with the same red stains. One look into his deep-sunken, blood-shot eyes, told more than all the rest, and my heart sank within my breast. Poor boy, he was mad! And the first words he spoke confirmed the insane look in his eyes.

"'Where is it?' he asked hoarsely, shutting the door with a quick motion, and striding across the room to

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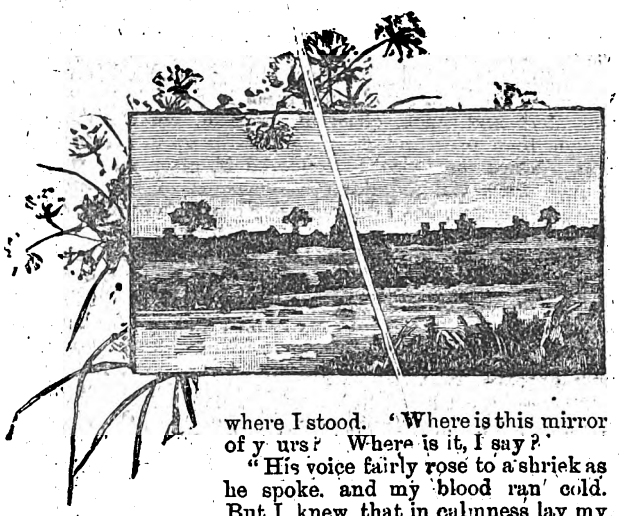

where I stood. 'Where is this mirror of yours? Where is it, I say?'

"His voice fairly rose to a shriek as he spoke, and my blood ran cold. But I knew that in calmness lay my only hope, and pointing to the mirror which rested on the top of the cabinet, I said:

"'It is there, Kenneth. But what do you want with it, and what does this—and this—and this mean?' I asked, touching his blood-stained shirt and coat and face.

"'It means that I have killed him—I have killed the wretch, the scoundrel—do you understand?'

"I confess I did not; but it was no time to argue the point with a madman, so, stepping back a few paces, to where I might reach the poker when the attack I felt sure was coming should be made, I waited for him to go on.

"'Where? Where?' he asked more quietly, passing his hand over his face again as if to tear an invisible veil away from his eyes. 'Where did you say it was? Let me have it, Grant, let me! It has never lied to me; it was a good friend, a good kind little friend, and—and—what am I saying? It told me of the work I would do, and I did it. It told me I would succeed, and I have. It told me everything I asked it, and you—where were you, Grant? I haven't seen you for ten centuries and fifty days! But, no matter, the mirror was here, the kind little mirror, and then it told me—ah, what then——.' and his head dropped suddenly upon his blood-spattered breast for a moment in silence. When he raised it again he was calmer, and for a fleeting minute I think he spoke rationally.

"'Grant,' said he, in a changed, dull voice, 'I am mad, I think. I have been so for how long you only know—I do not; but to-night I have done murder—foul, foul murder. Yet it was not I—it was the mirror. It told me that she would be false to me, and I swore it lied! but it did not, Grant, it did not. To-night I found them together, she in his arms, and I stabbed them both there—to the heart—with this!'

"As he spoke he drew from his inner breast pocket a small stiletto, and, as it flashed in the lamp-light, I saw its blade was covered with streaks of half-dried blood. For awhile the room seemed to reel about me as I realised the awful crime my friend had just confessed; but I was brought to my senses by his moving to the cabinet again.

"Looking up, I saw he held the little mirror for a moment in his trembling fingers, and a few drops from it were creeping slowly down the saucer and running over his fingers.

"'Yes,' he said, 'you showed me; you told me it would be so, and that I should kill them both together, and though I said you lied and swore I would not doubt her, you did not lie. I have killed her—him and her—him and her'—he paused for a second as if his mind were clouding again, and when he went on, I somehow felt the end was near, 'and I buried them side by side,' he said, 'where no one will ever find them, until their bones poke up through the dirt and shine in the sun. One good stroke, and another, and there they lay, writhing in each other's arms and trying to speak, while I and Death stood and watched them and laughed and laughed. And are you satisfied? Is this enough, or shall I look again and see myself going out into the unknown to meet them? Shall I?' No. I have seen enough, and you—you shall never spoil another life as you have spoilt mine!'

"As he spoke he raised the saucer and hurled it straight at the window. I turned to see it go, and in the crash of broken glass as the hard porcelain was dashed through the pane, leaving the red liquid dripping down the glass in great heavy drops, I did not hear the fall of the heavier body behind me. But as I turned to look at Kenneth again, I found him stretched out on the rug before the fire, the dagger buried in his heart.

"'And that is why,' concluded Alden's host abruptly, "I dislike the sight of that vial you have just brought to light. Please drop it into the hottest part of the fire, and let us get on to more cheerful subjects. Blood mirrors may do in New Zealand, but I don't want any more about my house."

"I don't blame you," said Alden thoughtfully, as the vial began to melt and run slowly down between the glowing coals. "It would be strange if you did!"

E. G. H.

RESULT OF "FOOTBALL PLAYERS'" COMPETITION!

No one succeeded in sending in a correct result in above competition, the nearest being three sets with six mistakes. We are therefore jumping the first three prizes together, and forwarding £3 to each of the following:

CHARLES V. WALKER, 46 Chester Street, Oxford.
MRS. RYAN, Manfield, Darlington.
E. COOMBS, 18 Kingscote Road, Birmingham.

A prize of £1 has been sent to

A. HUTTON, 3 Lapage Street, Bradford, Yorks.,

whose attempt was the neatest of those containing seven mistakes.

To the following, twenty-three books have been forwarded:

Emily Counter, 19 Northcote Road, Bournemouth; Mrs. Carpenter, 17 Bridge Avenue, Hammersmith; J. Edwards, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.; A. Wright, c/o E. Bishop, 2 St. Andrew's Hill, City; A. Clarke, c/o E. Bishop, 2 St. Andrew's Hill, City; E. Coombs, 18 Kingscote Road, Birmingham; G. Beiver, 83 Drakefield Road, Nunhead, S.E.; A. Goodwin, 2 St. Andrew's Hill, City, E.C.; J. A. Floyd, 47 Trinity Road, Southwark, S.E.; T. West, 16 Boston Rd, Boundary Road, Walthamstow; A. Winner, 2 St. Andrew's Hill, City, E.C.; A. Wentworth, 10 Cardwell Street, Liverpool; H. Buxton, 63 Leicester Street, Norwich; R. Webster, 19 Hatton Hall, Hatton Garden; Miss E. Cramphorn, 28 Woodlands Road, Leytonstone; Miss E. Parish, 28 Woodlands Road, Leytonstone; C. Cramphorn, 56 Granleigh Road, Leytonstone; A. Cramphorn, 28 Woodlands Road, Leytonstone; T. M. Child, 55 Rhondda Street, Swansea; Mrs. E. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.; C. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.; Miss R. Const, 101 Victoria Buildings, Clerkenwell Road, E.C.; A. Luck, c/o Purvis, 495 High Road, Leytonstone.

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"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCY.

TWO POUNDS OF FAT REMOVED IN TWENTY-FOUR HOURS.

Extreme Obesity becoming a Thing of the Past.

CORPULENCE—INCREASING POPULARITY OF AN EFFECTUAL CURE.

A MR. RUSSELL, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderately lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2lb. to even 12lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing on a weighing machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system which she most jealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the effect that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetable knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination. Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of "Corpulency, and the Cure," 256 pages, price 3d., stamps, post free) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drunk as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for this book, which can be obtained at the address given above.

The following are extracts from other Journals:

A SPANISH COUNT REDUCES HIS WEIGHT 34lb. IN 22 DAYS.

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. There has recently been issued a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled, "Corpulency, and the Cure" (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only threepence), published by Mr. F. C. Russell of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid—'My son, Count——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos = *i.e.*, 34lb.' Another writes—'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes—'I am just half the size' A fourth—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8lb. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes—'A reduction of 18lb. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says—'It reduced me considerably, not only in body, but all over.'" The author is very positive. He says—"Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2lb. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations."—*Cork Herald.*

CONSTITUTIONAL STOUTNESS AN ERROR.

It is a matter for congratulation that obesity is taking its proper place as a disease, and is receiving that scientific attention which it has long lacked. It does not follow that a person need to be the size of Sir John Falstaff to show that he is unhealthily fat. According to a person's height so should his weight correspond, and this standard has been prepared by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Bedford Square, London, W.C., so that any one can see at a glance whether or no he is too stout. People in the past have been wont to regard fatness as constitutional, and something to be laughed at rather than to be prescribed for seriously; but it is evidently an error, as persons whose mode of life has caused a certain excess of flesh require treating for the cause of that excess, not by merely stopping further increase, but by removing the cause itself. It is astonishing how long we go on perpetuating error, and how difficult it is to make people disbelieve anything, no matter how palpably false the principle, if it has become at all fixed in the public mind. These facts with regard to obesity, however, are so obvious that there ought to be no difficulty about their acceptance when once they become known; and, as a matter of fact, the immense number of persons who have already acknowledged their truth by recording the benefits received from Mr. Russell's treatment is simply wonderful. It is marvellous how this "Pasteur" and "Koch" of English discoverers can actually reduce as much as 14lb. in seven days with a simple herbal remedy. His book (256 pages) only cost threepence, post free, and he is quite willing to afford all information to those sending as above. It is really worth reading.—*Southport Visitor.*

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

T. P. H. asks: "Why does a wetting with sea-water so seldom result in a cold?" ——— Because salt water does not evaporate so quickly as fresh, the loss of heat is therefore slower and the body has time to recuperate before any evil effects are felt. The presence of the salt acts as a counter irritant or stimulant, preventing the pores from modifying to any injurious extent their wholesome action on the animal economy.

H. T.—The German Emperor seems to be anxious to imitate the great Frederick William of Prussia by enlisting big soldiers. One such soldier goes with him on his Eastern tour; the man is 6ft 10in. in his stockings. About ten years ago, he had a lieutenant who measured just 7ft. This officer looked over a garden-wall more than 6ft. high, and asked a girl to tell him the way to a certain place. She told him to "ride" to the right, etc., fully believing that he was on horseback.

X.—It was in 1605 that Dowe left a sum to pay for the tolling of the bell as a condemned criminal left his cell in Newgate on his way to execution. A handbell was also to be rung as he passed the church—criminals were not executed at the prison then. The handbell was discovered some years ago in a chest in the vestry, and hangs in the church. The charity is now diverted from its original purpose, and is used for the relief of the poor.

H D.—The most common name for a place in England is Newton; there being no fewer than seventy-two towns or villages of that name.

WEARY WILLY was much struck when travelling by rail through a certain part of India by the fact that for miles, while running through myriads of gorgeous tropical flowers, the railway embankments were covered with clover, buttercups, and daisies, similar to those that may be seen in England in the springtime. ——— The presence of these simple little flowers in such a country would naturally surprise anyone who was unaware of the fact that English grass seed is sown on railway embankments the whole world over for the purposes of keeping the embankments firm. It is so tough and lasting, and strikes root so easily, that the most flimsy earthwork becomes, as it were, cemented together by it.

J. T.—The Canadian government issued stamps with the Queen's head in a widow's cap. They are not worth much; some will fetch 1s. 6d.

J. H.—Church bells are tuned by chipping the edge till the proper note is obtained.

C. N.—The Mop Fair is a Statute Fair instituted for the hiring of servants, chiefly. The Stratford-on-Avon fair is the best instance; it has been in existence for several centuries. The old character of the fair is, however, almost obsolete, although the hiring of servants is still carried on. Contracts made at the fair are legally binding for twelve months.

CAT-LOVER.—It is estimated that there are seven million cats in England, and sixty-nine varieties. Their value is much enhanced if they possess the black markings on the chest, known as "The Lord Mayor's chain." The owner of a cat of this sort has been known to refuse an offer of £500 for it.

AMBIDEXTROUS sends us a post-card to inquire why the majority of people are right-handed. ———A certain professor, who has made the question a subject of study, says that infants use both hands alike until they begin to speak. The motor speech function controls the right side of the body, and the first right-handed motions are expressive motions, tending to help out speech. As speech grows, so does right-handedness.

M. S.—To clean your pipe take a shallow cork—or, still better, a rubber stopper—through which a hole is bored large enough to enable it to fit tightly on to the nozzle of a soda water siphon, and fit it into the bowl of the pipe. Insert the nozzle, the mouthpiece being directed into the vessel, force about a wineglassful of soda water through, and the pipe will be clean.

M. B.—It is a fact that several of the best known musicians and singers have taken to the rearing of live stock as a hobby or employment for their leisure. Two instances are furnished by Jean de Reszke and Paderewski. The former breeds horses, while the latter turns his attention to Scotch cattle.

RETINA.—The theory that the retina of the eye of a dead person retains a picture of the object last seen, and that this could be utilised in the detection of murderers, is very old, and has been the subject of much discussion. Investigations and experiments recently carried out tend to prove that it could be done only in exceptional circumstance and by means of an elaborate process.

PAUL thinks that a certain friend of his was "getting at him," to use his own expression, when he informed him that he once knew a chemist who converted an old linen shirt into sugar and alcohol. "Surely," he writes, "such a thing is impossible!" ——— Not at all, Paul. It is quite within the bounds of possibility to convert, by means of a series of chemical operations, linen into sugar and alcohol. By merely immersing the fabric in cold, strong sulphuric acid, the cellular tissue of which it is mainly composed gradually dissolves itself into glucose. The glucose so formed may be recovered by neutralising the excess of acid with chalk, and from the ordinary product so obtained alcohol may be prepared by the ordinary process of fermentation.

G. F.—The only instance of a Speaker of the House of Commons being found unworthy of the office is that of Sir John Trevor, who was elected in 1685. After a time it became notorious that he "had his price," and ten years later, a committee reported on his conduct. He had, among other things, been guilty of taking a bribe of 1,000 guineas to hasten the passing of a local Bill. By an irony of fate, he himself had to put up the motion declaring that he was unworthy the office. He pretended to be ill after that, but it did not save him from expulsion.

BELLE.—The method adopted by one lady, well known in Society, for preserving freshness and buoyancy in age, is to lie in bed for one day and two nights right off, once each month. During that time she does not speak. She also refuses at all time to read letters, and she peruses only light and elevating literature. Whether such a course would suit you, is for you to decide.

D. K.—When a tree is struck by lightning, it is not the electricity which tears it, but the explosion of water suddenly converted into steam by the heat of the electric fluid.

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Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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WITH EXPRESSION STOP EASY PAYMENTS. 4s. MONTHLY

Plays Hymns, Popular Airs, Quadrilles, Waltzes, Polkas, Reels, Hornpipes. Any tune can be played with artistic effect by anyone. No musical knowledge required. **A mere child can play it. Most marvellous Musical Instrument in the World.**

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MACHINES as worn by Royalty. Shape altered permanently by few weeks' wear, 9/9 each. Red Nose cure, medically approved, 3/9. Pamphlet, "Cause and Prevention," 1/-; particulars for stamp. Mention Paper.
LEES RAY, Specialist, South Castle St., Liverpool.

PALATABLE SUBSTITUTE FOR COD LIVER OIL.

DEVONSHIRE CREAM.—Really Genuine, in patent air-tight tins. ½lb., 10d.; 1lb., 1/4, 1½lb., 2/4; including tin and postage. Mrs. CONYERS, Morchard Bishop, Devon.

£100 in Prizes

1st Prize, £25; 2nd, £20; 3rd, £15; 4th, £10; 5th, £5; and 25 Prizes of £1 each.

CASH PRIZES, as above, will be given away as an advertisement for **PRAIRIE POWDERS**, the unequalled pleasant and harmless remedy for Headache, Neuralgia, Nervousness, Rheumatism, and Tic, among competitors who succeed in turning into the names of five common ailments the following letters:

ACHEHEDA, GANRLEUAI,
ESNUOVSRENS, HEMSATIMUR, ITC.

Post your solution, together with a Stamped Addressed Envelope, for result, to

THE PRAIRIE POWDER CO.,
Dept. 40, 19 Borough, London, S.E.

£20

Hairdressers fitted up Estimates Free.

Tobacconists Commencing. See Illustrated Guide (250 pages), 3d. How to open a cigar store, £20 to £2,000. Tobacconists Outfitting Company, 186 Euston Road, London.

The largest and original house (50 years' reputation). MGR., H. MYERS.

THE BEST HAIR DYE

in the World for Lashes, Eyebrows, and Hair on the Head, with Moustache and Beard. For Ladies' Hair and for all Colours. Had at 3s. 6d., post 3s. 9d., of ALEX. ROSS, 62 Theobald's Road, High Holborn, London, W.C. Spanish Cantharides for fallen hair, 3s. 6d., 5s. 6d., and 10s. 6d.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR. KSR.

WHY INDUCE HEART DISEASE TO CURE YOUR HEAD

When you can get a real safe remedy like KAPUTINE?

Dr. Thurston, Licentiate, of the Royal College of Physicians, writes November 16th: "Knowing the formulæ from which **KAPUTINE** is compounded, I unhesitatingly recommend its use in preference to crude Antifibrin and other synthetic drugs which, unfortunately for sufferers, are so commonly used for Headache, and which have undoubtedly injurious effects on the Heart, Brain, and Vesicle tissues generally."

NOTHING LIKE KAPUTINE. NOTHING SIMILAR. NOTHING AS GOOD.

All leading Chemists sell it. Packets of 18 doses 1s. Sample 1d.

After 13 Years' Suffering, Cured for 1s.

The Rev. T. TAYLOR, Vicar of St. Bredward, Cornwall, writes: "Owing to a severe accident while riding, my wife has for the past thirteen years been subject to violent attacks of neuralgia. The relief she has experienced from KAPUTINE has been speedy and effectual. KAPUTINE, while it is efficacious in its use, is attended with none of the disagreeable after effects which she has experienced in the case of other drugs."

After 10 Weeks' Suffering, Cured for 1d.

From Rev. J. H. BURN.

DEER RECTORY, MINTLAW, ABERDEEN,
NOVEMBER 8TH, 1897.

"My own cure with one dose of KAPUTINE was marvellous after ten weeks incessant neuralgia.

Used also by Her Grace the Countess of Cavan, Lady Dashwood, The Countess of Munster, Surgeon Lieut.-Col. Baker, etc., etc.

Nothing Similar. Nothing as Good. **KAPUTINE CURES HEADACHE IN 10 MINUTES.**

If you enclose stamped envelope to A. M. Kaputine Ltd., Huddersfield, you will get free samples by return.

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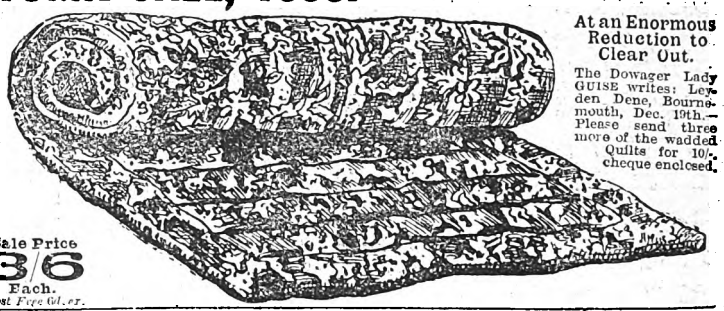
ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc., POST FREE, if mentioning *Short Stories* 12/11/98 when writing.

A Stock of 10,000 PATENT WADDED QUILTS, TORALIUMS, OR BED COVERS
(as Illustration).

Covered with Oriental Reversible Soft Sateen with double border. Size 54in. by 60in. These Quilts are offered below anything in the Wholesale Trade, and cause the greatest consternation to the buyer, wondering how they can be produced for the money.
SPECIAL OFFER.
Three Quilts for 10/-, or Six for 19/6, or Twelve for 38/-



Sale Price **3/6** Each.
Post Free Gl. er.

At an Enormous Reduction to Clear Out.

The Dowager Lady GUISE writes: Leyden Dene, Bournemouth, Dec. 19th.—Please send three more of the wadded Quilts for 10/-, cheque enclosed.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.
Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household

Sale Price. **2/- HEARTHRUGS** Regd.

In REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5/9; Six for 11/3; Twelve for 22/-

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.
Gigantic Sale of the "Queen's Royal" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern

CARPETS (Reg.)

Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations.

Admittedly the Cheapest in the World. *Woven without seam Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.*

6ft. by 9ft.	7/6	REDUCED SALE PRICE.	10½ft. by 12ft.	18/0	
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9ft. by 9ft.	11/0		12ft. by 13½ft.	22/0	
9ft. by 10½ft.	13/6		12ft. by 15ft.	25/6	
9ft. by 12ft.	15/0		12ft. by 18ft.	30.0	
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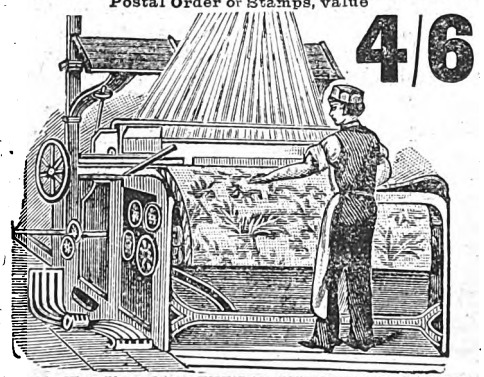

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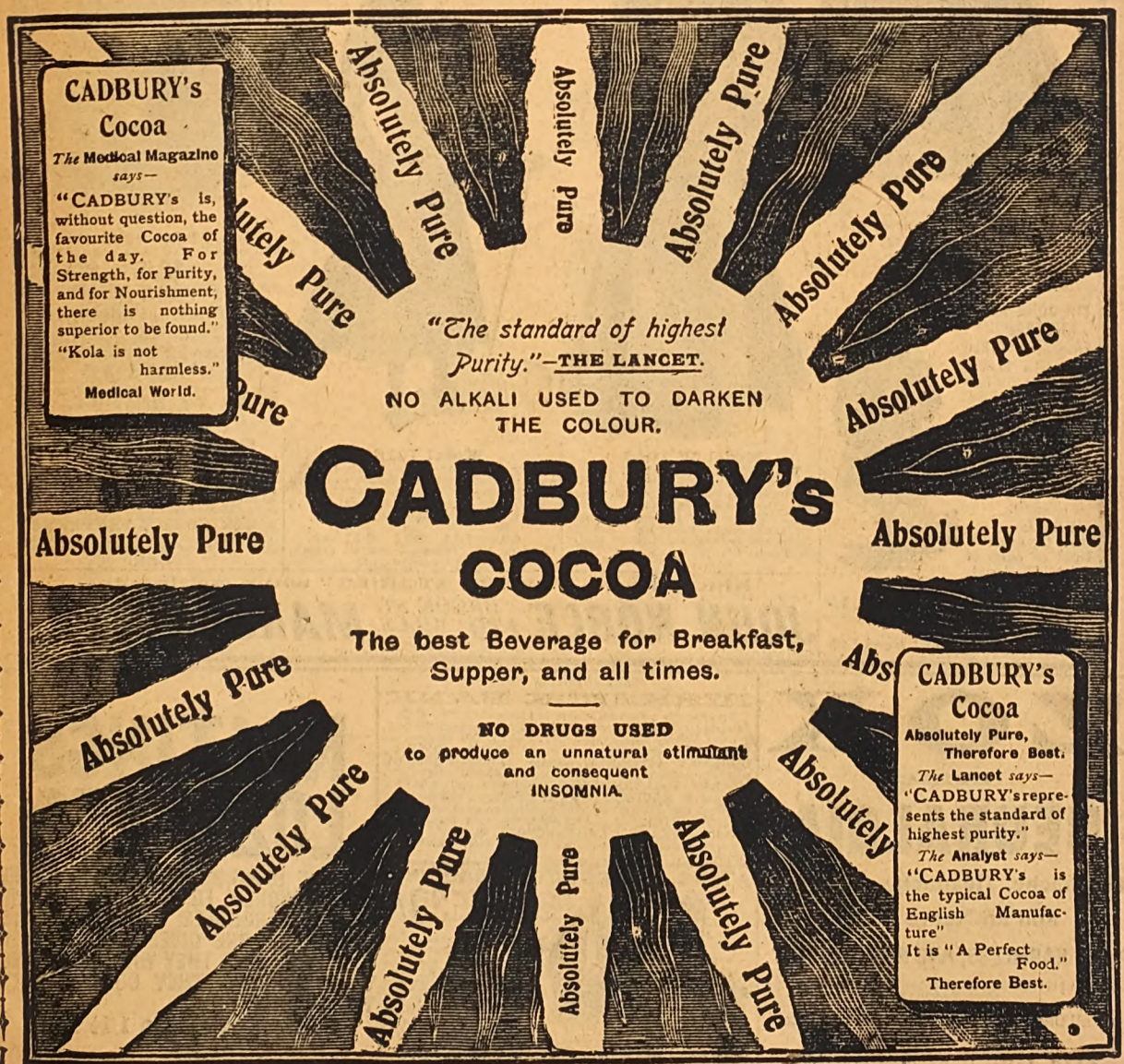
SOMETHING OF IMPORTANCE TO PEOPLE NAMED JONES. *See page 651.*

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 516. FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 19TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.



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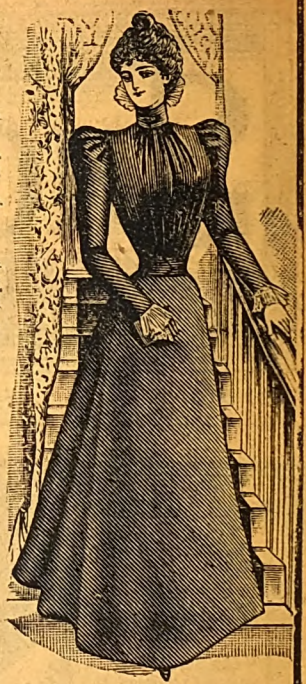

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SHORT STORIES

No. 516. For the Week Ending
One Penny. November 19th, 1898.

The Laughing Princess.

By ARCHIBALD MARSHALL.

I.

There was great rejoicing in the kingdom of Rosalia. King Henry had at last found a desirable suitor for the hand of his daughter, the Princess Rosalie. Prince Charming, the eldest son of the King of Salubria, had seen a photograph of the Princess, and promptly fallen in love with her. as well he might, seeing that she was the sweetest and prettiest princess that was ever seen outside a fairy book, or inside it for that matter. So transported with love was he that he had not rested until he had persuaded his father to send an embassy to King Henry, proposing an alliance.

King Henry was delighted with the idea, and had entertained the messengers royally before sending them back to Salubria with a cordial invitation to Prince Charming to come and stay a fortnight and court the Princess himself.

Princess Rosalie had seen Prince Charming's photograph, which he had sent by the messengers, and as he was as beautiful in his way as she in hers, everything seemed to point to the happiest and most satisfactory of marriages. There was nothing to mar the perfect equanimity of all parties interested in the affair, and a speedy termination to Prince Charming's suit would undoubtedly have taken place, if King Henry had only remembered to square the Fairy Malefica.

It was such a pity. He had always managed to keep on good terms with the lady hitherto, although it had been hard work, because she was naturally anxious to pick a quarrel if possible. So far, however, he had given her no chance. She had been the first person to be

Edited By C. Arthur Pearson

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invited to the christening eighteen years before. She had not wanted to come, of course; she had hoped to have been able to take that opportunity of throwing in a blighting spell. She had half made up her mind to

At the entrance to the hall stood the Fairy Malefica.

make the fact of her not having been asked to stand as godmother the excuse for doing so, but she had let the opportunity go by, thinking that other occasions would probably arise during the childhood of the Princess which she might turn to advantage.

Besides, the Princess had made her appearance on the scene rather before she was expected, and, to tell the truth, Malefica was unprepared with a curse which should do full justice to the occasion and thoroughly keep up her reputation.

Eighteen years had gone by, and as yet she had been given absolutely no opportunity to carry her baleful designs into effect. She was getting rather tired of it. She had been as rude as possible to the King and all the royal family, but they were so afraid of her that they seemed incapable of taking offence.

Presents of game and fruit had poured in upon her. She had been asked to dine at the palace regularly once a week, and no entertainment of any importance had ever taken place without her being invited and treated as the most honoured of all the guests. She had no excuse at all to make herself objectionable, and had bottled up her spite and malice for so long that her powers were beginning to become atrophied with disuse, and she felt that if an opportunity of expressing herself did not arise very soon, she would have to retire from business altogether, and then there would be nothing for her but to go on the parish, for she was improvident, and had laid by nothing out of the handsome income she had made out of her professional engagements.

Prince Charming was to arrive in a fortnight, and preparations to entertain him were going on night and day. The King was so absorbed in these preparations that all thoughts of Malefica, who had been very amiable of late, had gone out of his head. She ought to have been the first person to have been advised of what was to happen, but not a word was said to her; and, worse than all, through a most unfortunate oversight on the part of the Court official who sent out the invitations for the banquet which was to be held in honour of the Prince on the first night of his arrival, *the Fairy Malefica was not invited.*

She could hardly believe her good fortune when it first began to dawn on her that she had been overlooked, and that her opportunity had come at last. Her transports of joy when the time went on and no invitation came so alarmed her cook, who had been with her a great many years, that she thought her mistress was going out of her mind and gave her a month's warning.

Malefica retorted by casting a spell on the cook which would render her permanently distasteful to all policemen, and spent her time in thinking out a thoroughly workmanlike curse which should settle Princess Rosalie once and for all. King Henry, although he was fairly contented himself, had no happier subject throughout his dominions at that time than the Fairy Malefica.

The time went by, and Prince Charming arrived, attended by a numerous retinue, and proved himself to be all that the most exacting father or the most romantic princess could possibly desire. It has been related how the Court of Rosalia was in the habit of arraying itself in all the colours of the rainbow. Prince Charming and his followers had adapted themselves to this custom. The Prince made his appearance at the banquet in a suit of white satin embroidered with gold. Princess Rosalie sat between him and her father, and thought she had never in her life seen anybody so handsome.

Just after they had gone in procession into the banqueting hall, preceded by the minstrels, and had taken their places at the board, King Henry looked round on the glittering assembly and missed the evil face and rusty clothes of the Fairy Malefica. A shiver of apprehension went through him, his ruddy, smiling face became pale and serious.

"I say, Doppelmann," he called out to the Lord Chamberlain, "where's Malefica?"

The Lord Chamberlain cast a hurried glance at the chair which the fairy was accustomed to occupy. It was empty. Then his face went white.

"My liege!" he faltered, "she has not been invited."

"Oh, Rosie, Rosie," groaned the King, "it has come at last. We are undone."

"Why, what's the matter, father?" said the Princess in great surprise, while Prince Charming wondered what on earth the disturbance could be about.

"Here, Doppelmann!" cried the King, rousing himself, "take a royal carriage and go at once to Malefica's house and say you've come to fetch her. Say you forgot to put a stamp on her letter; say anything you like, but for goodness sake keep her in a good temper, or I don't know what will happen."

The Lord Chamberlain hurried off with a scared face, and the King turned to his guest.

"Excuse us, your Royal Highness," he said with an

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attempt at a smile. "An old family friend—it will be all right. Let us cast care to the winds and be merry. Gentlemen, a toast!"

The King rose with his gold cup in his hand and looked down the great hall over the bright array of revellers and retainers. He made a gallant attempt to appear at his ease. He opened his mouth to speak, but his jaw dropped and his hand fell, for there at the entrance to the hall, with the most evil leer on her face, stood the Fairy Malefica.

II.

THE Fairy Malefica was not dressed for company. She had never given in to the Rosalian custom of rigging herself out as if she was a character in a play, but preferred to go about as a respectable German Frau. But on this occasion she had been so excited at the chance that had come to her at last, that she had not even taken the trouble to put on her Sunday clothes. There she stood amongst that glittering throng, her bonnet awry, a loose strand of grey hair falling from under it, and two or three buttons off her gloves, which she had pulled on hastily as she came along. But if her appearance was commonplace, not to say slatternly, there was no doubt about the baleful glare of her eyes as she stood and faced the terrified King and his bewildered guests.

She pointed her finger at him.

There was an instant's dead silence. King Henry was trying to summon up a voice to assure Malefica that they had waited for her half-an-hour, and couldn't make out why she didn't turn up, but the malevolent gleam of her eye and the sneer on her face deprived him of all power of speech, and he could only gulp down in his throat the words that refused to come any further. His own subjects stared in fascinated horror at Prince Charming and his followers in utter bewilderment. Malefica also went on staring as hard as she could. She enjoyed this dumb tribute to her powers and wouldn't have cared how long it lasted. She was so brazen-faced that she could have stared all of them out of countenance.

But the silence was broken by a little silvery peal of laughter that made everybody jump. The only person in the hall who was not in the least upset by the appearance of the bad fairy was Princess Rosalie, and she only saw a very untidy and rather cross old woman for whom she didn't care the snap of her finger.

"Oh, what an old fright!" said the Princess, and laughed again.

A look of rage and malice passed across Malefica's face. She raised her umbrella and pointed at the Princess.

"I'll teach you to laugh at me, miss," she said in an awful voice. "And I'll teach you, Henry, to give a dinner-party without inviting me to it."

She paused and drew herself up in order to give full effect to the terrible curse she was about to launch: but before she could get her words out the Princess laughed again. She seemed to find Malefica very amusing.

"Go away, you silly old woman, and put your bonnet straight," she said. "You're not fit to be seen."

"Aye, foolish jade, laugh away," cried the bad fairy in a sudden access of fury,

"Laugh waking, laugh sleeping,
Laugh drinking, laugh eating,
Laugh when you're merry and laugh when you're sad,
Laugh when you're sorry and laugh when you're glad,
Laugh away, girl, I shan't take off the curse
Till you have laughed yourself dead and into your hearse."

Exception might have been taken to the fairy's speech viewed in the light of poetry, but nobody was inclined to apply criticism to it, for its effect was instantaneous. Peal after peal of hysterical laughter broke from the Princess's rosy lips. She lay back in her chair and laughed so loud and so long that the tears poured down her cheeks.

Malefica rubbed her hands with glee at the success of her curse, and poor King Henry, overtaken by misfortune at last after escaping it so long, sank back into his chair, laid his arms on the table and his head on his arms, and blubbered like a child. The sight would have melted the hardest human heart, but it did not melt the Fairy Malefica's. It seemed to rouse her to yet greater heights of malignity. She pointed towards the poor King, whose fat shoulders were heaving with sobs under his doublet of crimson satin.

"Aye, fool, you may well weep," said the fairy. "I've got a little curse for you, too."

But the King started up and spread out his hands towards her in piteous supplication.

"No, Malefica, no—not another!" he cried. "I've been a good friend to you, you know I have. It was quite a mistake, 'pon my word it was, your not being invited. It was that fool Doppelmann—he's so very careless. I'll sack him—I'll promise you I will—and I'll give you anything you like if you'll only not put a curse upon me, and take off the one you have put on Rosie. For goodness' sake, child, leave off that beastly noise; I can't hear myself speak." For the Princess was still laughing away with all her might as if it was all the best joke in the world. "Take her out!" said the King. He was of a peppery disposition, although kind-hearted, and the Princess was led away by her ladies-in-waiting, still laughing, and already showing signs of exhaustion.

Malefica looked at him thoughtfully.

"I was going to say that you should go on weeping without stopping," she said.

"Weep waking, weep sl——"

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"No, no, not that!" pleaded the poor King, the tears already beginning to trickle down his face, "although I'm sure I shall if you don't take the curse off Rosie.

The Lord Chamberlain told them the news

Think of all I've done for you, Malefica. Show a little gratitude—do now, there's a good woman!"

The fairy paused. Perhaps she was touched by the King's appeal. Perhaps she only thought that if the Princess had to go on laughing without stopping and the King had to go on crying, they would die of exhaustion before long and rob her of half her fun.

"Well, then, I'll alter the curse," she said. "I can't bother to put it into poetry"—"Thank goodness," muttered Prince Charming, who was beginning to find his wits—"but it will act just as well without. You shall weep at everything until you see or hear something so funny that you can't help laughing, and Rosalie shall laugh at everything until somebody succeeds in making her cry. And I don't think either of those two things will happen in a hurry," she added to herself as she made her way out of the hall.

III.

"COME now," said Prince Charming, when Malefica had left the hall. "That's better. We ought to be able to remove the curse pretty easily now. Don't cry, your Majesty. We've got just such another tiresome old woman attached to the Court of Salubria. We always buy her off now; it comes cheaper in the end. There's a certain sum appropriated to that purpose in the estimates every year. Can't you square the old lady?"

"No, there's no chance of that," said King Henry with a fresh burst of tears. "We're done for—up a—boohoo—tree."

"Well, I don't know what a boohoo tree may be," said the Prince. "We don't grow them in Salubria. But don't take on so about it. We'll soon have you laughing fit to break your sides. Look here, did you ever hear that story of the man who went into a shop and——"

"I've heard *all* the stories about men going into shops years ago," said the King, weeping bitterly. "Don't make it harder to bear than it is."

"Oh, all right," said the Prince in a huff. "If you like turning yourself into a running tap, *I* don't mind. You look a jolly big fool sitting there blubbering like a baby, that's all I can say. I shall hook it. I don't like my dinner swimming in salt water."

"Oh, how unkind you are!" wailed the King. "Why was I ever born?"

"Can't think," said the Prince. "I'll have a chop and mashed potatoes served up in my private apartments please, Mullstein," and he left the hall attended by his equerry.

"He's offended already," wept the King when Prince Charming had disappeared. "He might have had a little more consideration for us. I think. I didn't want to hear his beastly stories. Fetch Rosie down, somebody. I shall be under the curse all my life, I know, but I should think the sight of her poor father in this state would be enough to make her cry if anything would."

So Princess Rosalie was brought down again. The King was still sitting at the table sobbing as if his heart would break. Directly the Princess came in and saw him she pointed her finger at him and doubled herself up with laughter.

"Oh, you *do* look so ridiculous, papa," she said, "you funny, fat old thing! Your face is like a damp tomato with puffy little slits for eyes. Oh, dear, dear, take me away, somebody, or I shall die of laughing!"

And the Princess was led upstairs again in uncontrollable merriment, while the poor King was sunk into the most desolate state of grief by the behaviour of his undutiful daughter.

The next day some guests were to arrive at the palace, the two Kings of Dummeleutia, George and Ferdinand, with the Queen and their suite. King George was an American, whose name was really Elijah Pollixenes Jopp, and King Ferdinand had recently married the Lady Anne of Rosalia, King Henry's sister.

"We must do something before they come," said Count Doppelmann, the Lord Chamberlain. "If his Majesty goes on like this we shall be flooded out of the palace, and as for the Princess, it's as bad as living in the Zoo."

So the morning was spent in trying to remove the curses. They told Princess Rosalie that her father was dead. It was rather cruel of them, but she didn't seem to mind a bit. She said they would have the stunningest funeral as ever was, and she would be chief mourner and go in a salmon pink frock. In fact they thought she would have a fit, she was so entertained by the information. Then, as she seemed so pleased at the idea, they told her he wasn't dead at all, and she laughed all the more because of the relief to her feelings. Then her nurse, who had been with her a long time and was a privileged person, suddenly slapped her face, under orders. The Princess didn't cry, but the nurse did, for Rosalie slapped her back so hard that it gave her the toothache, and that, of course, was an excellent joke.

Being very beautiful, Princess Rosalie was rather fond of dress. They took away all her pretty clothes and said that Prince Charming was coming to see her. When she couldn't find anything to put on she said she would receive him in her dressing-gown, and the idea appeared to her so humorous, although her attendants thought it only indelicate, that she went off into another burst of laughter at their shocked faces. Then they

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dressed her and sent for the Prince. He came in with a very grave face, and she laughed at him. He did not like that, for he was rather a vain young man, although very nice if you knew how to treat him.

"You funny little boy," said Princess Rosalie. "What fun we'll have when we're married, won't we?"

She looked so pretty with her smiling face that Prince Charming forgave her instantly.

"Yes," he said, "but I can't live with a laughing jackass, you know."

It was a rude speech—there was something wanting in the Prince's manner, although he was very handsome—but Rosalie thought it only amusing, and showed such appreciation of his wit that he was quite pleased, and made up his mind to repeat the joke to the King to see if it would make him laugh.

"You've got a smut on your nose," said the Princess.

Prince Charming hastily took out his handkerchief, wetted it, and rubbed his nose.

She sat down on a sofa.

"There isn't any black on it," he said, alluding to the handkerchief.

"No, it was a white smut," said the Princess with a shriek of laughter.

"What a beastly stupid joke!" said the Prince sulkily. "I could make a better one than that with my hands tied."

"Did'ums get angry, then?" said the Princess, still laughing at him. She never left off teasing him all through the interview, and he got crosser and crosser.

"Look here, Rosalie," he said at last, "you like me and want to marry me, don't you?"

"Of course I do," said the Princess. "Won't we have larks?"

Prince Charming got up and stood facing her.

"No, we won't," he said slowly, nodding his head at her. "Do you want to know why? Because—I'm—not—going to—marry you—so there!"

And he stalked out of the room with unapproachable dignity, while the Princess lay back on a couch and laughed till her sides ached.

They didn't fare any better with the King. He had the blinds of his bedroom drawn down, and sat there plunged in inconsolable grief. He refused to stir out of that room; he said it was a good enough place to die in, and he knew he was going to die. They brought the Court jester to him. The poor man did his best, but the King ordered him to be beheaded after his second riddle, which was something about a schoolboy and a postage-stamp, and then wept copiously at the thought of what a brute he had been.

Somebody put a bandbox on a chair, and then sent for the Lord Chancellor with instructions to sit down on it. He did so, but the King was not in the least amused. He only said that they were all against him and seemed determined to break up his happy home. They got him out of his bedroom by-and-by, and engaged a travelling company which happened to be in the neighbourhood to perform a Rosalian adaptation of *Charlie's Aunt* before him.

Princess Rosalie laughed all through the performance, which encouraged the actors wonderfully, but the King said that the way they knocked the poor old lady about was one of the most pathetic things he had ever seen in his life.

At last they gave him up as a bad job, and let him mope as he liked until the arrival of Elijah, in whom the whole Court had great confidence, for the fame of his previous exploits had spread all over the country.

IV.

THE Royal party from Dummeleutia arrived in the afternoon. The Lord Chamberlain met them with a long face and told them the news. Ferdinand opened his eyes but said nothing. He was not a man of resource. Queen Anne said she would go and see her niece. "I flatter myself that there is nothing particularly ridiculous about me," she said haughtily. But Princess Rosalie seemed to think otherwise, and drove her aunt out of the room in a huff after about five minutes' conversation. Elijah asked to be taken to see the King, who fell on his neck and implored him to help an afflicted man.

"Cheer up, twenty-stone," said Elijah. "We'll soon put this right for you. What's the lady's address?"

"2, Mahatma Villas," said the King. "Do you think you can really induce her to take off the curse?"

"She'll take it off mighty quick when I've seen her," said Elijah, and he went straight out of the Palace to pay the Fairy Malefica a call.

A spirit of cheerfulness began to diffuse itself round the Palace when it was known that the famous King of Dummeleutia had taken matters in hand, and infected everybody except the lugubrious Monarch of Rosalia.

Elijah sent in his name, and was shown into Malefica's drawing-room, where the bad fairy soon joined him. He was looking at the pictures on the wall when she came in. He turned round towards her, and instantly fell back in pretended amazement.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said, "I want to see the Fairy Malefica."

"I am she," said Malefica, with great dignity.

"Why," exclaimed Elijah, "they told me you were an ugly old woman! You can never believe half you hear."

The fairy's face darkened.

"They dared tell you that!" she exclaimed. Then

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she simpered, "Then I am not quite what you expected, your Majesty?" she said with downcast eyes.

"Well, I should smile," said Elijah. "What they can see in that pink and white Princess when you're along, ma'am, beats me. Will she swallow that, I wonder?" he added to himself in some anxiety. But the digestive powers of Malefica's vanity was ostrich-like in their capacity, and made nothing of assimilating the compliment. She began to think that Elijah was a very agreeable man. She sat down on a sofa, and he sat beside her.

"Capital curse that you worked off on 'em at the Palace," said Elijah.

"Yes, wasn't it?" said Malefica, much gratified. "Oh, they can't play fast and loose with me, and so I'll let 'em know."

"Howdjer do it?" inquired Elijah.

Malefica looked at him.

"You won't tell anybody if I tell you, will you?" she said.

"Me, ma'am?" exclaimed Elijah. "What do *you* think?"

"Well, then, I *will* tell you," said Malefica. She unfastened the top button of her dress and took out a little clear white stone which was suspended from a chain encircling her skinny neck. "When I wear that," she said, "if I tell anybody to do anything they've got to do it."

"Shucks!" said Elijah in some alarm.

"Would you like to kiss my hand?" said Malefica coyly.

"Yes, ma'am," said Elijah boldly, but with some inward shrinking.

"Do it, then," said Malefica, holding out her hand, and Elijah did it. He felt somehow that he had to.

He was considerably surprised, but he was careful not to tell Malefica so.

"That don't amount to much," he said. "Tell me to do something I don't wan't to."

"You like sitting here by me, don't you?" said Malefica.

"Like it!" echoed Elijah. "Why——"

"Go out of the room," said Malefica.

Elijah got up instantly and went towards the door.

"Come back," said Malefica laughing, before he had reached the door. "It works all right, doesn't it?"

"It beats Edison," said Elijah. "Let me have a look at it, ma'am."

"No," said Malefica with great cunning, "I don't let it go out of my hands."

"Then you don't trust me," said Elijah. "Good morning, ma'am," and he got up to go.

"Come back," said Malefica, and Elijah felt there was nothing for it but to obey her.

"Yes, you can make me stop with you;" he said, "but you can't make me want to."

To his surprise the bad fairy burst into tears.

"You've hit it," she cried, rocking herself to and fro. "Everybody's afraid of me, but nobody loves me for myself—boohoo—and—and yet you said I was beautiful—at least I think you did—did you?"

"I implied it ma'am," said Elijah.

"Then why can't you love me for myself?" sobbed Malefica. "I'm worth loving, ain't I?"

"You are, ma'am," said Elijah, "but true love cannot exist without trust."

"If I were to trust you with the stone do you think you could——"

"I'm sure of it, ma'am," said Elijah promptly. "Try me."

"Here, take it, then," said Malefica. "Oh, the weakness of a maiden's heart!"

Elijah pocketed the stone.

"I'll give it you back when we're married," he said.

Malefica hid her face in coy alarm.

"Oh, how fast you go!" she said. "I really don't think I ought to listen to you. When will it be given out?"

"Come to the banquet at the Palace to-night," said Elijah. "Don't wear those rusty old clothes. Princess Rosalie knows how to deck herself out. Dress yourself like her."

"I will," said Malefica with fervour. "If she can stand it, silly chit, surely *I* can."

"'Course you can," said Elijah. "Now I'm off. You don't want me to stop any longer."

"No, no—go," said Malefica. She forgot that Elijah had the stone and was anxious for him to depart, which he immediately did, chuckling to himself as he made his way back to the Palace.

V.

When Elijah got back to the Palace he met Prince Charming mooning about the garden.

"Well, young fellow," said Elijah cheerfully, "how do you find yourself?"

"I am getting tired of it," said Prince Charming. "I shall be off home to-morrow morning."

"What, and leave the Princess!" exclaimed Elijah.

"I don't know that I'm so very keen on the Princess," said Prince Charming. "She's very pretty, of course; but—well, you see how it is, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," said Elijah. "I see you ain't fit to black her boots. Nice sort of a gilded popinjay, *you* are—forsake the poor girl when she's in trouble!"

"Funny sort of trouble," retorted the Prince, "grinning like a Cheshire cat all day long!"

"But she wants to marry you," said Elijah. "Her taste ain't worth two cents in my opinion, but she wants to."

"Do *I* want to marry *her*? That's the question," said Prince Charming.

"No, it ain't the question," said Elijah. "Still it's got something to do with it. And you *do* want to marry her. Do you hear? You want to marry her right now."

"Why, of course I do," said Prince Charming with a sudden access of cheerful energy. "Where's the Archbishop? Let's have a wedding at once."

"You don't mind her laughing, you know," said Elijah, still looking at him keenly.

"Mind it!" exclaimed Prince Charming. "Why, I like it. What a merry home we shall have to be sure."

"Well, you wait till the banquet to-night," said Elijah. "Everything will be put right then. You ain't good enough for her, and that's a fact. Still, if she wants you, that's enough for me, and she shall have what she wants, pretty dear."

Then he went into the Palace. "No doubt about the charm acting," he said to himself.

The hour for the banquet came round. The King was still in the depths of woe and Princess Rosalie laughed at everything and everybody. There was an air of constraint over the whole assembly, and the feast promised to be very unlike the usual hilarious entertainments for which the Palace was notorious. The soup had gone down (King Henry had spoilt his by

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crying into it) and the fish was on the table before the Fairy Malefica made her appearance. She generally came late in order to make an impression.

On this occasion the impression she made was undoubted. She had herself announced by a royal footman, who could hardly get his words out, so astounded was he at her appearance. She stood at the entrance to the hall, her evil face wreathed in smiles, while the company stared at her in undisguised amazement. She had dressed herself exactly like Princess Rosalie. She wore a girlish frock draped with festoons of pink roses. No jewels lightened the arid waste of her skinny neck and arms. She had stuck a red rose in her hair which she had dyed a sort of dusty primrose. Her appearance was enough to make the stoutest heart quail as she stood grinning in the doorway, a grizzly travesty of youthful innocence.

There was a dead silence which was broken by a ringing laugh from the Princess. Malifica's grin changed into her usual malignant scowl as she turned towards her, but much the Princess cared for that. "What a ridiculous creature!" observed Queen Anne of Dummeleutia, and began to laugh, too. Gradually a hum of amusement began to creep all round the hall, which expanded into roars of laughter, and soon the rafters rang again with the boisterous merriment which Malefica's appearance evoked. Only King Henry still sat sunk in Stygian gloom and wept unaffectedly at the miserable spectacle.

But Elijah was whispering at his ear. "Look at the old fool," he said. "Djever see such a sight? Ain't it the funniest thing you ever set eyes on?"

A watery smile gleamed through the King's tears.

"Do you think it is really funny?" he asked hesitatingly.

"Funny!" echoed Elijah. "Why, man, it's great! Go on—let yourself loose. Have a good laugh at her. It'll do you good." And he dug his royal host in the ribs.

King Henry's sorrow took wings and fled for ever. He lay back in his chair and led the chorus which filled the hall, his fat sides shaking like a jelly, his shouts becoming more and more like the crowing of a wheezy cock as his appreciation of the absurd spectacle increased. The curse had been removed, and the joy of his loyal people rose to an indescribable height as they realised that their jolly monarch was himself again.

In the meantime Malefica's rage at the effect her entrance had caused increased beyond all bounds. She gnashed her teeth and rolled her eyes, and if Elijah had not had her charm safe in his pocket, there is no doubt that the whole Court of Rosalia would then and there have been changed into all sorts of disagreeable monsters as a punishment for their temerity. But Malefica was powerless. She made her way on to the dais where Elijah sat, and put her hand on his shoulder.

"You will protect me from their impertinence, won't you, my love?" she said. "Wither them! Blight them! Ugh!"

"No, ma'am," said Elijah calmly. "I've undertaken this contract, and it will be carried out in my own way I don't stand interference."

"Gimme back my stone!" yelled Malefica. "Give it me at once!"

Elijah took no notice of her request.

"Kneel down and beg his Majesty's pardon for the way you've behaved," he said.

The bad fairy did as she was told, and she looked more horrible than ever with the tears of mortification making furrows in her painted cheeks.

"Oh, that's all right," said King Henry. "Let bygones be bygones. Sit down and make yourself comfortable."

By this time everybody had left off laughing and sat watching the development of affairs, all except Princess Rosalie. The joke of Malefica's entrance had not yet ceased to amuse her, and her laugh rang out from the expectant silence.

"Here, wait a minute," said the King. "Take off the curse from that poor child first."

"I can't," wailed Malefica. "This cheating, swindling, perjured——"

"Now then," said Elijah, "steady there please, ma'am, and hold your tongue." Then he rose in his place. "*She* can't, Henry, but *I* can," he said. "Here, miss, chuck it! You've laughed enough. The world ain't a bad sort of place, but it ain't so humourous as all that."

All eyes were turned on the Princess. The laughter died slowly out of her face, and she gave a long sigh. "I feel as if I never wanted to smile again," she said. But she did within five minutes when Prince Charming, whose character improved in flavour when things went right with him, embraced her before them all, and asked her to come and reign over the kingdom of Salubria with him, informing her that his father was on his last legs, and it wouldn't be long before they two ascended the throne.

The Prince and Princess were married with great pomp a week later, and are very happy. Malefica is a reformed character, and earns an honest living by telling fortunes at charity bazaars. She still thinks Elijah behaved badly to her, as perhaps he did; but that great man is quite unruffled by the charge, and still retains possession of the charm, which is of great use to him. King Henry is once more his old, merry self, and eats and drinks more than ever.

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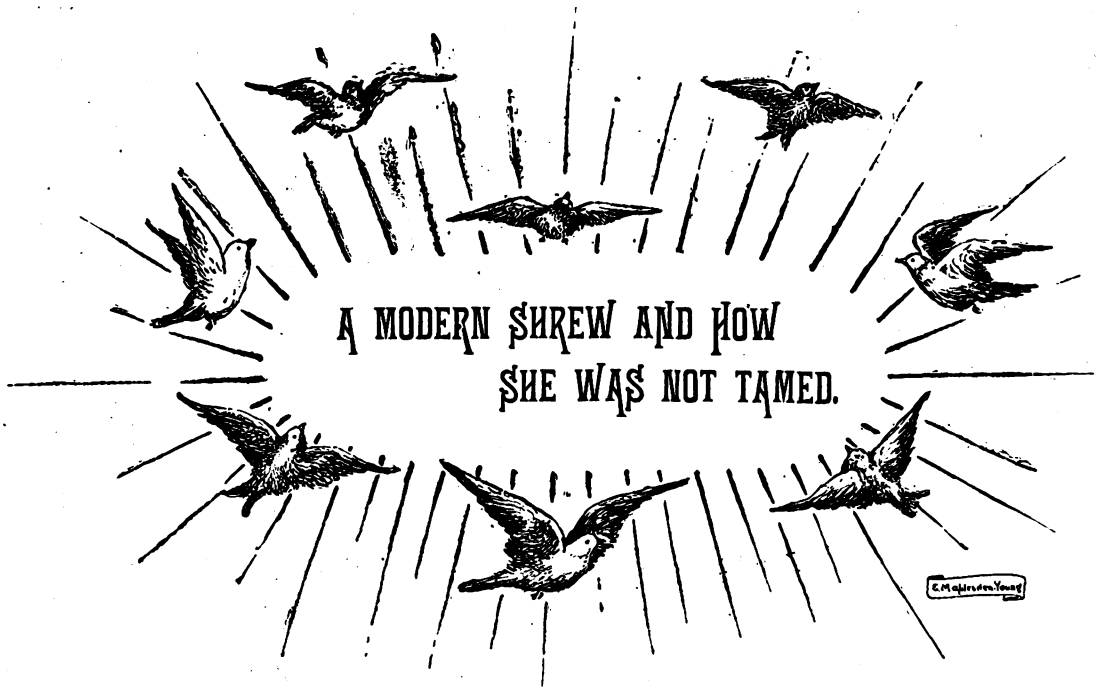

I REMEMBERED him passing backwards and forwards between his room and chapel at college. There was the same serious, injured look, a look in which, to those who knew him best, who understood his eccentric views and absurd methods, there was something comical.

He had been devoted to the stage. When a new company came to Cambridge he would be found among its audiences from the first to the last. He would rather see a bad play than no play at all; and when he was not at the theatre he read plays.

Notwithstanding his peculiarities, all of his set loved him. He was kind-hearted, impulsive, generous. His face was a mirror for his feelings, and no one saw it reflect aught except what was genuine. This was the man I had parted from five years before.

Now he was a new man—a new man—and yet the same old Peter Brown. He was married. He had just entertained me at dinner. The wife, a decided-looking little woman, sat at the board, plainly its mistress. There was no wine, and when we left the table we left it altogether and without a suspicion of the odour of tobacco.

We had chatted perhaps half-an-hour in the drawing-room, when Peter rose and signalling me to follow him, led the way up three flights of stairs to a little chamber with one window. All the furniture it contained were two easy chairs, a table, and a cupboard hanging against the wall. The door closed, Peter drew a long sigh. Then he went to the cupboard and took out a bottle, some glasses, and a box of cigars.

"Come, Peter," I said, lighting a weed he gave me, and throwing myself back on the cushions, "tell me all about it."

"About what?"

"I see that conviviality is restricted in your house. I am curious to know why."

His expression was very sad.

"Madam objects?" I queried.

"Madam objects." He cast a rueful glance round the apartment.

"And, like a good husband, you submit."

"Yes, I submit."

"And gracefully?"

There was some hesitation.

"My submission was not exactly graceful originally."

"Well, tell me about it."

He lit his cigar and began to relate an attempt which for originality and ingenuity had never been equalled by any of his extremely remarkable freaks while in college.

"You remember how fond I used to be of the theatre? Well, I've got over that, but it took a terrible experience to cure me. Of all the plays ever put on the stage my favourite used to be *The Taming of the Shrew*. To me Petruchio's method of curing his wife's temper, by feigning to be more violent than she, was a model of cleverness; and before I was old enough to have a wife I vowed that, if she should be a shrew, I would be a Petruchio.

"I first met my wife at a tennis party. She was my partner, and looked very pretty in a loose tennis jacket, a striped skirt, and a jaunty cap.

"With me it was one of those cases when a man's heart flies out of his bosom like a tennis-ball from a racket, and lights on the girl. We played very well together, and were neck and neck with our opponents near the end of a game, when a fault was served to my partner, which she sent back.

"'That's a fault!' I exclaimed.

"'What do you mean?' she asked sharply.

"'It fell out of the court.'

"'No such thing.'

"'I beg pardon,' I replied politely; 'it looked so to me.'

"'I'll be obliged if you'll play your own game, and let me play mine,' she returned angrily.

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"'I beg pardon,' I said apologetically, and the game went on.

"There was something about the bare-faced assurance and dictatorial manner of the proceeding that attracted my attention. Somehow I became dazzled by the girl's angry eyes. I could see nothing but a pretty face, a petite figure, a striped skirt, and a jaunty cap. I went away from the tennis party with the little termagant buzzing about my thoughts like a bumble-bee among the hollyhocks.

"I secured an introduction to her father's house; quarrelled with her at my first call; made it up on the second by retracting everything I had said; found myself cut by her a few days later; apologised for something I had not done; tried in every way I could think of to please her, and finally found myself madly in love with a girl who promised, if I should win her, to make my life a pandemonium.

"I went on a trip, to be gone a month, to try and forget her, but returned in a week thoroughly convinced that I couldn't get on without her. I proposed. She would probably have refused me had not her father told her that he wouldn't have a man for a son-in-law who 'languished under such a theatrical drawl.' That settled it. I was accepted.

"There was now nothing for me but a life of misery with a stubborn, quarrelsome woman. No man could live in peace with her unless he could break her. But could I do this? I thought of Petruchio, and sat down and read over *The Taming of the Shrew* for the hundredth time. I noticed that Petruchio first got the lady into his power and then commenced his training, I resolved to be married at once.

"The next day I went to my lady-love and told her that owing to business engagements which would require my absence, it would be impossible for me to claim her within a year. She informed me that unless I could find it convenient to claim her the next week I could look elsewhere for a partner. I had scored one point. I accepted the terms, and we were married.

"We went through the honeymoon pleasantly, for I determined not to cross her in anything, waiting till we should be comfortably settled at home in the house her father had given her in the same street in which he lived and only a few yards away. Then I proposed to commence a modern instance of the taming of the shrew.

"The honeymoon ended, and we arrived at home. I had engaged the cook myself, and by promising a large reward, had secured her to my plan. It was understood that she was not to give my wife food without my permission. I didn't rely much on this part of the programme—to starve her into submission—but I thought I'd try it with the others.

"We sat down to our first dinner at home. My wife sat opposite me, looking so pretty, so exceptionally good-natured, that my heart almost failed me. After all, wouldn't it be better to wait until she should provoke me?

"No, I had laid the plan, and I would carry it out. All our future depended upon it. The servant placed before me a smoking joint. I took up the carving knife and sharpened it on the steel savagely. My heart beat like a kettle-drum. Somehow it struck me that I was about to make a fool of myself; but I thought again of all that was at stake and began my training.

"'Jane,' I burst out, addressing the servant, 'what's the matter with this meat?'

"'Nothing, sir, that I know of,' Jane answered, opening her eyes.

"'The meat is burnt,' I exclaimed, feigning anger which I didn't feel. 'Take it away.'

"To say that my wife was astonished wouldn't alone indicate her feelings or her appearance. She turned deadly pale.

"'Take it away,' I repeated.

"By this time my wife had partially recovered her equanimity. I expected every moment to feel the decoration of fragmentary glass about my brow. I was disappointed.

"'Take it away, Jane,' she said in a soft voice.

"I was delighted. It was plain she had seen an evidence of will-power that she daren't oppose. With difficulty controlling my agitation, I rose from the table. My wife followed me into the drawing room. I passed on into the hall, and, taking my hat and stick, turned towards her and said:

"'I am going out. I will return at eight. We will then keep our engagement at your father's.'

"She stood looking at me; her face betokening alternative wonder and amusement with an occasional shade of anxiety. Then there came a sudden spasmodic little laugh, followed by as sudden a flash of lightning in the eye. Had I delayed a moment the storm would have burst. But I didn't delay. I went out and shut the door after me.

"I went directly to my club. Taking my old seat in the dining room I ordered a good dinner and a bottle of wine. I felt that thus far all had gone as well as could be expected. The ball was opened. My wife was at home, and no dinner. I was at the club with plenty to eat and a bottle of excellent Margaux.

"By the time I had drained the last glass I felt quite equal to the remainer of the ordeal before me, and resolved firmly not to depart one iota from my model Petruchio. Having finished my dinner and tossed off a glass of brandy to put a capper on my courage, I returned to my work.

"I was surprised to find my wife quite calm. She was ready to go with me to her father's. She quietly took my arm, and we walked slowly up the street. The full moon, rising, stood in the east, large and round.

"'How large the moon looks!' she remarked. 'It is full to-night, I think.'

"'The moon?'

"'Yes, the moon. I said the moon.'

"'It's the sun. The moon never shines at this time of day.'

"'Oh—is it?' Her tone didn't imply conviction.

"'I tell you that's the sun,' I blustered. 'Do you mean to contradict me?'

"There was an ominous pause.

"'Oh, no; I wouldn't think of contradicting such an astronomical prodigy. Of course it's the sun.'

"Her tone made me shudder.

"'Then I say it's the moon.'

"'Do you? I knew when I married you that you weren't clever, but I supposed you could at least tell the sun from the moon.'

"The conversation terminated at this point. I was not getting on, and was glad when, a few moments later we reached her father's house. We were received with open arms of course.

"'How well you both look!' and 'Do you find everything comfortable at home?' and 'Was the dinner nicely served?' 'You must be like two kittens on a feather pillow.'

"I think this last remark, made by Mrs. Brown's little brother contained a trace of irony.

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"Two cats, I thought.

"No sooner were their greetings over, and we had kissed and been kissed all round, when my wife and her mother disappeared.

"'What's that?' I asked myself.

"From the dining-room, separated from where we were only by a door, I heard my wife's voice mingling with the clatter of dishes.

"I leaned back in my chair, a trifle discouraged. The starvation part of my plan was surely a failure. But then I hadn't counted much on that.

"Mrs. Brown spent the whole evening in the dining-room, and then sent me word that she would remain all night with her mother. This was an avenue that I had not thought of. I winced. There was nothing for me to do but go home alone. I did so and went to bed—less hopeful than I had been since the commencement of hostilities.

"The next evening, when I returned from business, I found my wife at home and in the hands of a dressmaker. She had been provided with an elaborate trousseau; but one dress, designed to be worn on her reception days, had been left unfinished. She was standing before the mirror in the gown, the skirt of which the dressmaker was arranging to hand more evenly. I advanced and took the fabric between my thumb and finger.

"'What rotten stuff is this?' I asked.

"'It's silk, sir,' faltered the dressmaker.

"'Silk? This silk?'

"'Costly silk, sir.'

"'It's a base imitation. A mixture of poor silk and cotton. And this?'

"'Lace, sir.'

"'Do you tell me this is lace? My wife shall wear no such stuff. She must be dressed as becomes her matchless beauty.'

"My wife stood staring at me in mute wonder. Was it fear or anger that first blanched her cheek, and then flushed it hot as fire? I shuddered at the first word she would speak. But it was not spoken. Beckoning to the dressmaker to follow her, she strode out of the room, and passing into the adjoining chamber locked the door.

"I descended to the dining room. It was dinner time and I was very hungry. I waited for an hour for my wife to come down and dine. I waited in vain. At last I resolved to dine alone.

"'Get me a bottle of wine, Jane,' I said to the maid.

"'Madam has it under lock and key, sir.'

"I took my hat and went to the club and dined there. I sat alone at my table thinking over the situation.

"I went home at twelve, midnight. I was tired and sleepy, but purposely delayed so that my wife might have time to think—to arrive at the conclusion that she must sooner or later come to me vanquished and beg for terms. Then I proposed to take her to my arms, explain my strange conduct, and bid her be a dutiful wife, whereupon all such evidence of my displeasure would be avoided in future.

"When I went upstairs I found our bedroom door locked and bolted. I had especially arranged it myself for safety against burglars, and knew I couldn't force it. I must either beg to be let in or stay out. The former would be fatal; the latter I did. I went to another room, it was locked. I tried another and another; all were locked.

"I aroused the servants and demanded the keys. They were all in madam's possession. I went into the library. I had turned out the lights when I went up, and it was pitchy dark; I stumbled over the coal-skuttle and fell, striking my head on a sharp corner of the mantel-piece. Throwing myself on a sofa, I caught the flow of blood in my handkerchief. I lay awake all night and fell asleep after daylight.

"I was awakened by my wife in the morning opening the library windows. I saw the bloody handkerchief lying on the floor, and caught it up in time to prevent her seeing it.

"'Did you rest well, my dear?' she asked.

"There was a modulation in her voice I dreaded more than harshness. It maddened me. I was really angry now, and it required no acting to play my part. Without noticing her I arose and went upstairs to make my toilet. Then I passed down and out of the house to get my breakfast at the club.

"As I sat eating my chop and sipping my coffee, I made up my mind that before the day was over I must either conquer or be conquered. When I went home to dinner I resolved to take advantage of any excuse to be violent, and be as violent as possible. As I opened the front door with my latch-key I saw my wife standing in the parlour. She had been out, and had not yet removed her hat and gloves. I remembered Petruchio's attack on his wife's cap. Here was my chance.

"'What have you got on your head?' I asked harshly.

"'My bonnet, dear.'

"'It doesn't become you.'

"I confidently hoped that, to avert the storm she must see was brewing she would at least take off the obnoxious hat and lay it on the table. She did no such thing, but stood regarding me with the same mute wonder as during my former efforts.

"Again and again I demanded the hat's removal, but received nothing in reply but a cold stare. At last, giving away to all the violence I felt, and a good deal I did not feel, I raised my stick, and, sweeping it sideways, laid the hat, a mass of velvet and feathers, without form and void, at the other end of the room.

"What followed was so unexpected, so singular that I never could distinctly remember how it occurred. At any rate, at a call from my wife, two men entered from another room and seized me by the arms. One was my brother, and the other my wife's cousin.

"'What does this mean?' I asked, dumfounded.

"'Take him to the next third storey back room,' my wife said calmly to my captors. 'We will keep him there until we know how the disease turns. If he isn't better to-morrow we shall have to send him to the asylum.'

"Heavens! She thought I was insane.

"'My dear!' I cried.

"'My dear, you don't mean—Arthur—Tom——'

"'Don't mind what he says, he's not responsible.'

"By this time I was at the first landing, I struggled; but it was of no avail. My captors were both strong men, and they carried me to the third storey.

"'Go in there,' said one of them, pushing me into the room, from which every article of furniture had been removed. 'You can't hurt yourself there. Stop, let me search you.'

"He took my pocket knife to make sure I could do myself no injury with it; and then shut the door and locked it from the outside.

"Locked up for a lunatic in my own house and by my own bride!

"I passed three hours in a state of intense mortification and disappointment, and three hours more in des-

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pondency and repentance. I began to get hungry Nothing since lunch and it was now 11 p.m. I peeped through the keyhole and saw my wife's cousin guarding me.

"'I want something to eat,' I called.

"'No orders for it,' he replied.

"Great heavens! was my wife going to starve me? I ran over my conduct towards her since we had returned from our wedding trip, and remembered with horror my efforts to starve her.

"It took me just one hour more under the reducing influence of an empty stomach to make up my mind to capitulate.

"'Call Mrs. Brown,' I called to my keeper. I heard him pass the word to the waiting maid below.

"A light step was on the staircase, a quiet, but determined voice to the attendant, 'You may go now, Arthur; much obliged.' Then the same voice to me:

"'What is it dear?'

"'I haven't been ill.'

"'You seem more rational. I do hope you won't have another attack.'

"'Come, come,' I said, trying to assume a trifle of unconcern. 'Let's have no more fooling.'

"'I am not quite sure it would be safe to release you yet.'

"'I want to ask you,' she continued presently, 'if you are convinced of the folly of your proceedings?'

"'Well—yes. I think I can say that I am, rather!'

"'And you won't do so any more?'

"'Not during my present happy alliance with you.'

"'That's very sweet of you. And you'll attend to your business and let me manage the house?'

"'Yes.'

"'Now promise me three things.'

"'What are they?'

"'First to go with me to church regularly.'

"I groaned. 'I promise.'

"'Second no wine on our table ever.'

"'I promise.'

"'Third, no smoking below the third storey.'

"'Thank heaven, that's three. I promise.'

"'Now, my dear, if I let you out, will you be good and not do so any more?'

"'Open the door, I've had enough of this nonsense.'

"She turned the key. I stepped out and she threw her arms about my neck and covered my face with kisses. That was the end of my playing Petruchio."

"Peter," I asked, after we had finished, "is this the room of your confinement?"

"Yes, it was stipulated at the time that I was afterwards to be free only here."

"Your effort was not very wise."

"Not wise?" he asked, much hurt at the remark. "Then what has the world for two centuries seen in *The Taming of the Shrew* to admire? Was Petruchio a fool?"

"I give it up."

A BRUTAL young man is one who would tell a girl who offers to mend his gloves that there is a hole in her father's coat.

HE: "No matter how good a man's head is, it is only good when on his own shoulders."

She: "Ladies who have had some men's heads on their shoulders think differently."

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 4.

THREE of the people whose names were selected have applied for the sovereign. They are:

R. WELLS, High Street, Uppingham.

Mrs. MAY MONTMORENCY, 31 Camden Hill Road, Upper Norwood, S.E.

Staff-Sergeant ALFRED JENKINS, Army Pay Corps, The Barracks, Cardiff.

The following would have received a sovereign each had they applied:

T. V. Dickens, 16 New Street, Daventry; T. Ainsworth, 10 Raglan Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Thomas Young, 7 Brook Street, Kingston-on-Thames; Mrs. Reid, Roosmore Villas, Stanwell Road Swinton, Manchester; Mrs. Barrington, Kirk Langley, Derby; George Yates, 15 Wilson Street, Bury; A. Day, 57 East Street, Horsham; Mrs. Evans, 5 Florence Terrace, Falmouth; Miss Adams, 1 Camden Gardens, Shepherd's Bush; Mrs. Nuttall, 94 Arkwright Street, Bolton; Mrs. Pierpoint, 5 Palmyra Square, Warrington; Mrs. W. E. Battie, 79 Spring Street, Darlington Street East, Wigan; Mrs. Oldfield, The Elms, Yorkshire Street, Rochdale; B. Croft, St. Margaret's Bury, Ware, Herts; Geo. Jenkins, Dafen House, Dafen, Lanelly, South Wales; Miss Wyatt, Stokeleigh, Roehampton Lane, Roehampton; Mrs. Oddy, 3 Theatre Street, Norwich; Mrs. Leitch, Castle Street, Broughty Ferry; C. Ashleigh Wright, Queen's Road, Norbiton; A. Thurston (Grocer), Old Felixtowe; W. Rees, 16 Alexandra Road, Broadstairs; John Naseby, 42 Wansbeck Road, West Hartlepool; Rev. H. R. Jennings, 9 Strangways Terrace, Truro; R. Keddy, 94 Milbourne Street, Carlisle; D. Laird, 66 Ann Street, Dundee; Mrs. Miller, St. Thomas Road, Launceston; A. Nicholas, 26 Harrison Place, Newcastle-on-Tyne; E. G. Snow, 53 Western Road, Brighton; Jos. Turner, 104 Denmark Road, Lowestoft; C. W. J. Bartlett, 27 Springfield Road, St. James, Exeter; J. Ferguson, 7 Tulloch's Buildings, Inverness; Mrs. Dance, 5 St. Mark's Street, Peterborough; S. Cottle, Clandowns Broadway, near Bath; J. C. King, R. I. Constabulary, Maryborough, Queen's County; Miss Low, 10 Airlie Terrace, Perth Road, Dundee; Miss E. Malone, Lissadale, Sligo, Ireland; Geo. Pool, 61 Ashley Street, Carlisle; Chas Rix, 33 Valinger's Road, Lynn; Sam Stork, 47 Eldon Street, Sunderland; F. Masson, 44 Oakfield Street, Altrincham; J. Parker, 23 Castle Crescent, Kendal; Harvey Smith, 52 Vincent Parade, Balsall Heath, Birmingham; Chas. Porter, Lynn Road, Ely; O. H. Sharrott, Chestnut House, Tamworth; Mrs. Emma Cartledge, 120 Blandford Street, Ashton-under-Lyne; Mrs. Eyre, 43 Castle Road, Bedford.

MR. JONES, YOUR EAR!

IN the distribution which finishes on November 28th the Editor proposes to select twenty-five names from the great Jones family, and to set aside for each of them a bright new sovereign. Therefore, good Mr. Jones, tell your friends of the same name what the Editor proposes to do in this matter, and tell them to send along their post-cards some time between Tuesday, November 22nd and Monday, November 28th.

£50 For Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, Cousins, and Nieces!

THE Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* is offering £50 to ladies only, in the Great Distribution Scheme instituted by that paper. He has selected the names of ten ladies, written them on envelopes, and inclosed in each envelope a £5 note, which he will forward to the fortunate persons *on application only!*

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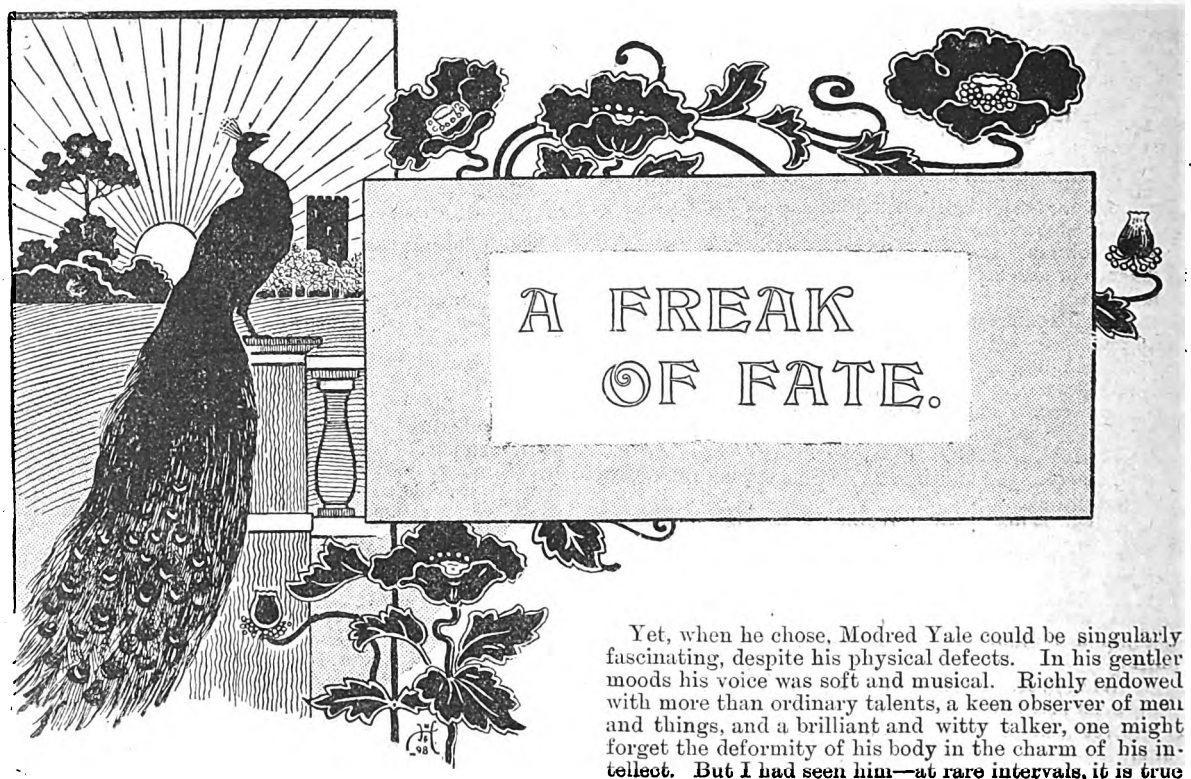

A FREAK OF FATE.

"He has made me a formal proposal for your hand, Cecile."

"But I cannot be his wife, father. I dread and dislike him."

"Listen, Cecile," said my father, and as he raised his head from his hand I saw how pale and haggard his face had grown since the receipt of the letter which lay upon the table before him. "Hitherto I have kept the truth from you; but it is necessary that you should know it now. You believe we are rich. In reality we are beggars. Not an acre of this estate is ours. This house and all in it belongs to another—Modred Yale."

"But how?" I asked, with a growing sense of terror.

"I do not know," answered my father helplessly. "I needed money, and he lent me it. I gave him mortgages. They brought me papers to sign, and I signed them. I am no man of business, Cecile. I don't know how it all came about. But everything is his, and at a word he could turn us out, homeless and penniless."

"And would he have the heart?" I exclaimed angrily.

"We have no claim upon him, Cecile," said my father, "unless you become his wife."

I remembered Modred Yale perfectly, though I was but a mere child when he went away to travel in the East. I had always shrunk from him with an instinctive repugnance; for he had seemed to my fancy something uncanny—not a man, but a gnome. With a face whose pale, cold beauty was marred by an habitual sneer, his body was deformed almost out of semblance to humanity. He was a dwarf with twisted limbs and hunched shoulders, and arms of enormous power, hanging almost to the ground as he walked.

Yet, when he chose, Modred Yale could be singularly fascinating, despite his physical defects. In his gentler moods his voice was soft and musical. Richly endowed with more than ordinary talents, a keen observer of men and things, and a brilliant and witty talker, one might forget the deformity of his body in the charm of his intellect. But I had seen him—at rare intervals, it is true—when it seemed as if the very spirit of evil had taken possession of him; when his voice rose to a harsh scream, and his face darkened with the rage and malice of a demon. This was the man who demanded my hand in marriage.

"He will be here to-night or to-morrow," said my father, looking at me anxiously.

I arose and went out. I was sick and trembling in every limb, and I wished to be alone, to think—to seek some means of escape from the fate which seemed impending over me. Modred Yale's wife! As I went slowly along the quiet lane under the cool shadow of the old oaks, the thought grew more and more incredible and abhorrent, like a nightmare of which one is half conscious, yet which will not be thrown off.

"Cecile!"

I turned with a glad cry; and the load seemed lifted from my heart as I saw the handsome, boyish face gazing at me over the stile, with that look in the frank, blue eyes which I knew so well.

"Sylvan!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I am so miserable!" and I rested my forehead on the fence between us and burst into tears. He sprang over the stile and stood beside me.

"What is it, Cecile?" he said, taking my hand. "What has happened?"

I related the interview which I had just had with my father. As I went on his face darkened with an expression of anger and alarm.

"But this cannot, shall not be," he exclaimed impulsively. "I have never spoken before, Cecile, because I believed you were rich. But now I have a right to, Cecile." His voice grew very low and tender. "I love you, and I have often hoped that you returned my love. Is it so, dear?"

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"Yes," I answered, forgetting all reserve in the sweetness of the moment; "I love you, Sylvan."

"Then I will work for you and your father, and you may defy this man to do his worst!"

"A very pretty scene," croaked a harsh voice near at hand. "Quite idyllic."

We started away from each other and looked round. There, at the distance of a few feet, gazing at us with a mocking leer that distorted his features into a repulsive mask, stood a dwarfish figure that I recognised but too well. It was Modred Yale.

At his side was another shape, hardly more hideous than himself. It was that of a huge ape, almost as tall as his master. By the wicked gleam of his red eyes and the grin that displayed his yellow fangs, the brute seemed to understand and share the dwarf's malicious humour.

With a low bow which the ape imitated—as he did all his master's movements—Modred Yale drew nearer, and, speaking in the same harsh, mocking tone, said:

"If I were an artist now, I should consider myself fortunate in having chanced upon so picturesque a group, and should lose no time in transferring it to canvas. But, pardon me, I am addressing Miss Cecile Ayre, I presume?"

I bowed silently, for I was unable to speak at the moment.

"I am Modred Yale," he resumed, with the same exaggerated air, "whom you remember, of course. But you have forgotten to introduce me to your friend."

"Mr. Sylvan Gainford, a neighbour," I stammered.

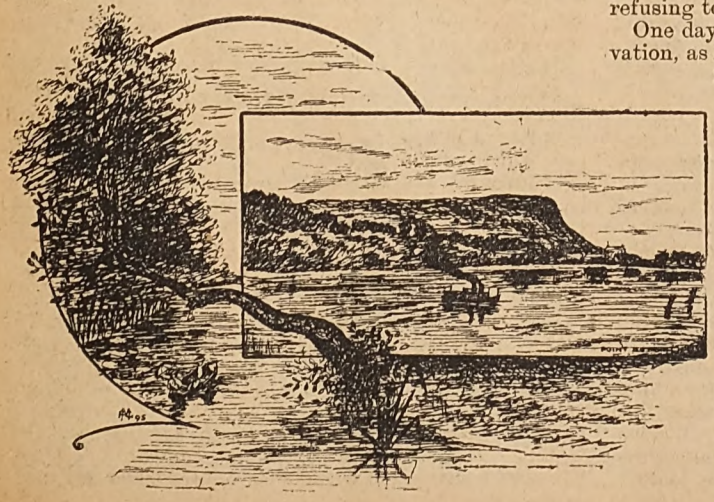
He returned Sylvan's distant acknowledgment with a salutation that was almost insolent in its grotesque extravagance.

"I must not forget my friend, my constant companion and adviser, Gordon," he said. "Come here, you brute, and make your bow."

He struck the animal a violent blow with the stick he carried, as he spoke. With a grin of ferocious hatred at his master, the ape shambled up and ducked his head at us. I was so full of vague terror that the scene had no humour for me.

"And now," added the dwarf insinuatingly, "my dear young lady, will you graciously conduct me to your good father? Mr. Gainford will, I am sure, be kind enough to excuse us.'

Was there something of the master in his tone already?



I thought there was, and so did Sylvan; for I saw his cheek redden and his hand clench.

Fearing an altercation I bade him a hasty good-bye, promising to see him soon again, and joined Modred Yale.

I hardly know how to describe the days that followed, so full of strange terror and suffering were they. With Modred Yale's advent there was an immediate change in our hitherto peaceful household. Almost from the first he assumed an air of authority, all the more repugnant from the mocking politeness with which he treated my father and myself.

My father seemed completely cowed. He rarely spoke in the presence of the dwarf, and when he did, it was with a timidity and hesitancy that were painful to see.

But the strangest and most terrifying thing was the mysterious relation that seemed to subsist between Modred and the ape Gordon. The two were never separated for a moment during the day, and at night the animal slept on a lounge in his master's room. Whenever Modred was out of doors or in, there also was the ape, chattering and grinning.

He insisted that the animal should sit at table with us, which it did, despite my indignant protest, Modred affirming, with his usual mock suavity, that Gordon was a perfect gentleman in manners, and should receive due courtesy.

So the hideous creature had its place beside the dwarf, devouring its food with a grotesque imitation of his master's movements.

Strange to say, the two appeared to hate each other with a savage malignity. Without the slightest visible reason Modred would beat the animal with the stick he always carried twenty times a day. On his part, Gordon would grin and glare at the dwarf with a ferocity that sent a chill through my blood.

Since Modred's arrival he had not spoken openly of his intention of marrying me; though I was convinced that he was only biding his time, perhaps the more effectually to strengthen his hold upon my poor father and myself. I had seen Sylvan but two or three times in the interval. Without appearing to do so, Modred had maintained a close watch over my movements. I could not leave the house for any purpose, but the dwarf, accompanied by his ugly companion, would be at my side, politely insisting upon escorting me in my walk, and refusing to be shaken off.

One day, however, I had managed to elude his observation, as I supposed, and, hurrying down the lane, met Sylvan at the stile. We had hardly shaken hands, however, when we were startled by the voice of my persecutor, who, with his grim companion, had stolen upon us unperceived.

"How deeply I regret the necessity of interrupting this interesting interview," he said, with a smile that was like an unspoken insult, "but I am compelled to warn my young friends that it is contrary to custom for a lady who is about to become the wife of one man to hold secret interviews with another."

"What do you mean?" responded Sylvan haughtily, while I held my breath in dismayed expectancy.

"Merely, my dear young gentleman," said the dwarf suavely, "that Miss Cecile will shortly honour me with her hand. Don't apologise, I beg," he added, with a wave of

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his hand. "You were not aware of it, of course, hence there is no offence. I simply wish to call your attention to the fact."

"It is a lie," returned Sylvan hotly. "Marry you! She would sooner marry your ape. He is less hideous than you in her eyes."

For an instant the dwarf gazed at him with an expression that froze my blood; then he turned to me with his unvarying smile.

"I will accompany you home, my dear Cecile."

"No," I replied, my anger getting the better of my terror. "You have no right to control my actions. You are nothing whatever to me. My father owes you money which he cannot pay, and you may turn us out into the world without bread or a roof to shelter us, if you will. But I will never marry you."

"Do not lose your temper, dear child," he said imperturbably. "If our friend will excuse us, as we walk home together, I think I can convince you that I have spoken the truth."

There was something so sinister in his tone and smile that I yielded, and, bidding Sylvan a trembling adieu, went with Modred and his hated ape.

"You spoke," said he, as we proceeded, "of your father owing me money, intimating that therein lay my power to force you to marry me. That would be, indeed, a power which you might easily defy. But what if it were in my power to send your father to prison for a term of years?"

I started and looked at him in horror.

"My father—in prison?"

"Yes," he answered, "just that. In his ignorance of business—let us be charitable—he was unfortunate enough to mistake his legal right. Just a mere signature, nothing more! But quite sufficient to constitute felony in the eyes of the law."

"But he is innocent!" I cried, clasping my hands in agony. "My poor father a felon? Oh, have you no pity, no mercy?"

"Who has had pity or mercy for me?" he exclaimed, showing the only trace of real feeling I ever saw him exhibit. "I, misshapen, hideous, a mock of nature. I who"—here he broke off abruptly, and added in a voice of forced calmness, "I trust, dear child, that you will spare no expense in the preparation of your trousseau. Our wedding should do honour to our family names."

* * * * *

Yes, it was so. Unsuspicious of the trap laid for him by the wily dwarf, and ignorant of business as a child, my poor father had done that from the consequences of which I alone could save him.

I did not hesitate.

How I passed the intervening period I cannot say, but waking out of what seemed a long dream of misery I found myself at the eve of my wedding day. I had told Sylvan the truth and bidden him a last sad farewell. I had prepared myself for the ordeal, and now only awaited the final sacrifice.

Alone, dazed, tearless, I sat in my chamber, counting the slow hours as they passed.

Suddenly as I sat so, a terrible cry rang through the house, a cry so awful in its pain and horror that the hair arose upon my head. Then there was a sound of feet in the passage, the opening and shutting of doors, loud exclamations, and wild confusion.

I found myself, how, I do not know, with many others in Modred Yale's room. He lay upon the floor with his eyes starting from his head, and with an expression of terror and rage upon his features that I shall never forget—dead! On his neck were the black marks of powerful fingers. The ape Gordon had disappeared.

The superstitious say that Modred Yale had sold his soul to the Evil One, that the ape was a familiar spirit sent to watch the doomed man; and that this familiar had at last claimed his bargain, and Modred Yale's soul had gone to its master. The wiser ones say that, driven to frenzy by the dwarf's cruelty, the animal had at length turned upon him and strangled him to death. No traces of the ape were ever found.

Sylvan, my husband, professes to hold the former belief.

LEIGH HALL.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☛ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 7 distribution must reach us by November 21st, addressed to The 7th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Fourth Distribution appears on page 651.

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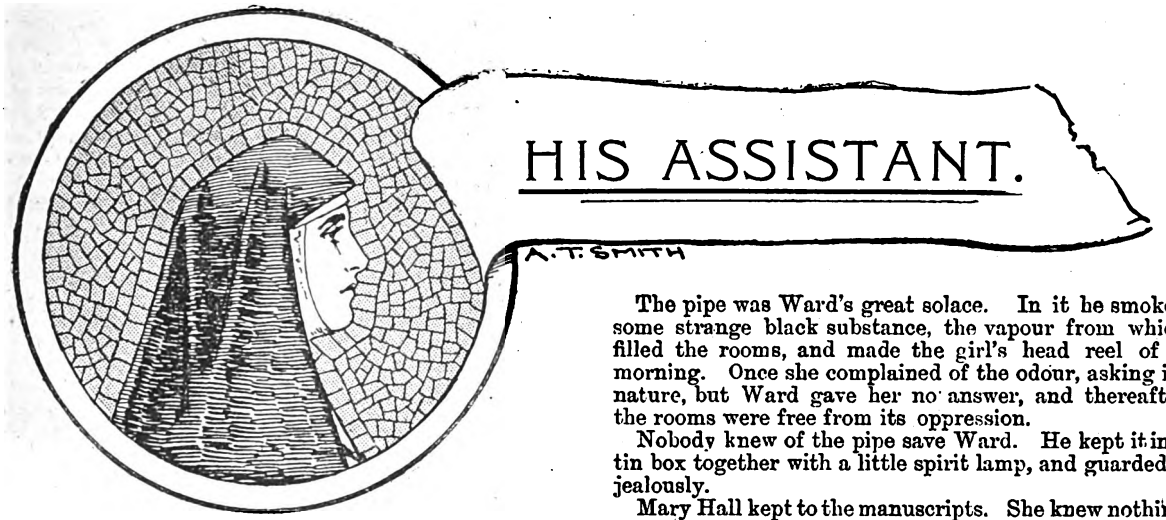

HIS ASSISTANT.

THE door-plate of the room 41, Albany Chambers, London, bore nothing more startling to the minds of the reading public than the words:

DAVID WARD,
LITERARY BUREAU.

David Ward was a little man whose age it was not easy to guess. Sometimes the girl, his assistant, felt sure that he was at least fifty years old. At other times, particularly when he smiled, which was not often, he seemed quite young, almost boyish, in spite of his grey hair. As a matter of fact, he was thirty-seven.

He was the mere skeleton of a man. His clothing hung upon his hook-like shoulders in a loose, dangling fashion, and his face wore a yellow, shrivelled look, much like some of the manuscripts stacked in heaps about the little back office.

Mary Hall did not mind his peculiar make-up. She usually looked at his eyes, which were deep and brown; and watched for the occasional smile, which revealed uncommonly fine teeth.

No. 41, was Ward's home as well as his office. It was characterised by that orderly disorder which somehow dominates a real bachelor den.

Besides the horse-hair couch and easy chairs, there were in the room various stands and book-racks, a tea-table, Ward's desk and the desk at which the girl worked.

On the easterly wall, where the shadows kept tryst with one another and the sunshine seldom fell, was a picture of "Solitude," and on the opposite wall was a lurid painting of the Battle of Waterloo.

There was another painting which hung over Ward's desk, that of a sweet-faced woman, with eyes like Ward's eyes, and soft, brown hair. It had been copied from an old daguerrotype which Ward carried about in a gold locket in the upper pocket of his grey waistcoat. He never, by any chance, wore any other colour than grey.

He was forgetful at times, but there were two things which he never forgot. One was to transfer the gold locket, when, of necessity, he purchased another suit, from the waistcoat pocket of the old to the corresponding pocket of the new suit. The other thing was to keep the mysterious pipe out of the girl's range of vision.

The pipe was Ward's great solace. In it he smoked some strange black substance, the vapour from which filled the rooms, and made the girl's head reel of a morning. Once she complained of the odour, asking its nature, but Ward gave her no answer, and thereafter the rooms were free from its oppression.

Nobody knew of the pipe save Ward. He kept it in a tin box together with a little spirit lamp, and guarded it jealously.

Mary Hall kept to the manuscripts. She knew nothing of Ward's domestic affairs, but she fancied that sleep occupied but little of his time. He never complained of ill-health. He was simply a bundle of nerves, a perfect working machine. There was a strong suggestion of perpetual motion about him, and the girl fancied that when he stopped working his soul would fly from his body like the freed mainspring of a clock.

He had not always lived alone. The girl's predecessor had been a silent old scholar, who had worked with Ward for five years, and had slept on the couch in the back office every night.

In his own peculiar way David Ward grieved sorely when he found old Scott dead there one morning. He advertised again and again for a man like Scott. After a while he decided that there had never been but one of that sort created, and told the girl who had haunted the office for days that she might come and help him out of a labyrinth of manuscripts.

He had a thorough dislike to womankind, but the girl's industry struck him as a good quality in an assistant. Somebody must come to his aid, and the girl came.

She was not pretty. She was too tall, and carried herself with a nervous stride. There was a certain drabness about her that made her fit almost at once into her place among the office fixtures. Her brown hair curled crisply about her rather colourless face, and seemed at variance with her steady grey eyes and sober manner.

At first the rustle of her gown about the office disturbed Ward, but later he became accustomed to it, and even raised his head from a mountain of manuscripts at nine o'clock every work-a-day morning, to listen for the click of her boot-heels upon the tessellated floor of the hall.

If she had taken a solemn oath that she would never weep, faint, indulge in hysterics, or even in adjectives, she could not have been less emotional than she was in his presence.

Once, when she was suffering acutely from nervous headache, she uncorked a bottle of ammonia, which had been standing in the sunshine on the window sill. It exploded, full in her face and eyes. She cried out at the sudden smart, then she thought of Ward and became silent. He appeared not to have heeded at all, but after a few minutes he pushed back his chair and went over to her.

"That wasn't a very bright proceeding," he began in his peculiarly irritating way.

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The girl remained silent. She felt as though she should scream if she opened her mouth at all.

Then she heard Ward busying himself about the room and expected presently to hear a tirade against women in general.

By and by he came back to his desk.

"Take your hands from your face," he said rather roughly.

The girl paid no attention to him.

"Take down your hands! Don't be an idiot!" he said, still more harshly.

The girl's hands came down suddenly. She was about to pour forth some scathing remarks, when there was laid upon her hot eyelids something cool and soothing.

"It's milk," Ward explained briefly.

It was the first time she had ever known him to interest himself in anything save the manuscripts, and it warmed her heart to him.

"That was so good of you," she said gently, resting her head against the back of the chair and trying to smile. If she could have seen through the bit of his handkerchief, she would have beheld a face transfigured by inward joy and light into a real loveliness, such as no man had seen upon it before. Something new and beautiful had found the heart of David Ward, and made the girl seem a very queen to him.

Then his glance fell upon one of his hands. It was like the hand of an old man, wrinkled and yellow. He sniffed contemptuously and went back to his work. But the girl never forgot that one act of kindness.

One day her father died. He had been a scholar, and had taught the girl nearly all that she knew. He was the last of her immediate relations, and she had looked up to him, and had loved him dearly.

She fancied when she went back to Ward again that he would say something, if ever so little, about her sorrow. He failed even to look up from his desk when she came in as usual. The truth was that his heart was so full of sympathy for her that he could say no ordinary thing. When, after an hour or so of silence, he did speak, it was of something entirely foreign to her troubles.

"That abominable Mrs. Tweed has been here again with another lot of rubbish tied up with pink ribbon," he said.

The girl had to smile at his cross face.

"It was blue ribbon last time," she said, trying hard to keep the tremble out of her voice.

A week later, when she had settled her father's affairs and taken a room for herself, she came into the office one morning red-eyed and dispirited.

Ward glanced at her several times before he could bring himself to speak. Then:

"You look as though you'd been tied up in a bundle," he said, with one of his rare smiles.

She knew that she was not a pretty girl. She looked up at him rather curiously.

"I feel worse than I can possibly appear," she answered simply. Then, as she saw the customary half-sneer coming back to his face, "you must try not to notice me for a few days," she said; "by then I shall be used to this," she touched her black gown. Ward turned his face to his work and went on scribbling.

The new, strange state of being went hard with him. In all his life he had never loved before. He thought he had enough of that sort of thing in the tales of woe which he marked with the great cross of his disapprobation, or dug into with his pruning knife, the blue pencil.

After a while he wheeled about in his chair again.

"Girl," he said, "you'd think a man a fool to covet suffering, wouldn't you? I've never had anybody of my own to lose since I can remember. It makes a fellow feel hard not to have any memories. I've tried often to fancy what it would seem like to have known her," he pointed up towards the lady on the wall, over his desk. "After all," he went on, "she is only a myth to me, not my mother. You've no reason to feel so wounded and miserable, girl; you have known joy. I'm a poor sort, body and soul, but I believe I should have loved her, I do."

It was a long speech for Ward to make. The girl sat silent, partly from astonishment, partly from habit.

Ward returned to his work. He was very sorry that he had spoken, and angry because his hands shook like reeds in the wind. He was more than ever an enigma to Mary Hall.

The third year of her stay at Ward's she was discovered by her ideal, a young lawyer with a small practice and a big bump of ambition.

With his keen insight he saw, through the drabness of Mary Hall, a nature strong and brave and womanly.

Unconsciously, at first, he let her influence him to high aspirations and keep him straight and honourable, when there were plenty of chances for him to be otherwise.

And MacGregor grew to love her with all his Scotch might, which was not little.

When he could keep the secret no longer he told her.

They were coming home from the opera of *Martha* at the time.

She was humming a piece of the music, and she seemed to him very sweet in her trim black jacket, straight gown and velvet toque.

MacGregor never beat about the bush much. They were walking briskly homeward.

"Mary," he said suddenly. He had never called her Mary before. "Mary," he said again, "I love you with all my heart."

The girl made no response, her heart was beating to a glad song, no part of the opera of *Martha*. She walked along, looking straight in front of her.

They were nearing an electric lamp.

"Look at me, dear," MacGregor pleaded.

In the midst of the light the girl turned her glad eyes on his. She seemed wondrously beautiful to MacGregor.

He slipped his arm within hers and they walked in silence to the house in which the girl occupied an upper room.

When near the door she stopped for a moment to take her latch-key from her pocket.

MacGregor put his arms about her.

"Aren't you going to speak to me at all, darling?" he asked.

She answered him in the quick, jerky way, common to her.

"It doesn't seem possible," she said. "Not possible at all, you know. Thank you for—for caring, and good-night."

MacGregor laughed boyishly, leaning forward and placing a hand at either side of her face.

"Does this seem possible?" he asked, pressing many kisses on her lips.

"Say 'I love you, Don,'" he urged.

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She looked at him frankly. "I do," she said earnestly. "I do love you, Don."

The girl was very happy. It seemed almost impossible that she should find Ward as grey and skeleton-like as ever that next morning.

But she found him quite unchanged, his face buried in a heap of papers. He nodded to her when she came in.

He was struck by her look of youth, and felt insignificant. He vented his feelings, as usual, by sniffing.

The girl longed to have him happy. She noticed that he had not washed his breakfast things, and she went to work and did them herself.

He watched her dreamily and let himself fancy how it would seem to have her always near him, where he could see her whenever he looked up from his work.

He remembered the strange pipe suddenly, and shuddered.

Somehow, whenever he thought of telling her, the pipe came into his memory.

He had not touched it for a good month, never since he had made up his mind that he must let her know how much she was to him.

Sometimes of an evening a great longing for it would come over him, and he would go to the fire-proof box and take out the evil thing and look at it hungrily. Once he had gone so far as to touch its bowl with the head of a hammer in a menacing way.

But it had a terrible fascination for him, he could never quite finish it with one good stroke.

It had been his friend for so long, his consolation for the lack of human friendship.

By and by he would destroy it for her sake. Somebody had said that a man could not break from its awful charm.

He would disprove all that.

After he had told her that she was his first of women, a beautiful and sweet and comforting thing sent to bless him, he would destroy it.

He tried to write her a good, manly letter; but he thought it read like the poor swashy things which he had corrected for so long.

Then he decided that he would tell her very soon.

"I'm a poor thing," said he, addressing himself in the glass. "A poor thing to be thinking of love. Look at me!"

"I'm a fit subject for the museum," he said, grinning up at the lurid painting of the Battle of Waterloo.

And so it was, that, day after day, he put off telling her, and was more gruff to her than ever before, and he loved her with all the heart in his weazened little body.

One morning she came into the office and straight across to Ward's desk.

"Look, Mr. Ward," she said, smiling down at him. "Read and say that you are glad." She spread out a periodical before him.

Ward looked at her. He had noticed before that she had put off her mourning. She was gowned in brown. Afterwards he recalled her as she appeared to him then.

Mechanically he read the heading of the paper. He saw that it was a society paper, and he followed her finger down a certain column, where he read:

"Mr. Donald MacGregor, the young lawyer who is fast making a name, is engaged to Miss Mary Hall daughter of the late John Hall."

Ward read it through twice. He had never had anybody to lose, he had told her. Drearily he began reading the item a third time, a strange mist made the words dance, and finally blurred them altogether from his sight.

"Is it true?" he heard himself ask in a commonplace way.

"Perfectly true," the girl answered, smiling. "Say that you are glad, Mr. Ward."

"I am glad," Ward said gently. She waited, half expecting that he would say something more. She was removing her wrap when Ward spoke again. "Go out and take a holiday," he said urgently. "Go and enjoy yourself. I want you to be happy. You were meant for happiness. Take a holiday. There's plenty of money in the drawer," he reached over his desk and took out a little roll of notes. "I want you to go out and buy my wedding present for you, whatever you wish for most," he said. He smiled one of his rare smiles and pushed her gently towards the door.

The expression of his eyes struck the girl as infinitely sad.

"I don't want to go," she said with a half sob.

Ward smiled again. "Good-bye, girl," he said very gently, then he shut the door after her and locked it

He came back into the room and stood with folded arms before the painting of his mother.

The refinement of anguish lifted him for a moment above the mere creature that he was. Then a hurt, almost child-like, expression came upon his face.

"I'm a miserable liar, mother!" he said brokenly. "A miserable liar! I am not glad! I loved her so! I needed her so!"

When he had stared at the picture for a while, his face softened. His lips quivered into a smile of adoration for those compassionate eyes.

He went over to the little cupboard suddenly and got out the opium pipe and its trappings.

"For her sake, and for mother's, I will do it," he said musingly.

He took the pipe to a back window, and, leaning out, flung it, with all his might, into the yard, where it struck the bricks and fell in a hundred pieces.

"When I was a boy," he said meditatively, coming back into the room and flinging himself wearily into a reclining chair, "when I was a boy, I never did wrong without being punished severely for it at once."

Ever since his love for the girl had become assured to him he had been under a severe nervous strain. Now that there was nothing to hope for, or to look forward to, he felt strangely calm.

He fell asleep after a time and dreamt happily of the girl. There was not an atom of bitterness in his dreams, and he slept as peacefully as a child.

He was lying in the chair, with his face turned to the window, when the girl unlocked the door the next morning and came in with a little song on her lips.

"You see I have come back to you," she said gaily, crossing over to him.

The sunlight coming through the window slantwise, just touched his forehead and hair.

The rare smile that had now and then transformed his plain face rested full upon it.

Concerning David Ward's heartaches God had called a halt.

JEROME FITZGERALD.

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A Strange Welcome.

MARK WARNER sat in the shade of the big oaks that grew by the kitchen door. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and his coarse hat lay on the grass at his side.

He was leaning forward, his chin resting on his hands, his elbows upon his knees, calmly puffing a short pipe. Near to him sat his wife, busily engaged in stringing beans for dinner.

"It's almost ten years since Ted went away," observed Mr. Warner, blowing a cloud of smoke over a vagrant bumblebee that was buzzing about a hollyhock.

"Ten years this autumn," remarked his wife, without looking up.

"This harvest time," corrected Warner. "I recker-lect it well. He went off just when I was busiest cutting corn, and I had to employ Dick Johnson in his place. Dick wasn't worth his salt, and it was a clear loss of a sovereign and more to me."

"But you can't blame Ted for that," said his wife.

"He might 'a' stayed till the corn was cut."

"He said you wasn't treating him just right—then Ted was our only child."

"I was an only child myself," complained Warner; "and I wasn't treated any better 'an Ted; but I didn't go running away. You remember, my dad wouldn't hear of our being married in a busy time. Says he to me: 'Mark, I ain't going to have a wedding going on right in ploughing time. Wait till the corn's laid in and that'll be plenty of time for wedding arrangements.'"

"Yes," said Mrs. Warner, "and we had to wait, too. My mother was against our being married in the midst of gardening time. She said to me: 'Mary, it ain't no use talking about being married this spring, to say nothing of the work that's got to be done, it would be a waste to kill them chickens till harvest; an' then there's nothing in the garden worth mentioning to make pies, and it's a bad time altogether. Wait till after harvest, Mary,' says she, 'and the blackberries will all be ripe.' Mother was dead against extravagance, and believed in young people minding their parents."

"So she did, and so did father," said Warner, "but things are different now, and p'r'aps I was a little hard on Ted."

"Ted was a good boy."

"Yes; but he kept going with them Jones boys when he knowed that old Jones had treated me like dirt; then he was for ever working that foolish machine idea of his, when he ought to have been at work on the farm."

"He said the machine might make us all rich if he got it right," suggested Mrs. Warner.

"But such foolish things don't ever git right," declared Mark, "and I spect he's found it out by this time. Ted was a good hand to work, though, when he did work, and p'r'aps I ought to have allowed him to have his way about them ideas of his."

"It would have been the best thing—boys will be boys."

"So they will, and Ted was only sixteen—just when a boy knows the least and thinks the most!"

Warner rose and stood leaning against the big oak. His wife got up and went into the kitchen. Presently Sam White came along the lane, carrying a reaping-fork, and stopping, he leant against the fence.

He was a young man of spare build, with a half-inch of downy beard upon his freckled face.

"Father thought you might want someone to help you cut corn," he said, after exchanging greetings with Warner.

"I dunno just yet," the farmer replied. "I'm intending to commence to-morrow morning, though it does seem a bit early. My corn is later 'an yours."

"Yes; about two weeks. Father said if you needed any help he'd come in the morning."

"Well, I shall want a couple of hands for a few days, and I think you an' yer father might both come."

"He'll come; but I've to see to something else."

"I might get another hand. Tell your father to bring one if he can."

"All right. Heard anything from Ted lately?"

"Not for a long time."

"How is he getting on?"

"He don't say. Just says he's well, and working every day."

"Don't talk of coming home?"

"No. S'pose he ll sow his wild oats first."

"Course he will! I was never allowed to sow no wild oats. Well, I must be going. Good day."

He was walking away when Warner called out:

"I say, Sam, you didn't see anything of my ole speckled cow as you came along, did you? She hain't bin up to-day, dang her ole hide, and the calf's 'most bawled itself to death."

Sam stopped abruptly and came back, and stood by the fence.

"I must be losing my senses, that I must!" he said, with an air of vexation. "I was going to tell you and fergot it. I seed her down in the woods as I came along.

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A branch had fell off that big ellum and killed her, an' there she lay as dead as a door nail."

Warner took a long pull at his pipe.

Nothing ever disturbed or excited him in the least.

"She hadn't bin milked this morning, neither," he said, "and I s'pose the tree has spoilt the hide. You can tell your father to come over in the morning, if it ain't raining, and we'll get to work."

The next morning, as Mr. White was starting for Warner's, he saw a young man coming down the road from the direction of the little railway station. He was dressed in a neatly-fitting suit of grey and carried a small leather bag.

The young man looked eagerly at White, and nodding, said:

"Good-morning, Mr. White."

He held out his hand, smiling as he did so.

Mr. White took the proffered hand, looking very much puzzled.

"You seem to know me, but—w'y, bless my soul! it's Ted Warner!"

"So it is," laughed the young man. "I am glad to see some one who remembers me."

"I knowed you as soon as you laughed," said White. "But how you have growed! W'y, you are a man now, bigger 'an your father."

The two walked on in the direction of Warner's farm.

Farmer White was not especially inquisitive, but he was not altogether devoid of a certain amount of curiosity regarding the affairs of his neighbours, and before the two reached their destination, he had learnt several important facts relative to young Warner.

Among other things he learnt that Ted had perfected a most valuable piece of machinery which he had been working on for years, and having patented his invention, he had disposed of it to a wealthy firm in London for a small fortune, and was coming home to share it with his aged parents.

White speculated on the surprise in store for Warner, and he chuckled inwardly as he thought of the joy and amazement Ted's sudden return would bring to the parents.

As they arrived before the farmhouse they saw Mrs. Warner coming from an out-house, carrying a pan of milk.

As Ted came towards her she looked at him keenly, then set the pan of milk upon the ground, her form trembling.

"It's Ted!" she said, in an agitated voice.

She took his hands and kissed him. Then he put his arms about her neck, while the tears ran down his cheeks.

"You have growed so," she said, holding him at arm's length and gazing fondly into his face.

"I was afraid you wouldn't recognise me," he said, "but you cannot deceive a mother's eye."

They stood talking for some moments. Some of the little ducks that were running about the yard came up, and pouncing into the pan of milk, began to swim about in the liveliest manner.

"Where's father?" asked Ted.

"In the house, eating his breakfast. He's late with it. Come, let's go in."

She stooped to pick up the pan.

"Them ducks have spoilt the milk," she said, emptying ducks and milks out into the grass.

"Ted's father'll be very glad to see him," said White, as the three walked towards the house.

"Don't say who I am," said Ted, "and we'll see if father will know me."

"That's good," chuckled White. "I'll bet he won't know you at all."

Warner was sitting at the table eating his breakfast when the three entered.

"I've brought you a hand," said White, nodding towards Ted.

"All right," responded Warner. "Sit up to the table and have breakfast."

"I've had mine," replied White, "but I s'pose the hand hain't."

"No, I haven't," said Ted, taking a seat at the table.

"He don't know him, by jingo!" chuckled White inwardly.

"Just help yourself," said Warner, and Ted was not backward in obeying.

Little was said during the meal, and when it was finished, without Warner having shown any signs of recognising his son, White's excitement rose to the highest pitch.

"It's a good un, Warner, that it is," was his mental comment.

"Warner," said White, as the two rose from the table, "I 'spect yer don't know this feller I brought?" and he nodded towards Ted.

Warner slowly drew a pipe from his pocket, and filling and lighting it, said:

"Know him? I know'd him soon as he come in the door. It's about work time, ain't it? Ted, there's an extra knife out in the shed." C. DICKINSON.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXXII. (*continued*).

At first de Vismes had an easy task at Dushakh.

Taken unawares, like the rest of the scattered troops on the line, the few defenders of the post surrendered at the first onset, and for a couple of days de Vismes, and his able coadjutors, Adams and Hutchinson, were free to devote their whole time to consolidating their position.

Of course, the news of the raid soon spread from Tejend to Merv, Bokhara, and Samarkand; but beyond the latter point tidings travelled slowly. Applin's conjecture that there was no telegraph line north through the Amu Daria district, was right.

Beyond the Oxus bridge, which is 280 miles from Dushakh, the Russian officers left by Alikhanoff to collect stores for the use of subsequent levies from Siberia, gathered together as large a force as they could muster, and conveyed them by train to Tejend. Sarakhs and Penjdeh were also requisitioned for men from their already depleted garrisons, and at last, about June 18th, a desperate attempt was made to recapture Dushakh.

But the British officers, ten of whom were now on the spot, had not been idle.

They had 20,000 men present, and one half of those had been labouring day and night to throw up extensive lines of earthworks, whilst the remainder of the tribesmen had been rapidly initiated into the Boer method of warfare, being a judicious blending of prone marksmanship and rapid galloping towards or away from an enemy.

The nomads quickly perceived the advantages of steady shooting over their antiquated method of wild firing from the saddle. Long before Colonel Anitchkoff had brought his Bokharans and Siberians within range of the earthworks he had received most convincing testimony of the rapid progress made by these unexpected students in the art of warfare.

In the place of being the attacker he was attacked, and his native allies were routed before he well knew what had happened.

He retired to Tejend and consolidated all his European troops, resolving to force the defences of Dushakh by their aid, and leave to his untrained auxiliaries the congenial task of pursuit.

Peyton had now arrived from Usun-Ada, and the best possible preparations were made to withstand the more determined assault which was made on the early morning of the 22nd.

The Russian skirmishers, consisting mainly of men from the 103rd regiment of the line, were not to be denied. They resolutely pushed the attack home, and Peyton saw, to his grief and dismay, that if once the entrenchments were carried, his host would begin to crumble away into nothingness.

The Turkomans were not cowards, but this manner of fighting was new to them. Were it not for the great gallantry displayed by de Vismes and the other Englishmen, the nomads would long before the end came have flown to their horses and raced back to their hills across the desert.

Peyton, resolute in his despair, had made every arrangement for destroying the railway line, when his gaze was suddenly arrested by the sight of a cloud of horsemen coming up rapidly on the left rear of the Russian attack.

This, then, was the finish. If they had secured cavalry support, it was all over with his hillmen.

He had almost given the order to tear up some hundreds of yards of rails when he was restrained by a growing sense of amazement at the tactics of the approaching cavalry.

Why, they were charging the Russians! Were not those British dragoons? Those streaming puggris were assuredly worn by Bengal Lancers?

There was, to all appearance, some midsummer madness about this astounding apparition. Dream, as the whole thing seemed to Peyton, it was backed up by very tangible reality. This was Colonel Doyne's cavalry brigade, which had reached its destination in the nick of time, to render the utmost service, after a superb march from the Helmund.

Regardless of danger from the scattering enemy, Peyton rode wildly towards the British force.

Recognising Colonel Doyne, he shouted, without any preliminary salutation: "The train, the train!"

The brigadier followed Peyton's emphatic gesture and saw at once what he meant. Standing on the rails a couple of miles away were the engine and eight carriages which had conveyed Anitchkoff and his principal followers to the scene of action.

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A squadron of the Royal Irish Lancers captured the complete fitout in less than twenty minutes, and when Peyton had rapidly explained the great success of his advance on the Caspian, the brigadier detailed one hundred British and one hundred native troops for similar work on the eastern section of the line.

"The train, the train!"

De Vismes was given command and that night the long wooden bridge over the Oxus, stretching in rickety evenness over two miles of swamp, sand, and river, was ruined so completely that no train could possibly cross it during the next couple of months.

The way was now quite clear for Sir George White to effectually dispose his force between the Oxus and the Caspian.

During a lucid interval, Captain Peyton said to the brigadier:

"Well, sir, I am glad to be able to hand over to you an army, such as it is, of 40,000 men, and stores for 400,000, together with a railway line and fourteen ships."

"What do you mean?" said Doyne, smiling and searching for a letter in his pocket book.

"Of course you take command!" replied Peyton.

"Not so," said the other, handing him the letter he had sought for. "My orders are to co-operate with you; I command my cavalry."

The note was from the Commander-in-Chief. It ran:

"Colonel Doyne has undertaken to give you this dispatch if he finds that you are still alive and have been successful in your mission. You are hereby brevetted to the field rank of colonel. If Captain de Vismes be with you, he receives his majority, and the native officers who accompanied you are, if approved by you, raised to the next rank above that they now hold. Other rewards are reserved until I am more fully acquainted with your work."

Peyton did not speak for a moment. He turned his head and looked across the desert, whilst Colonel Doyne lit a cigarette.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Another Agincourt.

"Comrades," wrote Lord Roberts in a proclamation issued to the army on June 1st, "in the forthcoming battle with the French, England demands our services under circumstances that have seldom, if ever before, occurred in her glorious history.

"We must, at all hazards, utterly rout and destroy the enemy.

"This is the crucial struggle of the campaign. The best troops of France are opposed to us. Their numbers far exceed our own, but I know that they cannot equal us in courage, in discipline, in every splendid quality that is found in the British soldier.

"To our hands are committed the destinies of our beloved country. Strong in that sacred trust, I feel in my heart that the issue is already determined. Let us resolve that, God willing, our confidence in victory shall be justified by the result. We must deal the enemy such a blow that the power of France will stagger helpless from our path."

The Commander-in-Chief would not have uttered these stirring words to his men had there not been desperate need for the display of that calm courage which recks not of the chances of war.

There were 400,000 British troops massed in two great armies of similar proportions on both sides of the Seine, in the pastoral valleys between Yvetot and Rouen.

Taught prudence by their previous experiences, the French commanders resolved that their next blow should be a decisive one. For a wonder, therefore, their national vanity was subordinated to the rigid necessities of the moment; and, beyond some trival outpost affairs, no engagement was risked with the invaders until they had assembled such overwhelming forces that, under the ordinary conditions of warfare, they must succeed in hopelessly crushing the two sections of the British army.

On the north bank of the Seine General Saussier contemplated, with the conscious pride of superiority, a superb army of 500,000 men, whilst, on the south, General Mercier commanded a well-equipped force of 450,000.

France had strained every nerve to place these phenomenal numbers rapidly in the field.

All bridges across the river had been blown up to a point far below Yvetot; junction between the different portions of Lord Roberts' troops was rendered apparently impossible without retreat or delay.

The former course meant a moral victory for the French; the latter they resolved to render impossible by delivering a concerted attack at dawn on June 2nd.

Like Trochu during the siege of Paris, General Saussier had his plan; like von Moltke, on the same memorable occasion, Lord Roberts also had a scheme, and it differed materially from that of Saussier.

During the afternoon of June 1st, thirty-eight stout barges were towed up the Seine from a point below Yvetot, where willing hands had for some days past been engaged in fitting substantial level platforms upon them at a uniform height of 6ft. from the water.

Between the two wings of the British army nineteen roads led to the river, and at ten o'clock that night there were nineteen substantial floating bridges spanning the stream in each locality where a crossing was practicable.

About the same hour General Massy, who now controlled the operations on the south side of the river, pushed some 10,000 men close up to the French lines—"Just to keep them awake," he explained to his staff—and whilst the French generalissimo marvelled at the audacity of the English in anticipating the attack of the morrow, 190,000 of the said English were quietly taking up the positions allotted to them on the extensive lines of the northern force.

Shortly before dawn the 10,000, who had made things exceedingly lively for the French in the dark, rapidly withdrew, and when General Saussier was calmly drinking his morning coffee and glancing over the final arrangements for the attack, to commence at 5.30 a.m., it being then four o'clock, the actual disposition of his adversary was as follows:

Three miles in front of his position were 350,000 Britons. General Massy, with 50,000 men, was intrusted with the comparatively easy task of holding the river flank, whilst the barges, having served their purpose, were drawn up on the British bank of the stream and by prior efficiency of design, now formed thirty-eight excellent floating forts in the most exposed localities.

General Saussier did not know of these unexpected events, nor did he know, as he asked for a second cup, that at that precise moment, the British were advancing to attack *him*.

Lord Roberts resolved, from the outset, to risk annihilation for the sake of complete success.

A partial or merely strategic victory would be as bad as a defeat.

The superior French army lay crescent-shape in front and almost overlapping him. He therefore sent the whole of his guns and cavalry to the extreme left with orders to irresistibly pound the French right until it was driven in upon the centre. He split up his forces into six divisions of ten brigades, and in each brigade there were 5,000 men

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He personally kept at his immediate disposal eight additional brigades as a reserve.

Divisional commanders and brigadiers received the most precise instructions that they must each fight on their own line of advance without reference to proceedings elsewhere, and the only deviation from this definite scheme would occur when the French right was obviously driven in, and concentration towards the Rouen road and the Seine should be aimed at.

In a simple phrase, the battle was fought as though the British troops were travelling along the radii of a fan, of which the French constituted the outer circumference. As the fight progressed the fan commenced to contract.

General Saussier finished his second cup of coffee that night in Paris.

He was about to complete his early breakfast when the sound of firing, rapidly growing in volume over a wide segment of the French front, startled him exceedingly.

A staff officer exclaimed: "This is an attack in force."

"Impossible!" shouted the General. "They have impudence the most sublime, but surely not such as this."

An aide-de-camp rode madly up to the house occupied by the Commander-in-Chief.

"My General," he cried, "the English have driven in the pickets, and the whole army is threatened."

"It is unbelievable!" roared the astonished Frenchman, rushing towards his charger. "Fly," he continued, addressing his staff, "to order a general advance, and telephone to Mercier to offer battle at once. We must drive these imbeciles into the sea forthwith."

There could now be no doubt concerning the nature and magnitude of the engagement.

Along a front of seven miles, a determined conflict was already in progress, and the mad fury of the combat rent the air with its din, whilst affrighted birds mingled their cries with the screaming of shells and the whistling of bullets.

The French guns were caught in a most disadvantageous position, being massed in rear of the centre, and the fierce and wholly unexpected onslaught of the British momentarily drove back the French line, and hampered the exertions of the artillery.

At last General Saussier ordered ten batteries to the front, to stop the British advance at all hazards.

Miscalculating the position of his opponents, the French artillery officer intrusted with the movement actually galloped his guns into the fighting line of a brigade composed of the London Scottish, the Queen's Westminsters, the Artists' Corps, and the Inns of Court Volunteers, strengthened by a battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers.

"Bayonet the gunners, Westminsters!" shouted Colonel Sir Howard Vincent, as he perceived the endeavours of the French to wheel rapidly and extricate themselves.

"Shoot the horses, 23rd," yelled Colonel Blyth, who knew the most effective method of throwing guns out of action.

This combination of effort soon achieved its purpose. The French artillerymen fought like men possessed, for the gunner in all lands cares not for life when his beloved weapon is in danger. It was the first experience of the Volunteers in the dread realities of war, but they took up the points of the situation like puppies lapping new milk. They absolutely climbed over men, guns, and horses, and it seemed as though, in a fit of Gargantuan rage, they desired to pound the lot into fragments, until their officers hastily persuaded them to form up in column again.

Not a moment too soon was order restored.

Even the brief diversion created by the mad exploit of the artillery enabled the commander of the French centre to rally his disgusted, but unbeaten troops. In the small town of Les Petits Osiers, a congeries of narrow streets and lanes, he took his stand, and when the British brigade resumed its advance, it was met by a murderous and well-sustained fire from a vastly superior force.

For a little while the Brigadier, Colonel Blyth, made his men lie down until he sent to Major-General James Alleyne, who was in charge of the division, for reinforcements.

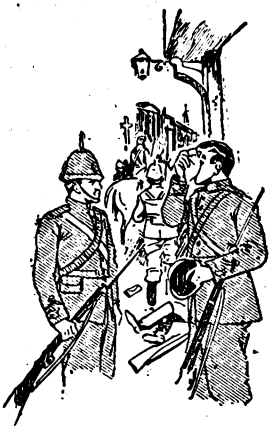
But every brigade was hotly engaged, and relief was impossible.

Colonel Blyth hesitated no longer. Whatever the result to himself and his men, the French must be driven out of Les Petits Osiers. Calmly trotting his horse into the bullet-swept zone in front of his men he shouted, pointing to the town with his sword: "Now, who leads?"

Few could hear him owing to the noise of the firing, but all understood his action. Every man sprang to his feet and a race ensued between the different regiments as to which should be first to close with the enemy.

Alas, many fell by the way! Of that fine brigade it was afterwards computed that 400 men were lost during that frightful onrush.

But heroism such as this was not to be denied, and in a few minutes they were at close quarters with the French. The latter, nothing loth, sought to engulf them in a sea of lead and steel, and in a few minutes the entire brigade must have been annihilated had not help arrived.



Wiping the blood from a cut across his forehead.

Lord Roberts, at first anxiously noting the progress of the fight from the tower of an ancient church, was assured by about 5.30 a.m. that all was well on both wings. He descended, therefore, and moved up the reserve division to strengthen the centre attack where he counted upon the most stubborn resistance.

Among the troops under his direct command was a splendid brigade of 6,000 men, composed exclusively of the Royal Irish Constabulary.

Unequalled throughout the world for physique and steadiness on parade, these stalwart troops were much more at home in active service than when engaged in their ordinary duties, and there had been no little grumbling among the men when they were not selected to take part in the first attack. But, unknown to themselves, fate had reserved for them a predominant share in determining the fortunes of the day.

Perceiving with quick glance the momentary check of Colonel Blyth's force, and intuitively realising the difficulties against which he was contending, Lord Roberts now dispatched the Royal Irish Constabulary to his assistance.

At the precise moment when the Fusiliers and the London Corps were seemingly swallowed up by overwhelming odds of fresh troops, the Irish Military Police dashed at the double into the town and set about the congenial and oft-practised task of clearing the streets.

Now, street-fighting is an art in itself, and the French soon found that Ireland had developed the pastime to a pitch of excellence never dreamt of on the Continent. Whether using bullet, bayonet, or butt-end of a rifle, the Irish policeman was an expert of the first quality, and the small, if active, Frenchman was no match for the genial giant who proceeded to mercilessly instruct him in the science of an election fight.

In ten minutes there were over a thousand French soldiers stretched, killed or badly injured, on the paving stones of Les Petits Osiers, and the rest were swept into the open country at the rear, as though a tornado had struck them.

"Faith," cried a pleasant-looking leviathan, wiping the blood from a cut across his forehead when a moment's halt was possible, "that reminds me of nothin' in the world so much as like a Cork demonsthration."

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"It's a thrue word you spake, O'Reilly," said the man whom he addressed. "Th' only difference is that a Cork mob wouldn't have quit so aisy."

Lord Roberts, informed by signals from the church tower that the artillery and cavalry had driven in the French right, and that the extreme British left was already beginning to swing round, made up his mind at this moment to strike a tremendous blow at the discomfitted enemy.

Rouen was but three miles distant.

He had determined to attack the city next day with a portion of his forces, but the remarkable rapidity with which the huge French force had melted away before the ardour of his men, suggested the possibilty of capturing the place forthwith, when organised resistance was least probable.

Hastily explaining his design to Alleyne, to whose division he united the entire reserve, he sent off several aides to secure the co-operation of the mounted arms, which, by-the-way, were led by Lieut.-General Sir Drury Lowe.

Some further minor details were arranged with lucidity and dispatch, with the result that by 9.30 a.m. a fresh set of ideas were in full operation, having for their objective the capture of Rouen itself.

Alleyne's division marched in two columns along parallel roads straight for the gate known as the Port de Havre, and the cavalry and guns were instructed to press hard for the same point, eleven o'clock being the hour fixed for the combination of the attack.

The flying French were by this time seized with absolute panic.

To their excitable nature it seemed as though fate forbade that they should prevail against the British. General Saussier, after in vain risking his life repeatedly in the effort to stem the tide of disaster, had been forced by his staff to desist.

He hurriedly gave his second in command orders to defend the town at all hazards until Mercier could come to his assistance, and then resolved to proceed by special train to Paris.

He was captured by a dragoon, without the slightest attempt at rescue.

In view of the inflammable condition of that fickle city, this resolution was a wise one. He was the head of the army, and it was far better that the Government should be made aware of the magnitude of the disaster by himself than by the necessarily more unconvincing means of a dispatch.

Sir Drury Lowe was vigorously shelling the retreating force with shrapnel—his cavalry delivering charge after charge in the successful endeavour to more hopelessly crowd the French into the centre—when news of Lord Roberts's fresh design reached him.

By a mastery stroke of genius he at once changed his tactics.

Hastily massing his cavalry, he caused them to charge into the scattered but still numerous foe for a distance of about 800 yards. The division was then to wheel to right and left, thus opening up a clear path for the guns which followed in their track, and enabling them to decimate their opponents from the closer range.

This terribly effective manœuvre was repeated again and again, and the French losses during the next hour were simply colossal.

There was no time to think of any other consideration but the one object in view. The claims of humanity were necessarily thrown to the winds. Gunners and horsemen individually were but insignificant portions of this awful engine of death and destruction.

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The French general intrusted with the defence of Rouen, to which not a thought had been given prior to the battle, was madly urging his horse along a crowded and hopelessly encumbered road, when he was struck heavily by a section of a shell.

He was captured by a dragoon without the slightest attempt at rescue by the frenzied and heedless mob of soldiers, whose desperate rage was now centred upon one consideration only—the desire to save their lives.

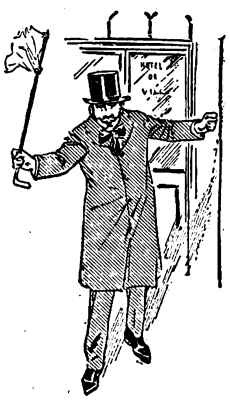
There were many opportunities when, had they rallied in the slightest degree, they must have hindered if not wholly stopped the murderous attacks of the British guns and cavalry.

Fewer men would, indeed, have been lost in attempting such a deed than in the blind fury of the flight. But arms, ammunition, knapsacks, belts, even coats and headgear, had been thrown aside, and the human torrents poured on, they knew not how nor whither.

Many died from sheer exhaustion, some went mad and danced and sang wild snatches of familiar ballads—whenever there was an obstacle in front lifelong comrades tore savagely at each other to gain another pace towards safety.

When the Lincolnshire regiment reached the outer line of fortifications it was hard to distinguish them from the dishevelled crowd of fugitives pouring into the city.

The *sous-officier* in charge of the guard did, it is true, realise what was happening, and strove to close the iron doors and raise the drawbridge.



It was the Mayor of the city.

He was promptly seized, and almost wrenched limb from limb by those of his own countrymen who would have been shut out by his action.

So well had the attack been timed that Lowe's cavalry and Alleyne's infantry entered the town together. The two British commanders rode into the Grande Place almost at the same moment. Of organised resistance there was practically none, but the stern necessity of war rendered it imperative that the ghastly slaughter should continue, for even yet a moment's breathing time given to the enemy might mean the complete failure of the bold movement.

One portion of a battery had managed to struggle up thus early—four guns of D Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery—and Major Eustace was ordered to at once open fire along the broad straight boulevards. He rapidly placed his guns in position. In a few seconds the shrapnel would have gone shrieking down the thoroughfare into the mass of fugitives, now, unfortunately, containing women and children as well as panic-stricken men, when a gentleman in plain clothes, bearing a white handkerchief tied to a walking-stick, ran through the main entrance of the Hotel de Ville, and bravely advanced up the street in the very face of the guns.

General Sir Drury Lowe rode forward to meet him.

It was the Mayor of the city, and he took it upon himself, in the absence of any proper military authority, to yield unconditionally.

* * * * *

Early that morning General Mercier had advanced with a splendid display of horse, foot, and artillery, to sweep the English out of France on the south side of the Seine.

He quickly discovered that he was fighting the air, and the flanking parties on the right also found to their cost that the Seine was held in force. Shortly afterwards the telephone from General Saussier's headquarters informed him of the fierce attack made by the British, and he continued to receive conflicting messages until all communications suddenly ceased.

As a matter of fact, any further information must have been conveyed in a strong Irish brogue, as the Royal Irish Constabulary had just entered the building.

Mercier, of course, wasted both men and temper in a useless duel with the well-posted and considerable army corps under Massy's command. At last came definite tidings. Saussier was irremediably beaten and Rouen was occupied.

The French General vowed, in all manner of strange expletives, that the English should yet be worsted, and he forthwith put into operation the most brilliantly-conceived and deadly tactical movement that Lord Roberts had so far been called to face.

He valiantly set out to march to the estuary of the Seine, with the intention of crossing the river by hook or by crook, and recapturing Havre, thus imperilling the British base and totally destroying their lines of communication for supplies and reinforcements.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Mercier's Mistake.

General Massy kept keen watch and ward at his post on the north bank of the Seine. By midday he became aware that the vast French army beyond the river was engaged in some definite move, but he could not discover its purport.

A captive balloon which he sent up for the purpose of finding out the direction taken by the enemy was destroyed by a shell filled with an explosive specially designed to cover an immense area. These missiles were in possession of both forces, and ballooning was, early in the campaign, rendered practically impossible by this means.

Foiled in his endeavour, and knowing well the futility of dispatching scouts across the river to ascertain the line of march of such an immense host as that commanded by General Mercier, the Englishman adopted the last resource of the modern philosopher—he lit a cigar, and proceeded to calmly reason out the situation, choosing Major Harington for his confidant, as the latter happened to be near him.

"Mercier has three courses open to him," he said reflectively. "He can attempt to recapture Rouen, in which case the chief will know about his intention before I do. If he is wise, he will retreat to Le Mans, and compel us to follow him before we advance on Paris. In this case we can do nothing to-day or to-morrow, and by the time we are ready for an advance we will have learnt his position. His third course—and, by Jove, I hope he won't take it—is to advance towards Havre and try to cut into our lines of communication."

"Well, sir," said Harington, "it seems to me that the last alternative is the only one to guard against immediately. There is a gunboat about five miles down the river. Shall I ride there, get ferried across, and see if I can find out where the heads of his columns are?"

"The very thing," cried the General. "Is your horse fresh enough?"

"He has done nothing but eat all the morning."

"Off you go, then. Take a small escort with you in case of accident. Report to me here, if possible, between three and four o'clock."

Harington chose a sergeant and six troopers of the Queen's Bays to accompany him and the party rode away at a sharp trot.

They soon found the tiny warship, and the Commander lowered a boat to row them across, the horses swimming whilst the men held the bridles.

Once on the other side they struck straight into the country and made for the highest point in the vicinity, some two miles distant. There was neither desire nor

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It was not three o'clock when Harington dashed up to the divisional headquarters.

necessity for caution. Speed was the chief requirement, and there were no hostile vedettes to be seen.

By 1.30 p.m. they were breasting the hill from the westward, and on nearing its summit Harington and the sergeant dismounted so as to reach the crest without showing against the skyline.

Both men whistled softly to express their amazement as they saw the entire French force heading towards the coast in dense masses, with a vast commissariat in the rear, and a cloud of cavalry rapidly advancing towards the place where they were standing concealed by some brush wood.

Harington waited a few minutes to take accurate note of the enemy's disposition. Then the Sergeant exclaimed anxiously: "If we don't hurry, sir, they'll see us."

"You are right," said the Major. "It will certainly be better that we should not be noticed."

They rode at a breakneck pace down the hill and were soon hidden by the trees on the road at its base. Once there Harington told the non-commissioned officer to keep in touch with the enemy's whereabouts so far as he could, and whenever there was anything definite to communicate, to send one of his party to the river with orders to cross by some means and give his information to the nearest officer, with a request to forward it immediately to Lord Roberts and General Massy.

It was not three o'clock when Harington dashed up to the divisional headquarters, covered with dust, and his charger steaming from the combined effects of the double bath and a fast gallop.

"Take one of my spare horses," cried the General on hearing the news, "and go to the Commander-in-Chief. I have just heard he is at Rouen. It is four miles and a good road."

Harington was desperately hungry, but he did not dare to suggest a moment's pause lest some other staff officer should be selected for this important mission.

Declining the offer of a fresh mount he set off again at a good hunting pace, and in half-an-hour he was clattering over the paving-stones of Rouen to the Hotel de Ville, where he found Lord Roberts seated in the vestibule, with the Duke of York and several divisional commanders, partaking of a hasty meal.

His lordship listened to the recital in silence, only interjecting a question as to the probable number of Mercier's guns.

Harington's diplomatic experiences now stood him in good stead, else he would have been slightly nervous. As it was, he spoke quite collectedly, and evidently impressed the distinguished soldiers present by his lucidity and powers of observation. His final arrangements for obtaining further news by means of the dragoons elicited a nod and a smile from the Chief, but as he concluded a deep silence fell upon the company.

Every man present felt that the situation was one of unusual gravity, and they all waited until Lord Roberts should express his views.

After a marked pause the hero of Kandahar, who had been scrutinising the marks left on his boots by the stirrup-leathers, suddenly looked at Harington and said; "When did you last have anything to eat?"

This wholly unexpected query went straight to the youngster's soul, for his eyes had unconsciously travelled

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towards some meat pies and sandwiches on the table. He blushed furiously beneath his outer crust of perspiration and dust as he stammered: "At five o'clock this morning, sir."

"I thought so," said Lord Roberts. "Sit down and have a snack. Don't hurry. Orderly, bring some more bottled beer."

Teddy required no second invitation. His youthful appetite was simply ravenous, and a lot of men would give pounds for the thirst which he slaked with a first long draught of honest English beer.

Lord Roberts was discussing Mercier's move with the Duke of York and the other generals present, when a cavalry orderly drew up outside, and a moment later the sentry at the door announced "a letter from General Massy for Major Harington."

Everyone, Harington included, imagined that some fresh incident bearing upon the French tactics had happened, and the common thought was that it was curious the information had not been sent direct to the Commander-in-Chief. The moment that Teddy glanced at the envelope he saw, to his bewilderment, that the handwriting was Irene's, and the cover bore the unmistakable London postmark.

Shortly after his departure Massy had received the post-bag, and, finding this letter, thought it would be a kindly thing to send it on to Harington—or it might not reach him for hours. But now the young officer was utterly at a loss to explain the occurrence, and the entire party were looking at him, eagerly awaiting the expected intelligence.

"Come, Major Harington, why don't you open it and learn what's the latest development?" said Lord Roberts, for Teddy had laid the note on the table.

Harington answered with the calmness of despair: "It's not from General Massy, sir."

"Then who on earth is it from?" was the Chief's very natural question.

"From a lady, sir." Teddy positively glowed.

Not a man in the room except Harington but laughed heartily at this unlooked for explanation.

"From a lady!" repeated Lord Roberts, with affected astonishment. "Do you mean to say that, in addition to your other activities, you find time for the affairs of the heart?"

If he did not wish to appear for ever ridiculous, Teddy knew that he must now tell the complete truth.

"It is from my *fiancée*, sir," he said, "Lady Irene Vyne, and I presume that it came to hand shortly after I started to find your lordship, so General Massy was good enough to send it after me."

"Ah," said the Commander-in-Chief, "you are a lucky fellow. You get your rewards quickly. Please ask me to the wedding. Meanwhile, you are transferred to my staff. I will explain to General Massy. You had better send a note back with the orderly, directing your servant to bring your baggage to the Hotel des Bains, Havre. We go there by train within an hour."

What talisman was there in Irene that she was so constantly associated with her lover's good fortune? It was the memory of her words that impelled him to the brave deed which won him promotion and the Victoria Cross. And now that fortune had again sought him—for it was no small thing to be thus pitchforked into the headquarters staff—her sweet personality became interwoven with his fate at the precise moment the fickle goddess had smiled upon him. No wonder he furtively kissed the note before he stowed it away beneath the left lappel of his field tunic.

His scattered senses returned as he heard Lord Roberts say: "Mercier has done the best possible thing to help us. By retreating on Le Mans he would have forced us to pursue him. An advance on Paris must be regarded as suicidal with such an army on our flank. As it is, Massy's division and the fleet can hold him in check until our men have had a night's rest, and are fit to cross the Seine in pursuit. Be good enough, gentlemen, to see to it that an abundance of rations be issued, and that none but the most necessary duties be performed. We are quite safe from attack. Divisions will commence to cross the river tomorrow at 7 a.m. I will return from Havre about that hour. You, Alleyne, will make all arrangements for holding Rouen, and a strong corps of observation should be pushed forward five or six miles along the Paris road tonight."

A little later the assembly broke up, and after Harington had seen to the care of his gallant charger he was ready to attend the Commander-in-Chief and the Duke of York on their way to Havre.

Here they met Lord Charles Beresford. Telegrams from the front announced that two of Harington's scouts had recrossed the Seine to bring tidings of the steady advance of Mercier's corps, and the latest news showed that the French were in bivouac for the night at a point nearly opposite Yvetot.

* * * * *

At noon on June 3rd, over 250,000 British troops were so posted as to cut off General Mercier's line of retreat towards Le Mans, and at six o'clock the same evening Lord Charles Beresford, who, conjointly with the Duke of York, was intrusted with the defence of Havre, was informed of the French advance through the woods opposite Caudebec.

Each vessel in the fleet had sent half her crew and all her boats to the river, and when darkness shrouded the landscape in gloom, there was not a yard of water unpatrolled for a distance of nearly eight miles.

Mercier laid his plans well. Strong rafts were hastily knocked together and carried to the banks on gun carriages. At midnight a combined attempt was made to effect a crossing, and thenceforth a series of murderous affrays commenced between the sailors and the French. It was during those few terrible hours before dawn that the British navy suffered greater loss in men than resulted from any other engagement throughout the war.

Every combat was a personal one. Small parties of equal strength and determined courage attacked each other resolutely, and the swift current of the Seine carried out to sea many a ghastly token of the fury of the fight.

But daylight came at last and the weary sailors were able to leave the task of defence to Massy's division, which had now arrived.

Not a Frenchman had reached the opposite shore alive, and Mercier had lost a great number of men and even more valuable time in a fruitless enterprise.

Furious with rage, he brought up all his artillery and commenced to shell the opposing heights. But the fleet soon took a strong hand in this game. When the tide permitted, the gunboats and lighter cruisers stood into the estuary of the Seine and effectually engaged the French artillery, whilst the heavier ships threw shells far inland amongst the thick clusters of troops, who were compelled to stand galled and inactive beneath this fresh infliction.

And so the day wore, amidst wild galloping of the French staff and objectless movements of divisions and ceaseless attempts, ever becoming more faint-hearted, to cross the river.

As night came on the French leader received unmistakable tidings of Lord Roberts's advance. The pursuing army was now only four hours distant, and, to cap all else, a colossal mistake by the transport had resulted in a scarcity of ammunition for the Lebel rifle.

Provision had only been made for two days' operations, and the reserve was in Rouen!

Summoning his divisional commanders, Mercier told them

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the exact position of affairs. He concluded by announcing that if they failed to reach the north side of the river at the next attempt there was nothing left but to capitulate.

Nerved by his words, his subordinates swore that they would succeed, and every preparation was made for a tremendous effort on the lines adopted during the previous night.

British audacity, however, supplied another solution to the problem which distracted the French Commander-in-Chief and his Staff. At ten o'clock Alleyne led his division across the river. Without a moment's hesitation he forced in the French vedettes and delivered a strong assault upon the enemy's position. In the darkness the numbers of the French were of little avail. The fighting was mostly between regiments and brigades; with energetic purpose on the one side, and irresolute uncertainty on the other.

An hour later Lord Roberts's first division surprised the French rear, and when dawn broke over the scattered combatants, his second division had outflanked the enemy on the south-west.

The rapidly growing light showed the British position to be a very favourable one. Even under equal conditions they would probably have beaten the French after a severe fight. Lord Roberts knew that his opponents must be dispirited, but he did not know that they were practically disarmed.

He realised that the crucial point in the campaign had now been reached, and the severe physical and mental strain under which he had lived for many weeks, and especially during the past three days, rendered him haggard and pallid in the extreme.

But the indomitable spirit of the great soldier who is so loved by the rank and file of the British army sustained him even in this desperate moment, when the fortunes of England apparently trembled in the balance.

He proceeded quietly, if somewhat slowly, to give the necessary directions for a combined attack by all arms, but suddenly Harington cried: "An officer with a small escort is riding towards us with a flag of truce!"

The Commander-in-Chief's iron nerve did not desert him at this momentous intelligence. He examined the party carefully through his glasses before he said: "What is the meaning of it, I wonder?"

The French envoy was soon before him. Saluting respectfully, he said: "My name is General Forêt, and I am commissioned by the Commander-in-Chief to arrange terms of capitulation and thus prevent useless bloodshed."

"The only terms I can offer," replied Lord Roberts, "are those of unconditional surrender."

The Frenchman looked the Englishman squarely in the face ere he strove to utter a protest. But he saw that argument was useless with this slight, stern Briton, who gazed at him so resolutely with his steel-blue eyes.

Yet he clung to his mission to the last. "Surely," he went on, "in view of our superior numbers, and taking into consideration the fact that unfortunate circumstances alone prevent us from offering battle, in which case—I say it with all esteem for yourself and your brave troops—we would probably beat you, you should grant the officers liberty on parole and disband the army corps."

"It is impossible, sir," replied his lordship. "The conditions under which this war is fought do not permit of such terms being accorded. Do you refuse? I am about to order the advance."

General Forêt hesitated a moment before he uttered the fateful words: "My orders are to yield, unconditionally or otherwise." Then, as if to excuse himself, he cried, with tears of anger in his eyes: "France is ruined by her own acts. Our men are armed with empty rifles!"

The "Cease Fire" was sounded, and before night fell arrangements were in progress for the speedy transportation to England of this host of prisoners of war.

France had now lost over a million of her best troops.

(To be continued.)

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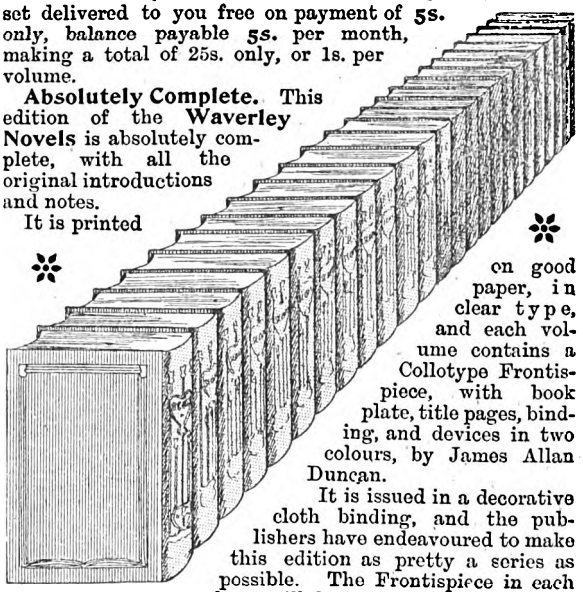

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A "Hero" and a "Martyr."

DAY by day he thought of it, and night by night he brooded upon it, till gradually there developed in his mind a direful purpose, born of a fixed idea that so often pushes the one possessed of it to success and fame, but still more often becomes the propelling agent to crime.

But to comprehend what follows we must go back a little—ten years—to the time when Jacques Fleurnois, a young and unknown physician, a native Marseillais, and without a sou in his pockets, had come to settle and practise his profession in Paris.

Cold and wet and semi-starvation were daily visitors to his garret in the Rue Nouvel before he could secure patients enough to provide for his simplest wants. Then one day, without the slightest warning, that fickle jade, Fortune, took a turn in his favour. Amelia Flint, an English maiden lady of mature age but ample means, true to thrifty instincts of her British nature, came to take up her quarters in the cheap little hotel where Dr. Fleurnois lodged, and to "do" Paris at her leisure.

Taken suddenly ill one night, a physician was needed in haste, and Dr. Fleurnois was called. He was as shrewd as skilful, and Miss Flint as susceptible as the rest of her sex who had reached forty years without suffering from a touch of Cupid's dart. He was ten years her junior, but what did that matter when she had a hundred thousand pounds secure in her own right, was absolutely alone in the world without a single living relative, and exactly the wife for a needy wooer?

In six weeks' time, so well did the Doctor exert his fascinating powers, Miss Amelia Flint, spinster, had become Mdme. Jacques Fleurnois.

Suffering and privation were of course gone for ever, but, alas for the plans of the happy bridegroom, he had forgotten to reckon in his calculation the fact that his wife was not a fool.

He had wanted and expected to get absolute possession of her money in making Miss Flint his wife, but Amelia, though willing to commit the folly of marrying a foreigner ten years her junior, had a clear head for business.

She held fast her property, both principal and interest, though she agreed to the securing of her income to her husband for life should he chance to survive her, the bulk of her property to be distributed at his death according to her will.

She cared for his comfort, looked after his home, catered to his taste, and made him a handsome allowance, but neither caresses nor wrath could induce her to sign over to him any portion of her estate.

One might almost say that she knew or felt instinctively the important factor her wealth presented in the maintenance of the peace and happiness of her home life.

He had married her for her money, and he did not get it, at least, not all. He hated his wife for this and, as I say, a direful purpose began to develop in his mind, a purpose all the stronger and more determined because, as the years passed on, Dr. Fleurnois fancied himself on the verge of an important medical discovery, which money was required to perfect—money by the thousand francs—and which could not be saved from his allowance or his wife's judiciously invested income.

Again and again he had appealed to his wife and urged her to peril her property in behalf of this enterprise, but persuasion, tenderness, anger, and threats—and turn by turn, he tried them all—were equally unavailing. Madame Fleurnois had been poor herself once, and never again, if she could help it, should the bitter bread of poverty be pressed to her lips. Her money was safe in sound Treasury bonds, and there it should stay. Such threats, too, as he persisted, would speedily oblige her to appeal to the protection of the British consul.

"And then, *mon cher mari*," said she, looking her husband full in the face, "I should go back to my own country and leave you to your own devices. A good home and a comfortable living, as you have, is worth at least a civil tongue in your head; I'd advise you to keep it."

The little conjugal tempest had left its mark, though Fleurnois was too alive to his own interests to permit it to stand long in the way of a reconciliation with his wife.

A drive in the Bois, a little dinner in the Café Anglais, and to all appearances the Fleurnois household had settled again to its former peaceful train.

In the husband's mind, however, was that ever malignant and darkening purpose. His invention absorbed his entire thoughts; the money needed for its developement he longed for as hungrily as a starving animal longs for a bone.

If only his wife could be brought to reason, or only be brought—to die. The terms of the marriage contract assured him her entire income, and, perhaps, after all, she had made no will.

* * * * *

The cholera was now raging in Europe, had reached Marseilles, and was suspected at Havre. Paris was tremulous with apprehension, nobody could be certain where its ravages would end or where next the dread plague would fasten its tentacles. Still, in spite of the rapidly growing shadow of a terrible epidemic, Dr. Fleurnois thoughts hovered always about the malignant idea that had now taken entire possession of him. Naturally, from wishing his wife's death to laying plans to accomplish it was only a step, and a step easily taken.

Poison must be the means, poison that left no traces before or after death, for, like all criminals of his calibre, Jacques Fleurnois was afraid of the law.

Sitting one morning reading the daily bulletin of the progress of the cholera plague, the following paragraph in a treatise upon the subject by a well-known authority caught his attention:—

"Timidity and fright," said the great authority, "in the handling of the plague, was doubly to be deprecated, for the reason that it not only predisposed persons to the contract of the disease, but also because it blinded justice and assisted crime; briefly, the effects and symptoms of certain mineral poisons were exactly similar to those of the first stages of the cholera disease, and therefore

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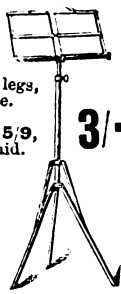

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FOLLOW THE USE OF

Dr. PAUL'S WHITE PILE OINTMENT.

Gives ease at once and effectually removes Piles, Cracks, Fissures and Ulcerations. In boxes 1/- & 2/6 each. Post free 1/2 & 2/9

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HUNDREDS OF POUNDS IN PRIZES - EVERY COMPETITOR GETS ONE OR A £300 HOUSE

LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.

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CASH PRIZES, as above, will be given away as an advertisement for PRAIRIE POWDERS, the unequalled pleasant and harmless remedy for Headache, Neuralgia, Nervousness, Rheumatism, and Tic, among competitors who succeed in turning into the names of five common ailments the following letters:

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SULPHOLINE LOTION,

For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.

Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case, Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

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BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.

SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.

In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

MAKE PRIME BEER AT HOME

Good! it's Mason's

EXTRACT OF HERBS

6D. BOTTLE MAKES 8 GALLONS

NON-INTOXICATING BEER

The most palatable refreshing tonic drink producible.

IMITATED but NOT EQUALLED

Of all Chemists and Stores. Also try Mason's Wine Essences and Mason's Coffee Essence. Sample bottle of either of above post FREE for 9d. Two, assorted, 1s. 3d.; Three, assorted, 1s. 8d. *Agents Wanted.*

NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

The BEST BEVERAGE for YOUR MEALS.

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such poisons feloniously administered would produce—as many times he believed they had—a death that was really a murder, but that passed unnoticed and unsuspected. It was well to be warned."

Jacques Fleurnois read the passage again carefully, laid the paper aside, and two hours later announced to his wife that he had made up his mind.

"I'm ashamed of myself," said he: "I ought to have gone before; I'm a Marseillais and I'm going now, at once, to volunteer my services for duty in my native town; the cholera is hourly increasing there, and the Government has issued an appeal for all the skilful attendance that Paris can spare. You, of course, will remain here——"

"Remain here, Jacques—I!" exclaimed Madame Fleurnois, surprised. "Certainly not; I shall go with you. Someone must look after your food and the proper condition of your home to keep you in health for your work. I'm a doctor's wife, and a doctor's wife's place is at her husband's side. I go, and that settles it."

Dr. Fleurnois had calculated upon this decision and laid his plans accordingly.

His wife, he said, was right; cleanliness and good nourishment were two-thirds the battle, in his opinion, and she certainly would be of great assistance to him if she was not afraid, etc., etc.

Two days later the thing was done, and they were installed in a comfortable little apartment in the healthiest and airest part of the town, with a stout, strong-armed *bonne* to wait upon them.

Neither husband nor wife seemed to fear the infection, and so, for nearly a fortnight, their stay in the dirty and pest-ridden city passed without a break or special incident in their busy lives. Then the epidemic began to abate, the cases grew fewer, and deaths less frequent, and Mdme. Fleurnois began to talk of the return to Paris.

For two days now everything had been bright and cheerful. The sultry heat of September had fled before a rapidly freshening sea-breeze that seemed to sweep from its path all illness and death, and this morning Mdme. Fleurnois had gone to the Cannebière market to lay in a stock of flowers. She stayed so long that the Doctor, apparently impatient for breakfast, at last touched the bell, and told the *bonne* to bring in the coffee—he would wait no longer.

He really had seen from the window his wife returning, though he did not say so, as he hurried Toinettei with the plates and coffee-pot, and when she had gone again to the kitchen for hot milk to fill up the cups, he hastily dropped the contents of a little white paper that he took from his pocket into the sugar already placed in the cup for his wife.

He had scarcely resumed his seat and his paper when she entered the room, her hands full of flowers, and a face of concern that she had kept her husband waiting so long.

"I am truly half-starved," she cried, "and you were right, Jacques, not to wait for me longer. There's a man too, from the board of physicians, calling for you down stairs at the door."

And the Doctor, anxious as he was to see his wife drink the coffee, was obliged to rise and go and see what the messenger wanted, while Mdme. Fleurnois threw off her bonnet, laid aside her flowers, and took her seat at the table.

As she did so, she glanced with the instinct of a housekeeper at her husband's cup; something was floating on the liquid, an insect of some kind shaken probably from her roses, and helplessly bobbing about in the steaming fluid. She took up a spoon and lifted it out, but spilled the coffee into the saucer as she did it in a way that still more offended her fastidious eye.

Really it was too bad! What a mess she had made of it. And not time, with Jacques so hurried, to have a fresh cup drawn for him. Ah! she had it—she didn't mind for once a splash or two, while Jacques was always so particular.

The exchange was made, the coffee drunk, and Mdme. Fleurnois all ready to help her husband to a fresh piece of omelet when he returned to the table, as he did in a moment, to swallow his coffee at a gulp and hastily excuse himself.

Fresh cases had broken out in the suburbs and he must go at once. He wouldn't return for lunch, but she could look for him for dinner."

And the Doctor, with a strange, wild glance at his wife's empty cup, turned and was gone.

Left alone, Mdme. Fleurnois fidgeted and pottered about the neat little apartment, and finally went into the kitchen to make a strong stock soup for dinner.

Jacques didn't seem well, she thought, and would be sure to neglect his lunch and need something strengthening. How white he looked, too, poor fellow, when he went away.

And all day long the wild eyes and drawn lines of her husband's face, as she had seen him last, haunted her memory and made her restless.

Six, seven, eight, and far into the night, the little table with its flowers and its delicate larded roast remained set and waiting for the master who did not come.

Instead there came with daylight a rap at the door, and a messenger from the Prefect of the Police apprising her that her husband would never return.

Dr. Fleurnois was dead, seized by the plague that he had fought so gallantly and so far with impunity.

They could not send for her, of course, and in accordance with sanitary laws then in force, she could not even claim the body.

"A hero and a martyr, madame," the Prefect added, "to the cause of suffering humanity."

To-day, as a "hero and martyr," Mdme. Fleurnois continues to mourn her husband, and to view with pride the Medal of Honour sent her as his representative, which hung in her prim little drawing-room in the prim little New England village to which she speedily returned. She remembers nothing but the days of self-devotion and self-sacrifice that they spent together in plague-ridden Marseilles, and is happily still ignorant of the fact that she owes her own escape from death at the hero's hands to the simple accident of an insect in a cup of coffee.

M. ALDERSON.

THE £100 PRIZE

In "Pearson's Weekly" Football Competition has been won altogether three times this season. This competition is simplicity itself, and you should certainly go in for it.

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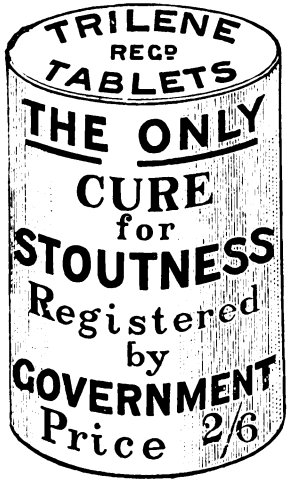
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

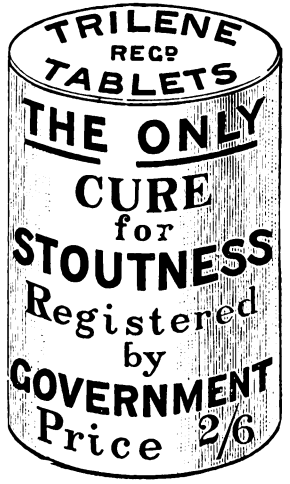
TRILENE TABLETS Regd.



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Convalescent Home, New Brighton, Cheshire.

Miss S. J. PRITCHARD says: "They have done me good. I am 21lb. lighter already."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

A. BROWN, of 25 Edwin Street, High Pallion, Sunderland, says: "You have no idea what a most wonderful effect the Tablets had. I am a great deal thinner, and better in health."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 21lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe diets, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if the had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cumbridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I think you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

Mrs. WOOD, 447 Cowbridge Road, Canton, Cardiff, says: "Tablets have a most marked effect, and I shall take every opportunity to make known the wonders of your remedy."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lanes, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

"Miss HUMPHREYS, of Claremont Buildings, Shrewsbury, has lost 1st. in weight already, and thinks the Tablets do every success."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 39 inches. I hope soon to be 42. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 5lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

Miss J. GUISE, 3 North End, Croydon, says: "I cannot speak too highly of the Tablets; I was stout as my life until a few weeks ago, when I first began your treatment. I was surprised to find they acted so admirably. I am now getting quite a slender figure, besides being better in health."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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I'VE FOUND IT AT LAST.

I would particularly call the attention of every reader to the offer on page 654. If you have not already read the conditions under which the £50 is distributed, you ought certainly to do so at once. A sovereign is not to be sneezed at nowadays, especially when it may be obtained practically for the asking. The names of those people selected are taken not only from directories, but from the previous lists of prize-winners in *Short Stories*, and from many other sources in which your own name may possibly appear. "Of course," you will say, "it is not likely that I shall be chosen." Well, perhaps not. Still, on the other hand, it is quite possible that your name may be down to receive a sovereign, and if on looking through the list of people who would have received the money had they applied, you find your own cognomen in all the glory of type, you would have very good cause to wish you had taken your Editor's advice, and sent along a postcard.

G. J. T.—There are about 70,000 more words in the English language than in the French, German, Spanish, and Italian put together.

H. M. T. wants to know which is the most popular name for British fishing-boats.———"Mary." There are no fewer than a thousand vessels round our coasts bearing this name.

D. E. K.—Eating hair is certainly a disgusting habit, but one far more popular than you would suppose. Many girls bite off the ends of their hair and chew them in the same way as certain folk find solace in biting their finger-nails. Some time ago a British medical man found four pounds of hair in the stomach of a woman about thirty years old.

L. J.—I have never seen jackets of fish skins in this country, but they are widely used amongst the Esquimaux of Alaska. The Dolly Varden is the fish utilised, and the skin is prettily decorated with red spots.

M. G. H. would like to know when the "new woman" first made her appearance.———It would be difficult to say, for even Isaiah the prophet, who lived more than 2,500 years ago, complained that the women of his time overstepped the old rules and customs of their sex. In ancient Greece the question was constantly cropping up. Aristophanes, the comic poet, had many a hit at the women of his day, and in his "Ecclesiazusæ" he showed them on the stage, dressed as men, transacting the business of the state, and deciding on a community of goods—and of husbands.

P. S. B. has a dim recollection of hearing somewhere or the other about a regiment of soldiers being selected according to the shape of their noses. He would be glad if I can tell him if there is indeed such a regiment, and, if so, where.———Probably the one you are thinking of is a regiment of infantry of the guards in the Russian Army, founded by the Emperor Paul. That gentleman was the possessor of a typical Kalmuck nose of the most excruciatingly uptilted pattern, and, since then, out of compliment to him, all the officers and men of that particular regiment have noses of the same shape. The sight which they present when on parade is, as you may suppose, somewhat startling.

J. F. B.—You are right; many old glass bottles are ground up and used in the manufacture of mortar instead of sand. The reason is that it binds much better.

H. S.—Copper, brass, zinc, and silver are fatal enemies to microbes, so that if you want to abolish the festive microbe you have only to drop a piece of either of these metals on it. Pure gold, when cleaned and purified, will have no effect.

A. F.—No pictures are hung on the walls of the Louvre, in Paris, until the artist has been dead ten years.

F. M. G.—Yes, it is quite possible to plunge your bare hand into a basin of water without wetting it, by means of spreading a layer of lycopodium powder upon the surface of the water, which prevents all contact of the water with the hand.

Rechabite. — No, the temperance society you mention is not the oldest in the world. There is at least one that can boast of greater antiquity, and that is the abstaining commune of Achlyka, in Siberia, all of whose members are strict teetotalers every day in the year—except one.

L. D. H.—A general election in France differs from our election in many ways a great deal more than that it is fought on Sunday. For instance, all men when they have attained their majority are registered voters, whether they are householders or not. Everyone qualified is inscribed on a poll list, and is armed with an electoral card, giving his name, profession, and his passport of citizenship; this also serves for purposes of identity. Each card is numbered and corresponds with the number on the register. When a voter enters the polling station he gives up his electoral card, the number is compared with the number in the register, and when his identity is established he is allowed to vote. Before the card is returned to him an official tears off a corner of it, which renders it useless. This precaution renders fraudulent voting exceedingly difficult.

Swede writes in reference to the marriage customs of Sweden, dealt with in a recent number of *S.S.*, to say that the bride is seldom loaded with all kinds of ornaments, although she may wear occasionally a belt of silver, with articles suspended from it, and that the struggle between the married and unmarried guests has been abolished for some time.

Cissie.—Yes, there were men dressmakers before Worth. The first celebrity who made his mark in this particular line was Rhömberg, the son of a Bavarian peasant from the neighbourhood of Munich.

Moses writes: "Is there any period in the year during which no actual night occurs in England?"———Yes, from May 22nd to July 21st. Twilight lasts until the sun has disappeared eighteen degrees below the horizon, and during these sixty-one days this limit is never passed. There is, therefore, no actual night.

N. J.—German women do not go in for the "Women's Movement," and have very little sympathy with new ideas. In this they are unlike the men. There are twenty-six and a half million women in the Empire, and as the sexes are fairly equal in numbers, it is perhaps well for the men that they restrict their energies to the home circle.

N. M. W.—The navy of Persia consists of one dispatch vessel—the *Persepolis*—of 1,200 tons and ten knots speed. She is armed with five small breech-loading guns. Egypt has no efficient war-ships at all.

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KITTY—"None of your soft soap, Pat."
PAT—"No, darlin', it's WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSORR I've brought ye."

The Cheapest, Purest, most Economical Soap made in this Country is

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER.

It does the work QUICKLY.
It does the work CHEAPLY.
It does the work THOROUGHLY.

Lathers Freely in the Hardest Water,

and is equally successful in the Household as in the Laundry.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
IS A
FULL-WEIGHT SOAP.

Each Tablet weighs SIXTEEN OUNCES as against Twelve Ounces in the Short-Weight Soaps.

OF ALL GROCERS.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

A 16-ounce tablet for 3d. equals 3 l. per lb.
A 12-ounce tablet for 2½d. equals 3½d per. lb.

A 16-ounce tablet for 3½d. equals 3½d. per lb.
A 12-ounce tablet for 3d. equals 4d. per lb.

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SOLID SILVER
£21 TEA & COFFEE SERVICES
(Or £21 IN CASH)
AS FREE PRIZES.

THIS IS A BONA FIDE COMPETITION.

PERFECTLY FREE. NO ENTRANCE FEE. NO DIVISION.

WE WILL PRESENT ONE OF THESE TEA AND COFFEE SERVICES TO EACH PURCHASER OF

The "ONRIOS" DREAM BOOK,

who fills in correctly the missing letters in the words below, relating to the "Onrios" Dream Book.

1. THE O----S B--K OF D--M I----------S
2. E---------Y E--D AND I---------D
3. WILL A----D YOU A F---------S D---------N OF YOUR F----E
4. AN I---------E A-----R TO YOUR P---------Y
5. WILL S----Y L--D YOU TO U---------E F-----E

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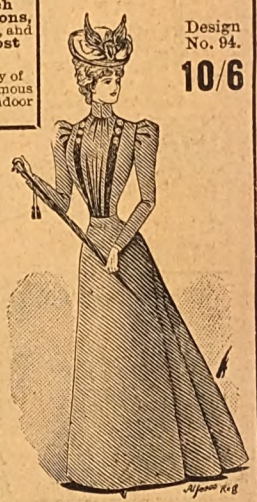

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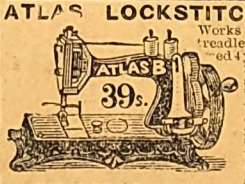

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THE BLACK KNIGHT.

PRINCESS MYRA KOLJASSOW was in the habit of passing the winter months every year in Berlin. There were various reasons for this.

She was not content to be in St. Petersburg, nor at her estates in the Crimea; she did not like Russia—hated it, in fact

She was a Berliner by birth, and a rich Russian prince, whom she had met at one of the court balls, had chosen her, on account of her rare beauty, to be his wife.

Naturally she could not refuse him. She was as poor as a church mouse; next to the youngest of eight children, and the countess' coronet that rested on her glorious dark hair forbade her seeking a way out of her poverty by her own exertion.

For two seasons Countess Myra Hildhausen had reigned as queen of beauty, and had had an unusual number of admirers, but no earnest wooer; and at the beginning of the third season she metamorphosed herself into the Princess Myra Koljassow with millions at her command.

Prince Dimitri Koljassow was not a very agreeable man; he was moody and tyrannical. Myra had to use wiles and coquetry, and degrade herself by many devices which, strictly speaking, were

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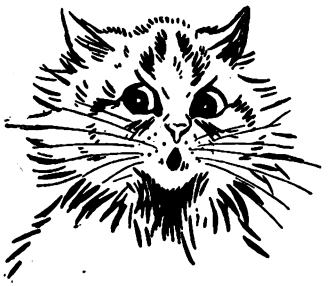

beneath her dignity, in order to keep him in good humour and his pocket open.

Nevertheless, she was content with her lot.

"You know I have no heart, mamma; that I don't know what love is; I don't believe that it exists; that I have striven to catch a rich husband so that I might have money to spend and satisfy all my desires."

She said this in a confidential talk with her mother, the old Countess, who lived in a pretty apartment near the Tiergarten, one that was worthy of her social position, and the rent of which came out of Dimitri's pocket.

The old Countess was a small, nervous woman, who was afraid of about every thing in the world, and of her son-in-law, Prince Koljassow, beyond all else.

"I cannot understand where Myra got the courage to marry him," she once said to her maid, in whom she had confided for many years, "nor how I ever managed to have such a daughter. It almost seems like witchcraft. Just compare all my other children with Princess Koljassow, dear Schmiedeck, particularly my youngest daughter Countess Melitta."

"Dear Schmiedeck," was of the opinion that the Princess was more of a demon than a woman, but she was wise enough to hold her tongue. Countess Melitta was the only one of the eight children who had stayed at home with her mother to care for her, and to be a companion to her. The others, that is, the girls, were judiciously distributed among rich relations; each one possessing her little drawing-room accomplishment, with which she, in some measure, paid for the hospitality shown her.

Melitta alone was without a talent, and not nearly as pliable as her sisters, rather austere in fact. Perhaps this was the reason why the old Countess clung to her more than to the others. She could always depend upon Melitta, and in her intercourse with her the girl showed an affectionate tenderness that the old lady missed from her other children. Her brothers and sisters looked upon the youngest as a sort of Cinderella, and in no respect equal to themselves. The brothers, indeed, appreciated her housekeeping when they came home on leave from their different military academies, and condescendingly dubbed her "a good creature." But that was all. On the other hand, they all looked up with respect to Myra, "the child of fortune."

Only the old Countess doubted Myra's happiness; and with maternal anxiety she would ply her again and again with questions during her stay in the Tiergarten villa, in regard to the details of her inner and outer life, but she always received the same answer: "I am content with my lot."

Princess Myra spoke the truth. She had no heart. The old Countess acknowledged it to herself one day when she sat at the tea-table with her daughter, who had arrived from St. Petersburg only a few days before. Myra had been talking of her adventures, of her triumphs, had told stories of men who had done the wildest deeds through love of her, and some of whom, in consequence, had gone to ruin. While the old Countess opened her eyes wide with horror, Myra laughed at her, and every now and then the sharp, white teeth crunched down on a piece of cake, and she marked the time of a few bars of "Madame Angôt" on the edge of the table with her spoon.

"So it is, mamma! It is not my fault that poor Marcel d'Aubray fell in the duel. Why did he anger Dimitri by admiring me too openly?"

"Because you are a coquette," answered Melitta, who was just passing through the room. "Because you play with human beings as if they were puppets. Tell her that it is despicable, mamma; and that she will rue it bitterly some day."

"Melitta is right," the old lady corroborated, fired by the earnestness of her favourite daughter. "Poor Marcel! He was so handsome in his white uniform, and his grave, brown eyes were so full of love for you. I believe he will come to you in your last hour, Myra, with others, perhaps, of whom I know nothing, and make it hard for you to die."

"Spare me your sermons!" cried the Princess angrily. "I am mistress of my own doings, and do not fear their consequences. There are only two things I do fear—age and satiety, and these are both still far off."

Just then the piquant, mouse-like face of the French maid appeared at the opening of the copper-coloured portières that shut off the next room.

"Your Highness, the hairdresser! He says he can wait no longer."

"You have indeed kept the man waiting a long time, Myra," the old Countess observed.

"Nonsense, mamma; a hairdresser is no one, and he must learn to wait, '*c'est son métier!*' I have no intention of leaving this tea-table until I have enjoyed my second cup."

There was an artistic confusion in the next room, the boudoir of the Princess. Parts of the brilliant costume in which the handsome Princess was to shine at the masked ball at the embassy, lay scattered about over all the furniture. The wax candles in the high brackets in front of the dressing-table were already lighted, and the hairdresser stood near in a respectful attitude. He did not lift his eyes from the ground until the rustle of a woman's skirts were audible. Melitta had come in in her noiseless fashion.

"I am sorry you have had to wait so long. You should have sat down," she said kindly.

"The gracious Countess is too good. I hope that the Princess will be ready for me soon, as my time will be up in a quarter of an hour."

What an agreeable voice the man had, and how genteel he looked in his black suit! "Irene would paint him as Childe Harold," said Melitta to herself, thinking of the most talented of her sisters, and her liking for Byronic figures. She studied the tall, handsome figure for a few seconds with objective interest, and the pale, oval face, with the thoughtful expression about the eyes and mouth. Perhaps this man, like so many of fortune's step-children, had been born to something higher, and was suffering now under the slave's chains that bound him down.

"Your business is not an easy one," she said hesitatingly.

The shadow of a smile crept over his face. "It, too, has its pleasant moments," he answered; and though his tone was perfectly respectful, his speaking brown eyes said plainly: "This is one of them!"

Melitta felt that she blushed, and an expression of disapproval came over her face. She turned to go, and said coldly, without looking round, "I will tell the Princess that your time is nearly up."

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Then the graceful figure, with the fine, intelligent face, that had called up the forbidden light of admiration in the man's eyes, disappeared, and a moment later Princess Koljassow rustled into the room. She did not look at the hairdresser, but at herself, as she sat before the mirror, giving her orders.

"I wish my hair dressed to suit the rôle of Cleopatra," she said listlessly. "Have you had instructions to that effect?"

"I have received minute instructions from the court hairdresser, Your Highness."

A flood of raven black hair, loosed from its bonds, fell down over the snow-white dressing gown. With such material to work with much may be accomplished. The classic coiffure, on which the golden fillets were artistically arranged, soon crowned the beautiful head. Princess Myra was a perfect Cleopatra, when, an hour after, she went to say good-bye to the old Countess. Her costume was dazzlingly beautiful and costly, copied faithfully, to the smallest detail, from a Parisian fashion-plate. The old Countess, however, thought it rather immodest, but she learnt from her daughter that she was old-fashioned, and had no idea of the spirit of the age.

"Others show more of their figure than I, without being favoured by fortune, as I have been," said Princess Myra fretfully, as she went off. "Dimitri said so only lately."

* * * * *

The fashionable masked ball had reached its height when Cleopatra entered the hotel of the embassy. She had driven thither in her own elegant troika, familiar to all Berlin (as her husband always liked her to drive three horses) and had been received there with flattering distinction. She had been made much of as the poor Countess Hildhausen, now, as the rich, independent married woman, she reigned supreme in the world of beauty and pleasure.

The Cleopatra costume of the Princess (who wished to be, and was recognised at once, in spite of her black half-mask), was universally admired; all the more, as it suited her bewitching and dangerous style of beauty so admirably. Princess Myra was forced to listen to numerous compliments, in which there was much exaggeration and little wit. She enjoyed them for the first half hour. The social triumphs of several years had blunted the freshness of the sensation, and she now saw with horror, although no one yet guessed it, the demon of satiety creeping nearer. "Not yet! It is still far enough off," she said to herself. "I still enjoy my diamonds, dancing and playing with human hearts."

"Let us dance," she said to her partner, as an inspiring waltz of Strauss began, and then she noticed that Chamberlain von Boethlingh in his artistic brigand costume no longer stood by her chair, but another in his place—a Spanish knight, tall and slender, dressed all in black, wearing the Calatrava order of the Cistercians on his breast. She did not recognise him for the minute, but was sure he must belong to her circle of acquaintances, for he offered her his arm, and led her to the dance. And how he danced! Princess Myra knew that she had never met him in a ball-room before. She would have been sure to have remembered his unusually light and yet firm way of holding her, and the peculiar rhythm of his motions. She was sorry when the waltz was over, and she asked her partner as he took her back to her seat if he would not lift his mask for her, using, as she spoke, the familiar "thou" of the carnival.

"No, Cleopatra," he answered. "It would not be worth while for thee, for I am no Antinous."

"But, perhaps a Cæsar?" she asked mockingly, angered by the sneer in his voice.

"No; nor that either. I have not come to fight with you, and you possess nothing that I think worth my striving for!"

His voice was cold, and seemed familiar to her. His dark eyes shone behind his mask, and reminded her of Marcel's, who had died for her.

"You are trying to rouse my curiosity," she said, bravely repressing a slight shudder; "but that is love's labour lost."

"You should not use the word love, oh queen! Your lips, whose wonderful beauty I acknowledge, change it into a serpent."

"What do you mean by that?"

"That you have no heart, Cleopatra; that you are superficial, egotistical and pitiless; in short, all that a true woman is not."

The Egyptian queen breathed heavily.

"And who or what art thou that darest overstep, in this unheard of manner, the limits of carnival license, already sufficiently vague?"

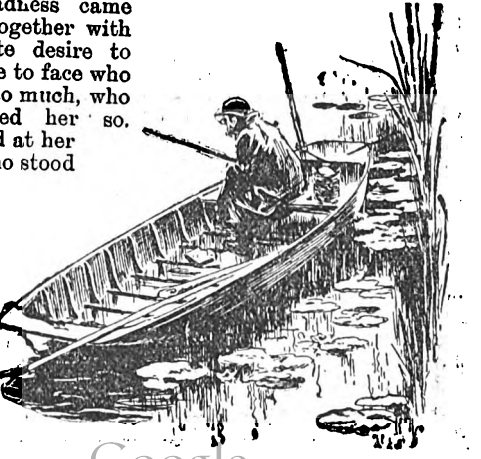
"I speak the truth," he answered coldly, "and dare speak it since I am not one of your vassals. I am a free man, who seeks not for your favour, and who uses the carnival license to show you that there are armours which your charms are powerless to pierce."

Princess Myra thought her anger would stifle her. "If my husband were here he would answer you better than I am able to," she hissed between her teeth. "Luckily, I do not lack for friends who will act for me."

"And whom, in gratitude for their devotion, you will expose to your husband's deadly weapon," he continued cold-bloodedly. "Remember Marcel d'Aubray."

She shuddered; her heart began to beat tumultuously. At that moment the music began again, and the black knight bowed gracefully to her and said, "May I have the honour, queen?"

"Never! not one step, nor one more word, with you," was what she tried to say, but it died away on her lips, for the eyes that reminded her so of Marcel's, now looked so commanding that they forced her to rise. Half against her will she let him lead her back to the dancers. A glorious gallop forced her anger momentarily into the background, and they glided along as if supported by wings, and every other sensation was lost in an indescribable intoxicating rapture. But when the dance was over she could not feel the same anger again. A new and curious sensation, a gentle feeling of soft, longing sadness came over her, together with a passionate desire to see him face to face who had dared so much, who had insulted her so. She glanced at her partner, who stood silently beside her.



"Listen to me, black knight," she said, and her voice had never before been so gentle

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in speaking to any man. "You have misused your masker's right, but I will not be angry with you for it, but will show you that I am magnanimous enough to bear the truth. Let us be friends."

"That cannot be. No woman without a soul can charm me. I have only one feeling toward you—that of pity!"

"Idiot!" she cried, with quivering lips. "Do you not know that I have everything to make existence worth living for—that I stand on its summit?"

"I know it; but one day you will have to descend," he answered indifferently. "Every one must. You will grow old and lose your charms, and then your life will be poor and empty."

Princess Myra trembled with anger. Never before had anyone dared hint that her youth and beauty were not immortal.

"Do those in the kingdom whence you come always stay young and beautiful?" she asked derisively.

"By no means; but in my kingdon every one possesses a talisman against satiety."

There it was! That was the word she had always hated and feared above all others, that tortured her in secret. Cleopatra waved her fan of shining peacock feathers nervously to and fro. She was forced to master her emotion, for some of her admirers had again surrounded her. They wanted to learn something from her of the knight of the Calatrava. They guessed first one person, then another of her circle, but Myra was sure that no one had guessed correctly, and she determined to solve the riddle alone. Her head throbbed, her pulse beat rapidly.

What had that man not said to her! How pitilessly he had called all her faults by name! How well he seemed to know her, and how cold her beauty left him! This last hurt her most. Her glance followed the mysterious man as he mixed with the crowd. His proud bearing, the unusual taste shown in his costume of black armour was noticed by everyone. Elegantly dressed female maskers approached him, trying to open a conversation, but t ey held him only *en passant*. He seemed to prefer to be a silent spectator.

Princess Myra managed to get near him again, as if by accident; his personality had for her a mysterious charm.

A commanding gesture of the hand, in which her fan seemed a sceptre (and one which she always used to order about her crowd of admirers), called the black knight back to her side.

"I shall not wait for the unmasking, but am leaving the ball at once," she said; "let me see your face before I go, and tell me who you are."

He bowed, but did not raise his visor.

"For you I am no one. Farewell, queen, and if you wish to truly enjoy life, then try to be kinder, gentler, and more unselfish. Those are qualities which keep off satiety, and are more enduring than youth and beauty."

He was gone. Princess Myra was again surrounded by her friends, but a curious numbn ss overcame her. Something she could not have named burnt within her and pierced her soul, even after she had left the ball.

The Princess spent almost the whole of the next day in bed. She wanted to sleep it off, but her slumber was disturbed by feverish dreams, in which the black knight raised his visor and showed Marcel's pale dead face, and then aga'n a skull grinning in derision.

She was pale and looked worn-out as she sat before her dressing-table again that evening to have her hair done for the entertainment at the Nobles' Club.

"I want my hair curled loosely to-day, and put one or two of these pomegranate blossoms on the side," she said to the haird esser, who was a ready beginning his work. "I am a little fatigued from yesterday evening, and shall have to use a touch of rouge. What do you think?"

This question was directed to the hairdresser, and as she spoke she looked at him for the first time—a quick, indifferent glance.

"If your Highness wishes my opinion, I prefer under all circumstances, natural pallor to artificial colour."

That voice! Where had she heard it before? With a violent twist of the head she obliged him to stop in his work, and now, with vivid interest, she scrutinised the proud pale face with the almond-shaped eyes that were so painfully like Marcel's.

"Do I dream?" she whispered, pressing her brow with her slender fingers. "You are—you are—speak! I will know who you are!"

A satirical smile played about his mouth. "If Your Highness wishes to know exactly, I am the first assistant in the shop of Ferdinand Herzberg, the court hairdresser in Dorothea Street. That is, I was until yesterday. I work to-day for the last time at my profession, voluntarily, from—love of it."

"You rascal! You have dared force yourself into a social circle closed to your class, to play the cavalier, to insult a lady of the highest aristocracy! You have—"

"Your Highness will do well to speak in a little lower tone," the calm, melodious voice interrupted, "or the servants may piece together things that have no connection with each other, and tell the world a dangerous romance about the Princess Koljassow."

"You are insane, a fiend!" the Princess hissed between her teeth. "How did you learn all the details of my life and character? I order you to answer me truthfully."

"And I gladly obey the command of Her Majesty, Queen Cleopatra. All that I know and that I spoke of under my mask Your Majesty's own charming mouth betrayed to me. I was forced to listen to what you were saying yesterday evening when I spe it nearly an hour of my valuable time waiting in this room."

"Do you know that this unfortunate joke of yours may cost you your position, and even more—that I can destroy you?"

"No," he said smiling, "but I know that the story of Princess Koljassow and the black knight may become the most piquant anecdote of the season. Your Highness will therefore do well to let me finish your coiffure quietly, then the carnival 'frolic,' which, as we know, has its grave side, will remain the secret of Queen Cleopatra and the black knight."

Princess Myra was forced to acknowledge that he was right. His quiet energy conquered her will. Quivering and almost fainting from anger, she yet remained quiet under his hands.

Quickly and gracefully he arranged a coiffure of the heavy black locks. But when the last hairpin was in place the Princess, in her trained white dressing gown, drew herself up to her full height and faced him. Her large black eyes threatened him with their fire.

"Never come under my eyes again! Do you understand? If I have need of a hairdresser——"

"I have already had the honour to tell Your Highness that I left my place yesterday, and therefore, in any case, my hands would never again touch this beautiful

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hair. But I cannot prevent our meeting in some other place."

She gave him a look of deepest disdain.

"My position will render that impossible. And now you may go. But stop! I wish to know one thing more. What was the reason of your most presumptuous behaviour at the carnival?"

"A few words from your mouth, Your Highness, that you forced me to listen to, and which, had a man uttered them, should have been differently answered."

"Repeat them!" she commanded.

With one hand on the door he made a low, disdainful bow:

"'Nonsense, mamma, a hairdresser is no one!'"

* * *

"Never come under my eyes again!"

"Good evening, Myra Twanowna, my turtle dove."

"Good gracious! You have frightened me to death again, Dimitri! You know my nerves can't stand such shocks."

"They'll have to learn to, *duschinka!* And now, come and give me a kiss."

The Prince delighted in surprising his wife in this manner when she thought him furthest away and had almost forgotten his existence; and the fright she always showed never failed to amuse him heartily.

Myra rose, sighing resignedly, and laid down her novel, "*Journal d'une Rapture*," by Maizeroy.

"Have you seen mamma yet? Has anyone given you anything to eat?"

"I lunched at the club with Pawal Jaruschkin and some other jolly fellows. I tried to see your old lady, but she wouldn't admit me. Melitta, whom I saw for a minute, told me you were both going this evening to the Marzdorf's dinner."

"To be sure Melitta goes out so seldom; but as Baroness Marzdorf, whose birthday we celebrate, is her godmother, she couldn't well refuse. Are you going with us?"

"Of course, my love; the husband of the much-sought-after Princess Koljassow must be seen with her a few times in the year instead of some other favoured cavalier." With this his fingers closed caressingly around Myra's bare arm, and she gave a little cry of pain.

"You press me too hard! You'll leave a red mark."

"Wax doll! Cover it over with one of your thousand bracelets. Now I'm off to get an hour's snooze. Have me called when you are ready."

The Marzdorf Hotel contained this evening only a select company. "To-day we serve thee up a celebrity, Myra," said the old Baron Marzdorf to the Princess, whom he "*tutoyed*" as he did all the Hildhausens.

"You excite my curiosity, uncle; who is it?"

"No less a person than Herbert Wilnau, the author of the 'World's Children,' that everyone is talking and writing about."

"We know the novel, uncle; Melitta is completely charmed with it; and it kept its interest up for me, too, until the end, although the author doesn't deal exactly gently with us poor children of the world. If, however, he belongs to the rich Courland Barons of Wilnau Schoningen, he does not have to earn his bread and butter by his art."

"He is not working for that, nor yet for laurels. Wilnau has the courage to be truthful. He will talk, will be heard, and will do good with his words."

"A modern apostle, then," said the Princess mockingly. "I can imagine a fitting exterior."

The old Baron laughed with amusement.

"Thou shalt judge of that thyself, thou little malicious creature. I'll bring thee my apostle."

A moment later Princess Koljassow opened her black eyes wide, as if she saw a ghost. She gasped for breath, her fan nearly fell from her hand, and, for the first time in her life, she could not smile the conventional smile, with which she was wont to entrap her victims at the first sight.

"Baron Herbert von Wilnau, dear Myra," and then the host slipped off quickly to greet some new arrivals. Again they faced each other—Queen Cleopatra and the black knight.

Yes; there was no mistake. It was he. It was he in the faultless evening suit, with the faultless bearing, and with the faultless chivalrous manner in which no one but herself could discover the slight trace of derision. He stood before her, and with social dexterity began one of those momentary conversations which take place in a salon between two strangers. Myra had to answer in order not to excite attention. She could not show her anger, for with the exposure of his bold intrusion she would compromise herself. So there was nothing to do but control herself and wait for the right moment; but she could prepare Dimitri, could set him on him, as it were.

As soon as she could do so without attracting attention, she drew her husband aside.

"You will have to fight for my honour again, Dimitri. There is a man amongst the guests of this house who has mortally insulted me." The Prince did not answer, but the vein that ran across his low forehead was swollen and blue—a bad sign. Myra knew that now he would follow his quarry doggedly, and that the proud man with the cold glances upstairs was as good as lost, let him choose what weapons he would in the duel.

"When you know all, Dimitri——"

"Has he paid you court in an unauthorised fashion?"

"No; but——"

"Very well, then, the matter can wait until we get home. And now put on a brighter face, Myra Twanowna, or hang me if I don't make you! I won't have people think there has been a conjugal quarrel between us."

Willing or not, the Princess was obliged to resume her social mask. The evening seemed endless. The ease with which Wilnau moved among those present, the open admiration shown him by everyone, and not least by Prince Koljassow, increased her unhappiness, until it was scarcely to be borne. At dinner, Wilnau

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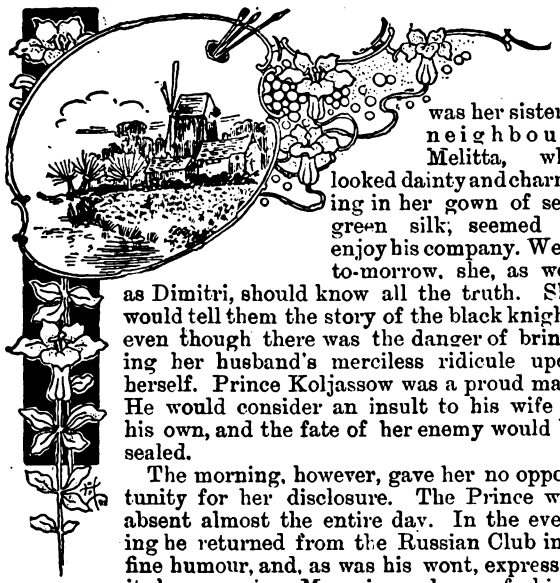

was her sister's neighbour. Melitta, who looked dainty and charming in her gown of sea-green silk, seemed to enjoy his company. Well, to-morrow, she, as well as Dimitri, should know all the truth. She would tell them the story of the black knight, even though there was the danger of bringing her husband's merciless ridicule upon herself. Prince Koljassow was a proud man. He would consider an insult to his wife as his own, and the fate of her enemy would be sealed.

The morning, however, gave her no opportunity for her disclosure. The Prince was absent almost the entire day. In the evening he returned from the Russian Club in a fine humour, and, as was his wont, expressed it by caressing Myra in a clumsy fashion, who lay on the sofa suffering from ennui.

"Don't pull my ears off, Dimitri," she said, pushing away peevishly one of his large hands. "It was very impolite in you to stay away all the afternoon when we had arranged to pay calls together."

"Bosh! One day is as good as another for that nonsense of paying visits," the Prince answered indifferently. "Why should I have to do penance and leave the club, where everything was so amusing? Wilnau gave a superb little breakfast, to which he kindly invited me. He leaves Berlin this evening for his estates, but he says he will soon be back. He is truly a clever, interesting man, this Wilnau! Just imagine the original way in which he learnt the details of the life of the Berlin aristocracy that are to appear in his new novel. He became the assistant of the court hairdresser, Herzberg, for several months, and was so diligent and showed such aptitude in the practice of the noble art of the coiffure and being, moreover, so refined-looking, that his master trusted him to attend his most aristocratic customers. In this manner Wilnau was able to study his subjects in *negligée*, without their rouge, physical or moral; and gained a deep insight into much which he will use—naturally with the finest tact and delicacy—so that no complaint may be made against the book or its author. Isn't that a fine joke, Myra Twanowna?"

The Princess made no answer. Everything was swimming before her eyes. It was several minutes before she could master her emotions sufficiently to speak.

"I really do not know if one ought to believe such romantic tales," she said at length. "Has the thought never come to you that this man, whom you so much admire, might be an adventurer, a deceiver, who has assumed the good old name of the noble Courland family from some sinister motive?"

"Of course not. This Wilnau is as genuine as myself. Many in the club know him well; moreover, I wish you to keep what you have just heard secret for the present. The Baron doesn't exactly make a secret of it; still, for various reasons, that you can easily surmise, he doesn't care to have the matter spoken of all over town."

After her husband had left her the Princess fell into a mood not easy to describe. The little romance, the centre figure of which was the mysterious black knight, appeared to her in an entirely new light. Why had she not recognised the man of rank at once under the disguise of a hairdresser—at least, then, when during their last conversation, he had opposed her with so much firmness and boldness? How would Melitta take the news? Myra rang the bell and told her maid to send the Countess to her. Melitta came, and listened to the marvellous tale with her own peculiar calm.

"I recognised at once yesterday evening the hairdresser whom you kept waiting so long in your dressing-room in Baron Wilnau, when he was introduced to me," she said. "The mystery perplexed me at first, but then I resolved to see in Wilnau for that evening nothing but the author of the 'World's Children,' whom I have so long been anxious to meet, and to wait patiently for the solution of the riddle. As far as you were concerned, dear Myra, you could not have ignored the Baron more completely than you did. Naturally, he felt it, and he looked over at me several times with an expression on his face that I couldn't comprehend."

"I know nothing about that," the Princess answered, "but if you think that the Baron felt hurt at my behaviour, I will try and make up for it at the first opportunity. Besides, we have something to forgive him also."

"Without a doubt," answered Melitta smiling. "We and many others. Wilnau will have to take patiently the scoldings he so richly deserves. But he gained his object."

From that day on Princess Koljassow's thoughts were occupied almost constantly with the black knight, although in an utterly different manner, for she could no longer despise him. He had taught her some hard lessons.

He was the only one whom her beauty could not influence, but also the only one (this she now thought, or believed she thought) whose favour seemed to her really worth striving for. She must win, if she took the trouble.

To take the trouble to please a man! That was something new; but also exciting and exhilarating, and promised a glorious reward. What a triumph it would be to conquer that proud man, and to see love soften him!

One afternoon, when Myra Twanowna had received her first violets from one of her admirers—for spring had come to Berlin—the Prince brought her the news of Wilnau's return.

"I have just spoken to him, and he asked me only a moment ago to bring him to call on your mother," he said, blinking at his wife through his half-closed eyes.

"Do it if you like," she answered indifferently; "but speak to mamma about it first."

"She will have no objection when she learns how anxious he is for it," the Prince said. "I think we might invite Wilnau to dine with us in a day or so."

Never had Myra paid so much attention to her toilet as on that occasion. She tried to outdo her own beauty.

A gown of heavy black satin, relieved about her neck, and the wide, open sleeves by a narrow band of white swans-

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down, suited her purpose best. There was a necklace, a triple string of rare black pearls, called devil's tears, which would match the costume perfectly, but they were still lying in the jeweller's case. Dimitri must buy them, and in order to compass this, Myra had to play one of her little comedies of affection, in spite of her distaste for it.

The Prince was willing. "You shall have the devil's tears, and adorn yourself with them for my friend Wilnau," he said. "Send after them. Here is a cheque that will be sufficient."

"I only adorn myself for myself, Dimitri."

"Very well, that's six of one and a half a dozen of the other," he said, giving his beautiful wife a little caressing slap on the cheek, which might have been a little lighter, however.

Princess Koljassow had to acknowledge to herself, that never had she deserved to be admired more than on the evening that was to bring the one for whom she was longing.

"He will forgive me. He will not be able to escape loving me," she said to herself, smiling gaily at the beautiful creature in the mirror. "Perhaps he is conscious of it already, for what else could make him call on mamma? He will come and will discover that Cleopatra has a soul now, and her eyes will say to him, 'Thou hast given me this soul, it is thine.'"

Her hands were stretched out toward the pearls in their white velvet bed, and she was just about to put on the costly ornament when the Prince, dressed for dinner, came in.

"I come myself to decorate your beautiful neck with the devil's tears," he said, dismissing the maid with a look. Myra glanced up in amazement. That was not his usual way of doing. What could have put him in such good humour? But it was wise to keep him in it, so she bent her head gracefully.

"Thank you. And now tell me, Dimitri, do I please you?"

"I am fascinated," the Prince answered, "and Baron Wilnau, our honoured guest, will doubtless share my enthusiasm, and be almost as proud of his gloriously beautiful sister-in-law, as of his fiancée."

"Sister-in-law! Fiancée!" The words faltered on her lips.

"Perfectly true, my love. Baron Wilnau is about to ask for your sister Melitta's hand. That was the object of his introduction to your mother. I thought that with a woman's quick wit you had foreseen this, and that your bewitching toilet was a delicate homage to the new brother-in-law."

"You are mistaken. I am most thoroughly surprised."

"It is to be hoped agreeably," he said emphatically, grasping her wrist with a hand like an iron ring. "Should you look at the matter differently from your husband, the harmony of this betrothal might be sensibly disturbed. Do you understand me, Myra Twanowna, my little gold heart?"

The Princess shuddered, her teeth chattered as if she had a chill. He offered her his arm and she let herself be led into the drawing room.

She looked entrancing, but like a statue, with the classically moulded neck on which rested the black devil's tears—the symbol of her own solitary genuine feeling, and of her own defeat—and with her stony, marble-white face, in which nothing seemed alive but the large gleaming eyes, black as night.

JESSIE TOMPKINS.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☛ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 8 distribution must reach us by November 28th, addressed to The 8th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Fifth Distribution appears on page 681.

No. 2 of THE ROYAL MAGAZINE Will be Ready on November 22nd. Still 3d. only.

The second number contains an article of absorbing interest entitled "Death by Electrocution," by one who witnessed it.

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THE WRONG WOMAN.

I HAD no business to see it, or to know anything about it, being a trained nurse out for my half-hour's constitutional, and not supposed to be hanging about a church gaping at a wedding.

The bride was tall and pale and composed, and the bridesmaid was a lovely, large-eyed, chestnut-haired, ruby-lipped girl, who seemed to think of nothing but the bride and the way her train and veil hung, and so on.

There were other bridesmaids and many smart guests, but once I had looked into the first bridesmaid's eyes I forgot all about them. Her eyes were large and deep, dark blue, with a look of some dumb creature in mortal pain. As for one moment I stared into them I could scarcely refrain from a cry of wonder, sympathy, fright.

She sailed in alone after the bride, and two by two the other eight white visions sailed after her, and I hurried out into the sunlight and, glancing at my watch, saw I had exceeded my time.

It may have been an hour after sunset that day when the superintendent rang for me.

"I wish you would take a special case for a few days. A young lady fainted at a wedding this morning and has developed some sort of fever—some brain trouble—since. Will you take it?"

A memory of the wonderful eyes and strange look I had seen in them, flashed into my mind.

"Certainly," I replied. "Must I go at once?"

"The carriage is waiting," said the superintendent. "Be as smart as you can."

And so it happened that I saw the bridesmaid again, lying in a stupor broken now and then by fits of delirium.

She opened her great eyes and said quite brightly:

"Ah, I saw you looking at me! You understood, did you not?"

"Yes, my dear, I know all about it," I said in a reassuring voice.

There were a mother, a father and a sister who hovered about the bed.

"Send them away," said the bridesmaid, as I took my seat beside her. "I want to talk it all over with you, because you understand."

So I sent them away, and she began a long, incoherent discourse, to which I confess I listened as I never before listened to fever ravings. The poor lamb broke off now and then, and dozed; then she renewed her talking, pausing once in a while to question me.

"You understand?"

And when I assured her I did, she rambled on again. Suddenly she started up.

"Nurse," she said wildly, "can't the wedding be stopped? Isn't it a sin for him to marry her when he loves me? She is rich and he is poor, and he is marrying the wrong woman, do you hear? *The wrong woman!* No one seems to notice it; you see, the minister doesn't know he loves me, not her! It's frightfully wicked of him to pray that way. No one knows but me. He knows, nurse; his face is as hard as iron, as white as marble; his eyes don't see me.

"Don't you think I had better just say his name out loudly? That will wake him. You see, he's asleep, and they are marrying him to her when it's I he wants to marry. Arthur! wake up, love. It is Alice you want, not Gertrude, Arthur!"

The young voice rang in passionate intensity through the quiet room, while I brushed sudden tears that were disgracefully unprofessional from my eyes. So this was the story of the bridesmaid!

They came in at her cries, and with drooping heads looked at her, but she said no more. Some remnant of reason closed her lips until we were alone again.

We were often alone, and after the ravages of the fever were past and she lay a shattered wreck of girlhood, her exquisite complexion pale, and her glorious hair cut close, she made me tell her again and again of how I happened to see that wedding, and she told me how her eyes read the startled sympathy in mine.

"I remember it so well," she whispered, "and I don't remember any more, except that I called out his name when I saw him put the ring on Gertrude's finger. It was too much for me, nurse."

One day she said gently: "He is coming to see me before I go away."

"How do you know?" I asked carelessly, not knowing what to say.

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"How? Oh, I feel it! You will see; he may come to-day, he couldn't get away before. You see, they have just come home. Then, after he is gone, I shall go away contented. But I couldn't go and not say good-bye, could I?"

"But, dear child, you won't be able to go away for a fortnight," I said hastily. "Don't begin to get restless, now; just lie quite still and good, and get up your strength."

The great eyes, greater still in their hollows, met mine steadily.

"You don't suppose I am going to *live?*" she said in surprised tones. "Why, you know better than that, nurse. After I have said good-bye I shall go quietly away, only I want to say good-bye first."

This as calmly as if she had said: "After I take my medicine I shall go to sleep." I went into the ante-room and wept, which was, of course, unprofessional, but somehow I'd never nursed a patient like this one.

* * * * * *

Not two hours later, just before sunset, he came. Everyone was out, and I met him in the ante-room. His face was like stone, his eyes strained, his mouth drawn. I knew it must be he.

"Are you the nurse who has been with her all through?" he said in hoarse whispers.

"Yes, my patient has been all mine," I said. "She is very weak. She must not be excited, but she must see you, because she knew you would come, and I dare-say she knows you are here now."

He looked at the closed door.

"May I——?" he paused.

"Alone?" I asked. "I am afraid not. But perhaps you won't mind me—we have spoken of you a good deal. I dare not leave her alone for fear it will be too much for her." And with that I went before him into the room.

She was so sweet and calm and happy, bless her! and just put her shadow of a hand where he could take it as he sat in my chair.

And I waited so long for them to speak that at last I turned and looked at them.

His face was marble no longer; his eyes flamed until they were fairly beautiful with the fire in their brown depths; his lips trembled and his white teeth gripped them desperately; the man's soul transfigured his countenance as it shone through.

She lay smiling at him, as sweet and quiet as an angel, and now and then her free hand, that was merely a wraith of a hand, softly stroked his, and I had not the heart to look again, but went quietly away to the ante-room.

Presently I went back, afraid for my bridesmaid. The man was kneeling by the bed and she had dragged her arms up and put them about his neck, and he had her little snowdrop-face between his hands while she spoke to him.

"And I am going away, dear," she said gently, with a ring in her sweet voice I had never heard. "That is why I wanted to see you so much to say good-bye. Don't forget me altogether, for I have loved you very, very dearly. Don't say it, Arthur, I know, but all the same I'd rather you didn't say it. You and I will love each other truly, purely, just as long as we live, *and after*—yes, dear, I know it. And now, good-bye."

And she kissed him and died.

J. PRINCE.

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 5.

Two applicants have succeeded this week in receiving a sovereign each in connection with this distribution. Their names are given below:

Se-gt. F. H. Pannell, Army Pay Corps, Northampton.
Miss E. Cramphorn, 28 Woodlands Road, Leytonstone, N.E.

It seems marvellous that so few of the fifty people selected should have been wise enough to apply, in view of the fact that many of the names are selected from previous prize lists in *Short Stories*, while others are from the various directories. Surely there is a good deal of apathy about the matter! If you don't care to apply yourself—that is, if you are not sufficiently in want of a sovereign to feel that the trouble and expense of writing a halfpenny post-card is justifiable—then, of course, you will be entirely a loser through no fault of ours. If, however, you were ignorant of this distribution scheme until your name in print has been called to your notice, then you are not to blame in the matter.

Some correspondents want to know if, once a name having appeared as one of those who would have received the sovereign if he had applied, there is any use in continuing to send post-cards. I may say that there certainly is, as I propose to select at least one name a week in future from the previous lists.

Below will be found the names and addresses of those people who would have been a pound the richer had they applied.

J. E. Long, Inland Revenue, Watlington, Tetsworth; Miss B. Roela, 13 Castle Square, Swansea; Arthur Bailey, 15 Archer Street, Osmaston, near Derby; C. Ambler, Prospect View, Thornton, near Bradford; R. H. Williams, Wellington Road, Camborne, Cornwall; T. Marsden, Studley House, Upper Belgrave Road, Clifton, Bristol; H. Robinson, The Parsonage, Heywood, Westbury, Wilts; F. C. Spendelow, 45 Ling Street, Holt Road, Liverpool; Miss A. Walker, 14 Esk Terrace, Whitby; R. Phipps, 16 Hall Street, Sale, Cheshire; G. Butty, 13 Regent Road, Morecambe; G. S. Knight, 15 Penygraig Road, Mount Pleasant, Swansea; F. T. Gibson, 24 Elmwood Street, Sunderland; Mrs. Allan, 13 Sydney Street, Glasgow; W. Back, 10 Edward Street, Brighton; A. E. Lower, 51 Station Road, Horsham, Sussex; E. Lambert, 1 Sunnyside, Sandgate, Kent; Mrs. McCourt, 47 High Street, Airdrie, N.B.; G. E. Mitchell, 333 Raglan Street, Lowestoft; Mrs. H. A. Green, Bengeo Street, Bengeo, Hertford; Mrs. Charity, 16 Sth. Brink, Wisbech; Robt. Howlett, Market Place, Aylsham; Thos. Wells, 12 Bury Street, Unthanks Road, Norwich; C. Keneely, 8 Patrick Street, Kilkenny; P. Creagle, District Inspector of Police, 6 Montenotte, Cork; John McGrath, 5 Lombard Street, Waterford; James Colhoun, 14 Pump Street, Londonderry; W. Hughes, Great Whitcombe, Carisbrooke; Joseph Murrin, Queen's Hotel, Queen's Road, Bournemouth; J. Goodwin, 3 High Street, Worcester; S. J. Griffiths, 15 Cradley Road, Netherton, Dudley; Jas. Methuen, 79 King Street, Wellington; W. Hobson, 24 Frith Street, Huddersfield; A. Britton, 12 Harehills Terrace, Leeds; Wm. Backhouse, 106 Upper Hanover Street, Sheffield; W. E. Rees, 26 Parkfield Road, Rotherham; Miss Hurt, The Nest, Castle Hill, Maidenhead; J. R. Cook, 1 Market Place, Reading; Mrs. Collins, 16 Bath Road, Banbury; James Dodds, 11 Erith Terrace, Bishopswearmouth, Sunderland; Mrs. Smart, 20 North Bailey, Durham; John Kelly, 16 Race Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne; A. Douglas, 3 Thistle Street, Aberdeen; John Carmichael, 17 Airlie Place, Dundee; John Fraser, 1 Summerside Place, Leith, Edinburgh; Miss L. Grey, Clovelly, 100 King's Head Road, Catford, S.E.; E. Shallcross, 71 Middleton Street, Clerkenwell; Miss A. E. Gilmour, 35 Helix Gardens, Brixton Hill, S.W.

Mr. JONES, Sir,—This is your week. Twenty-five of the fifty names that have been selected are those of people named JONES.

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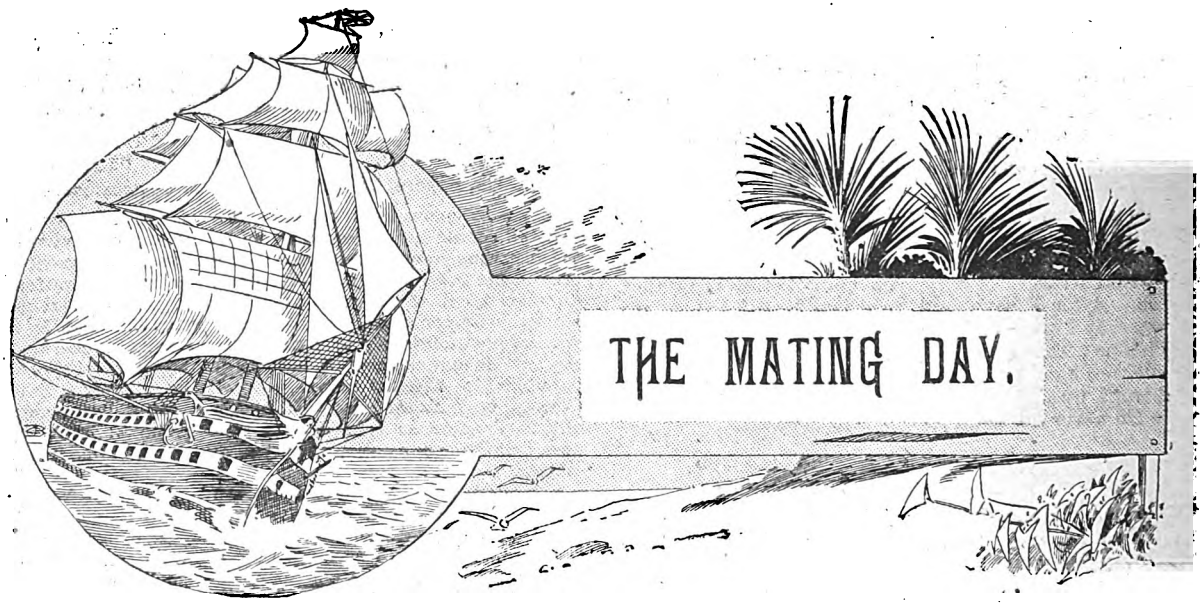

THE MATING DAY.

Gouigi the hunter lay motionless beneath a wide-spreading yacca that towered far above the other trees of the forest. The moon was out, and its beams, penetrating the leafy barriers, threw a network of fantastic shadows across the brown body of the islander.

He lay upon his back with hands clasped firmly beneath his head, and his bright black eyes staring at the branches above him. A long, double-pointed spear was beside him, the ends drawn to the fineness of a needle's point, its length well-polished and greased save for the handles near the centre.

Gouigi was thinking, and he had lain in nearly the same posture since the dawn of the previous day. For custom decreed that all those islanders who intended to take part in the mating tournament should absent themselves for the period of a day and a night from the society of their fellows, and Gouigi had made declaration to the chief that he would fight at the tourney.

One day each year the natives of this island of Macheki, in the South Seas, set apart for the mating of the maidens with the young braves of the tribe, and on this day took place a series of conflicts among the aspirants to determine which should have first choice from the bevy of eligible maidens. Usually, upon such occasions, the victor was content to triumph over his adversaries without seriously injuring them, and those vanquished had thus an opportunity to fight among themselves for second choice, and so on, until the maids were all chosen.

And upon most mating days there were many of the young warriors to take part in the conflict, yet now Gouigi counted upon his fingers and found there were but seven all told, who had declared their intention of fighting upon the morrow. For amongst the maidens to be chosen was Cheluilka, the daughter of the chieftain, and whoever won the first choice would thus in time become the first brave of the tribe, since the chief was very old and unlikely to live more than a few moons longer.

Therefore this time the duel would be fought to the death, the prize being the greatest fate had ever yet placed within reach of the mating-day champions, and only the strongest and bravest of the young men had dared to undertake the task of winning the Princess Cheluilka, and with her the leadership of the tribe.

Gouigi mused on all this as he lay under the yacca awaiting the return to the village. Somewhere amidst the forest were six other warriors resting or preparing themselves for the fray, but he did not dwell upon them long. True, they were the pick of the tribe, well skilled in the use of the spear, and of great and powerful build.

But he, Gouigi, was the strongest of them all—save, perhaps, Mati the Tiger, and Mati was a brute, whom he loathed and would delight to kill. He spat upon the ground when he thought upon him, and turned his musings into more pleasant channels.

Soon he would be chief of the tribe and able to command where he had before served. He would fight the Kankine for one thing, and drive them from the little neighbouring island, whence they so frequently descended upon his people to annoy them with their poisoned darts. And he would move the village over into the little harbour at the south, where the winds were less fierce. There were many things he had in mind to accomplish when he should become chief.

What a fortunate thing he had waited until Cheluilka was to be mated instead of choosing little Natka last year, as he had at one time intended. It was Mati the Tiger who had put it into his head to wait.

"For my part," Mati had said at that time, "I shall wait for the mating of the Princess Cheluilka, for whoever wins her will be chief."

And he, because he hated Mati and wished to fight him, had also waited, and so there was no one to choose little Natka, who had looked at him reproachfully, but said no word.

It had been a long year, in which he had repeatedly quarrelled with his rival; but the end was nigh at last, and his ambitions would not only be fulfilled, but supplemented by a triumph over Mati the Tiger. True, it would be a struggle to the death; there was no doubt of that. But he, Gouigi, would win. As for Cheluilka, he knew very little about her, for he had been several years with the other young men at the wars, and the

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fishing, and the hunting grounds, and the Princess had grown up in the village. But he had noted that Cheluilka was a handsome maiden, proud and reserved, and mixing little with the other girls of the tribe. He could recall, as he lay musing under the big tree, her full, rounded form, her piercing dark eyes, the erect carriage of her head and her disdainful smile. Yes, Cheluilka would do very well for a mate. She was not so lively as little Natka, nor could he expect her to mend his lines so deftly or to polish his spear so carefully as the laughing maiden who often followed him to the shore when he went fishing. But she was the chief's daughter, and with her he gained power and position, which, in their way, meant as much to the simple islander as to his civilised brethren.

The moon was waning now, and the light breeze which fanned his brow and fluttered the leaves of the trees heralded, he knew, the dawn.

He sat up, drew a piece of dried meat from his pouch, and leisurely ate of it, drinking afterwards from a little stream that flowed near by. Then, sitting down again, he examined with care his spear, testing its strength in every possible way.

Apparently satisfied with his inspection, he proceeded to bind up his long hair, heavy with grease, into a knot, fastening it upon the back of his head with a fish bone. Afterwards he made his toilet by rubbing every part of his body plentifully with grease, and then, seizing his weapon, he started through the forest on his way to the village.

With the first streak of dawn every member of the tribe was astir, and soon men, women and children were assembled upon the green slope that led to the sea. In two long lines that faced each other they squatted to witness the coming spectacle, and at the head of these lines sat the old chief, with the row of maidens just before him who were eligible to be mated.

The girls were calm enough, for it was well understood that but one would be chosen this day, since the fight was to the death. The surviving champion would, of course, select the Princess. The daughter of the chieftain, proud and self-contained, sat at the feet of her father, while the maidens on either side cast many curious and some envious glances at her dark, immobile face.

Little Natka was there, nearly at the end of the line, but her eyes were red with weeping, for on this day she knew that Gouigi was destined either to fall in death or to mate with the Princess, and either event would rob her of him for ever.

At the other end of the double row of spectators and facing the chief and the maidens, was the dark edge of the forest, and now, as the sun shot its first ray over the tree-tops, the aged chief rose painfully to his feet and exclaimed:

"It is the day of mating. The maidens await their lords. Who demands to choose first amongst them?"

"I demand the choice!" cried a voice, and a tall, powerful warrior stepped from the forest and advanced into the square. A loud murmur arose from the people, for this was Mati the Tiger, whose prowess was well known and respected.

But scarcely had he taken his place, spear in hand, when a lithe, slender form darted from the thicket and said boldly:

"I am here to choose first from the maidens. Who denies my right?"

"I!" returned Mati, and poising his spear he advanced upon his rival, who quickly sprang to meet him.

The contest was short. For a moment both whirled their slender spears rapidly before them, and then, quicker than the eye could follow, they came together—and separated. Mati stood upright, but his antagonist, uttering a great cry, fell writhing upon the ground and lay still, pierced to the heart by the sharp-pointed spear of his foe.

Again from the crowd rose a murmur of approval, and the Princess Cheluilka, aroused from her customary reserve, laughed aloud and clapped her hands together.

"Who now disputes my right?" cried Mati, strutting up and down in evident pride.

"I!" answered a voice, and another youth stepped from the forest to confront him.

The combat was longer this time, for the new champion was wary, and twice the warriors came together and separated before Mati's powerful arm could drive his spear-point home. Again he received the plaudits of the spectators, and again the Princess laughed.

The dead bodies were drawn from the square, and Mati turned to face another foe. But none were able to combat him long, and within the hour five dead forms lay side by side upon the green, silent evidences of his wonderful skill.

The Princess was fairly transformed by excitement. A deep red glowed beneath her brown cheeks, her eyes glistened like a serpent's, and as each warrior fell before the strong arm of Mati, her little hands were the first to demonstrate approval. She seemed to revel in the bloodshed, and Gouigi, watching her from the concealment of the forest, wondered at her high spirits, and glanced anon from her radiant face to where little Natka sat shrinking backwards and shielding her eyes from the ghastly scene.

But his turn had come now. Mati was already shouting:

"Who now challenges my right to choose first?"

Gouigi grasped his spear firmly and advanced with slow strides into the open. The crowd greeted the newcomer with a growl of applause.

His great form, erect and firmly-knit, glistened bravely in the morning sun. His head was thrown back in an attitude both dignified and defiant, and his clear eyes, steadfast and piercing, sought his rival's face and questioned it gravely. He looked every inch a chieftain, and the people, quick to judge a warrior's powers and resources, glanced at one another and whispered:

"Mati has found his match!"

Mati himself undoubtedly realised that his most desperate fight lay before him, but he did not flinch. Shaking his spear in bravado and casting a look at Cheluilka, who smiled and nodded her head to encourage him, he advanced with quick strides towards Gouigi the Hunter.

Swiftly the spears of the antagonists whirled above their heads and then, with a sudden rush, they met, and the crash of the spears, both splintered into fragments, echoed sharply through the forest.

The natives looked at each other in amazement, for such a thing as this had never happened before in their experience. Gouigi and Mati, each astonished at the force of the other's blow, stood face to face glaring defiance.

Then Gouigi turned his head.

"A spear!" he shouted.

Instantly two young men leapt from the ranks of the spectators and thrust their spears into the hands of the combatants.

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"Good!" cried the Princess, leaning eagerly forward.

The fight began anew, and so fiercely did it wage that for a time nothing could be distinguished but a mass of struggling brown limbs and the flash of the greased spears as they whirled in the sunshine. Then arose a wild cry, for Gouigi's spear had broken near the middle and the Tiger was pressing him furiously. But Gouigi managed the half weapon that remained to him with such consummate dexterity that a minute later Mati's spear was wrenched from his grasp and sent flying through the air. The Tiger reeled backward, and fell upon his knees, and now, as in a flash, the sharp point of Gouigi's spear was at his throat.

But ere he had time to strike, a piercing scream cleft the air, and Cheluilka rushed forward and threw herself between the warriors.

"Hold!" she commanded, "he shall fight again!" Then, as a murmur arose, she added; "I am Cheluilka, the daughter of your chieftain, and I say he shall have another chance!"

Mati, still kneeling with bowed head, never moved from his place, while Gouigi with spear still poised, seemed as if carved from stone.

The aged chief tottered to his feet and looked round at his people with a troubled air.

"It is wrong," he said; "it is very wrong, and you all know it! But Cheluilka is a woman, and she is my daughter. It shall be as she says. Mati shall have one more chance."

The people were silent, sitting with knit brows and angry faces. But Gouigi drew back and cast down his broken spear.

"It is well," he said calmly. "Arise, Mati the Tiger, and choose your weapon."

Cheluilka rushed back to where the chief sat, and drawing two great knives, fashioned from tusks, from his girdle, cast them upon the ground before the duellists.

"There are the weapons!" she cried.

Mati sprang to his feet, seized one of the knives, and waved his hand at the Princess in token of thanks. Gouigi stooped to pick up the other knife, but before he could resume the defensive, Mati bounded upon him with the ferocity of his namesake, the tiger, and only a quick movement on Gouigi's part saved him from death. As it was the blow but slashed his shoulder, and never heeding the dark blood that gushed forth he sprang at his treacherous enemy with a fierceness that matched his own.

For a time the blows fell fast, the spectators gazing with breathless interest at the unwonted sight. Forward and backward they pressed, and then Mati's great left arm shot round Gouigi's neck and drew him close to his breast, but just as his knife was raised to strike, the combatants whirled half round and fell full upon the ground.

For a few seconds they remained motionless, then slowly Gouigi released himself from the other's grasp and rose to his feet. But Mati lay prone upon his back, and protruding from his breast was the hilt of the hunter's knife.

Amidst the cries of approval that greeted the conqueror was heard the clapping of hands, and Gouigi, glancing towards Cheluilka, was rewarded with a bright smile and a nod of her stately head. But further along the line his eyes wandered, and there was little Natka, sitting back in her place and sobbing softly for joy.

The warrior's stern face relaxed, and for the first time that day he smiled grimly.

Then, although blood was dripping from the many wounds upon his body, he advanced to the chief, and folding his arms with savage grace, said, in a clear voice:

"I claim the right to choose my mate from these maidens. Who dares dispute me?"

There was no reply, and the old chief again arose and slowly addressed him.

"You have fought a great fight, and you have won. There is none living who dares dispute your right. Therefore, choose your mate from these maidens, and may your house be ever the abode of peace and plenty!"

In these words was the ceremony concluded, and now all eyes were turned upon the Princess Cheluilka. The daughter of the chief arose to her feet. The smile still lingered upon her features, but she held herself proudly erect as her dark eyes read the rebuke upon the faces confronting her.

"Mati was brave," she said, "but he is dead; and Gouigi was more brave, and is alive! Therefore, if I favoured the Tiger in the fight, it was to prove that Gouigi had the strongest arm and the greatest skill. Now you know why I gave Mati another chance. I have spoken."

She gave one proud look round her, and then her eyes sought those of Gouigi, and again she smiled.

No shout of approval greeted her speech as she resumed her seat. The people were silently watching Gouigi. He stood before the chief in the same attitude as before, but now a frown contracted his swarthy face, and his great eyes glittered strangely.

"Choose, oh, Gouigi!" commanded the chief.

Gouigi started and raised his head. Slowly his eyes passed down the line of maidens until they rested upon little Natka, and lifting his right hand he walked deliberately to where she sat and, drawing the astonished girl to his side, he exclaimed in a loud voice:

"I have the right to choose, and from all these maidens I take Natka to be my mate!"

Even that isolated tribe of savages could appreciate a heroism greater than mere prowess in battle, and the air resounded with wild cries of approval as the men and women of Macheki gathered round Gouigi to offer their congratulations.

But soon a hush fell upon the crowd, and with one accord they turned towards the scene of the late conflict, for the proud Cheluilka, unable to support the infamy of the slight Gouigi had put upon her, had rushed to the body of Mati, and drawing the knife from his breast, plunged it deep into her own heart.

S. PERCIVAL.

CAN YOU MAKE ROCK CAKES?

SIX cash prizes of Five Shillings each are offered to the senders of the best rock cakes, made from any recipe. The competition is running in *Home Notes*, and closes on December the 29th. Anyone who can make these little cakes may compete, and only three need be sent. Full directions regarding competition will be found in *Home Notes* dated November 26th, now on sale.

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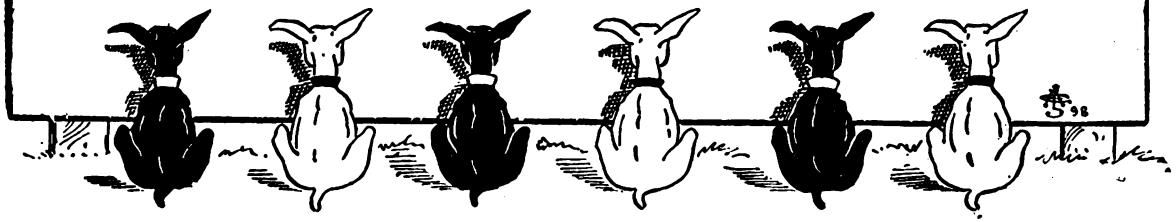
THAT HORSE OF STIVER'S.



THE other morning at breakfast Mrs. Perkins observed that Mr. Stiver, in whose house we live, had been called away, and wanted to know if I would see to his horse during the day.

I knew that Mr. Stiver owned a horse, because I occasionally saw him drive out of the yard, and I saw the stable every day; but what kind of a horse I didn't know. I never went in the stable for two reasons—in the first place, I had no desire to, and secondly, I was not sure that the horse cared particularly for company.

I had never taken care of a horse in my life, and had I been of a less hopeful nature, the charge Mr. Stiver had left with me might have had a very depressing effect. But I told Mrs. Perkins I would do it.

"You know how to take care of a horse, don't you?" she said.

I gave her a reassuring wink. In fact I knew so little about it that I didn't think it safe to converse more fluently than by winks.

After breakfast I walked out towards the stable. There was nothing particular to do, as Stiver had given the horse his breakfast, and I found him eating it, so I looked about. He looked about too, and stared pretty hard at me. There was but little said on either side. I hunted up the location of the feed, and then sat down on a peck measure and fell to studying the beast. There is a wide difference in horses. Some of them will kick you over, and never look round to see what becomes of you. I don't like a disposition like that, and I wondered if Stiver's was one of them.

When I came home at noon I went straight to the stable. The animal was there all right. Stiver hadn't told me what to give him for dinner, and I had not given the subject any thought; but I went to the oat-box and filled the peck measure, and sallied up to the manger.

When he saw the oats he almost smiled. This pleased and amused him. As I emptied them into the trough, I left him to admire the way I parted my hair behind. I just got my head up in time to save the whole of it. He had his ears back, his mouth open, and looked as if he were on the point of committing murder. I went out and filled up the measure again, and climbed up the side of the stall and emptied it on the top of him.

He brought his head up so suddenly at this, that I immediately got down, letting go everything to do it. I struck on the sharp edge of a barrel, rolled over a couple of times, and then disappeared under a hay-cutter. The peck measure went down on the other side, and got mysteriously tangled up in that animal's heels, and he went to work at it, and then ensued the most dreadful noise I ever heard in my life, and I have been married eighteen years.

It did seem as if I never would get out from under that hay-cutter, and all the while I was struggling and wrenching myself and the cutter apart that awful beast was cutting round in that stall and making the most appalling sound imaginable.

When I got out I found Mrs. Perkins at the door. She had heard the row, and had sped out to the stable, her only thought being for me and three lumps of coal she had under her arm, and one of which she was about to fire at the beast.

This made me angry.

"Go away!" I shouted. "Do you want to knock my brains out?"

For I remembered seeing Mrs. Perkins sling a missile once before, and that I nearly lost an eye by the operation, although standing on the other side of the house.

She retired at once. At the same time the animal quieted down, but there was nothing left of that peck measure—not even the maker's name.

I followed Mrs. Perkins into the house and got her to do me up, and then I sat down in a chair and fell into a profound strain of meditation. After awhile I felt better, and went out to the stable again.

The horse was leaning against the stable stall with eyes half-closed, and appeared to be very much engrossed in thought.

"Step off to the left," I said, rubbing his back.

He didn't step. I got the pitchfork and punched him in the leg with the handle. He immediately raised up both legs at once, and that fork flew out of my hands and went rattling up against the timbers above, and came down again in an instant, the end of the handle rapping me with such force on the top of the head that I sat down on the floor. I went back to the house and applied some more liniment. But I couldn't keep away from that stable.

I went out there again.

The thought struck me that what the horse wanted was exercise.

Exercise would tone him down, and exercise him I should. I laughed to myself to think how I would trounce him round the yard. I didn't laugh again that afternoon. I got him unhitched, and then wondered how I was to get him out of the stall without carrying him out. I pushed, but he wouldn't budge. I stood looking at him in the face, thinking of something to say, when he suddenly solved the difficulty by veering

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about and plunging for the door. I followed, as a matter of course, because I had a tight hold on the rope, and hit about every partition stud worth speaking of on that side of the stable. Mrs. Perkins was at the window, and saw us come out of the door. She subsequently remarked that we came out skipping like two innocent children. The skipping was entirely unintentional on my part. I felt as if I stood on the verge of eternity. My legs may have skipped, but my mind was filled with awe.

I took that animal out to exercise him. He exercised me before I got through with it.

He went round a few times in a circle; then he stopped suddenly, spread out his forelegs, and looked at me.

Then he leant forward a little and hoisted both hind legs, and threw about two hods of mud over a full line of clothes Mrs. Perkins had just hung out.

That excellent lady had taken a position at the window and, whenever the evolutions of the awful beast permitted, I caught a glance at her features. She appeared to be very much interested in the proceedings, but the instant the mud flew she disappeared from the window, and a moment later she appeared on the steps with a long poker in her hand, and fire enough in her eye to heat it red hot.

Just then Stiver's horse stood up on his hind legs and tried to hug me with the others. This scared me. A horse never shows his strength to such advantage as when he is coming down on you like a frantic pile-driver.

I instantly dodged.

It frightened Mrs. Perkins dreadfully.

"Why don't you get rid of him?" she said.

"How can I?" said I in desperation.

"Why, there are a thousand ways," said she.

That is just like a woman.

But I could think of only two ways to dispose of the beast. I could either swallow him where he stood, and then sit down on him, or I could crawl inside of him and kick him to death.

But I was saved either of these experiments by his coming towards me so abruptly that I dropped the rope in terror, and then he turned about, and, kicking me full of mud, shot for the gate, ripping the clothes line in two, and went on down the street at a horrible gallop, with two of Mrs. Perkins's garments, which he hastily snatched from the line, floating over his neck in a very picturesque manner.

So I was afterwards told. I was too full of mud myself to see the way into the house. Stiver got his horse all right, and stays at home to take care of him. Mrs. Perkins has gone to her mother's to recuperate, and I am healing as fast as possible.

T. RUSSELL.

The Strange Story of a Box.

I WAS sitting by my library fire one evening, smoking, when my manservant informed me that a large box had arrived. I suddenly remembered that it was my birthday, and that I had casually mentioned the fact to my friend Brindle.

Now Brindle was much addicted to the playing of practical jokes (this to me was a flaw in an otherwise delightful character), and perhaps on this occasion I might be the victim, so I told the man to help me carry it into the library and then he might go.

The box which was a long and rather narrow one, was, I noticed, perforated in every direction. It was fastened with a padlock, in which I found the key.

I opened it and started back in amazement, for inside it lay one of the most beautiful women it has ever been my lot to see, and she was either asleep or dead.

She was dressed in a long trailing robe of violet velvet —what a woman would, I think, describe as a "tea-gown"; the train of it made a sort of cushion for her head and over it strayed long strands of golden hair.

I fetched a mirror and held it to her lips; a faint cloud spread over it at once.

She was not dead then, but sleeping.

Yet—who sent her here? And why in such a plight?

I had no women-folk to apply to in my dilemma; besides, one's women-folk are apt to look askance at "strangers" of their own sex, especially if these are very beautiful.

I decided hurriedly to take my man Burns into my confidence, a Scotchman (he always claimed descent from the poet) and very excellent servant, who had been with me for years. And he appeared with such celerity, that a suspicion crossed my mind—but no, surely he was above spying through key-holes!

I pointed to the girl and asked him helplessly what I had better do.

"Do, sir? Why send for the nearest doctor, and for a detective from Scotland Yard."

"Of course!" I cried. "Why didn't I think of that myself? Take a cab and do both errands—I will stay here in case she awakes."

He went off at once. He had hardly been gone ten minutes when the door-bell rang. I opened it myself and admitted a tall thin man, who announced that a policeman had asked him to call at my house, and that his name was Dr. Smith of M—— Street.

"A policeman—you mean my servant."

"No I don't, I mean a policeman," he said testily. "Where is the patient? I am a busy man, sir, and can't afford to waste time."

Rather bewildered, I led the way to the library—and in a few words told him my story and showed him the white figure lying so still and beautiful in those regal velvet robes.

He crossed the room to look closer.

"Good Heavens!" he said. "It is Mlle. Sophie Seslagin, a Russian lady and a patient of my own. What can this mean?" He proceeded to investigate what would be the cause of her strange trance-like sleep.

"She has been drugged," he said. "I once studied in Russia, and there they use a curiously smelling herb,

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for such purposes, difficult to detect unless one is used to dealing with it."

"All that is very interesting—to you," I said impatiently. "But what am *I* to do?"

"I will send you a nurse at once," he said. "Have you a spare room? Good. The nurse is a sensible woman, and will put the lady to bed and ask no questions except of a professional description.

"Now, you must excuse me, I am watching a very interesting case. I will call again in the morning; meanwhile I can do nothing. No drug known acts on a patient under the influence of the one I mentioned; she will wake naturally in about twelve hours time." And with that the doctor bustled away.

The next person to arrive was the detective (his name was Holmes), to whom I repeated my story.

He listened attentively, looked at Mlle. Seslagin, but made no remark worth relating, and presently went away, after giving me strict injunctions to allow no one access to my strange guest but the nurse and the doctor. I promised to attend to his warning and showed him out myself, to find on the door-step a comfortable, motherly-looking nurse, who produced Dr. Smith's card, and into whose capable hands I put the management of affairs generally with a sigh of relief, which sigh I repeated as the door of the "spare-room" was shut between me and the still sleeping stranger.

Only the long, coffin-like box was still in my study.

Suddenly I caught sight of a piece of paper which had been pinned to the lid inside.

On it was roughly sketched a ship, some waves, and a woman apparently drowning. What this could mean I could not guess.

I was still puzzling over it when the door-bell rang again.

This time a man stood there—he had evidently just stepped out of a close carriage which waited near the kerb, and he wore an ulster with a high collar which almost concealed his face.

"I have come," he said, "to retrieve a large box which was left here by mistake."

"Then you have come to the wrong man," I said boldly. "That box, and its contents, are in my care."

As I spoke, to my surprise two policemen sprang out of the shadow of a neighbouring archway, and seized the man before he had time to turn round.

"We were given a hint to keep an eye on this house, sir—by Mr. Holmes," one of them informed me shortly, before they marched off to the nearest "station" with their prisoner.

I retreated indoors and awaited developments. Evidently I was in for a night of it, I thought grimly.

And indeed, I had only taken half a dozen pulls at my pipe when a four-wheeler drove up. Inside were Mr. Holmes the detective, two policemen, and *my servant Burns with handcuffs on.*

"What does this mean?" I asked.

The detective came into the house and shut the door—the cab drove off—and I mechanically followed him into the library.

There, he turned and faced me.

"It means," he said, "shortly, this: that your man-servant is a member of a dangerous secret society of anarchists. Mlle. Seslagin (who is very rich) had bribed one of the younger members to sell her some papers which contained a clear and concise account of how to set about placing bombs in Westminster Abbey before the coming Royal Marriage—in order to blow up the whole Royal party.

"Once or twice, lately, Mlle. Seslagin's house has been broken into, not for purposes of theft, but to find the missing papers, which she had copied and sent to the police, but kept the originals to put the anarchists off the scent and help the authorities to catch them all together.

"Besides, she wanted to pretend she had *not* given information. She knew anarchists and their ways and feared their vengeance. She little knew their skill! They contrived this very evening to enter her house, drug her wine, and (while all her servants were at supper) they put her into this box which they had got ready and carried her off.

"The orders were to deliver the box at No. 1 Mortimer Street.

"By a curious coincidence, there happen to be two Mortimer Streets, and *the box was brought to the wrong one.*

"The plan was (had she been taken to the anarchist who lives in the other) to cross-examine her on the subject of these papers, and then she was to be taken out to sea and drowned. Dead men—and women—tell no tales."

I handed him the paper I had found.

"Yes—that is the formal order for her death. I know their cipher well."

"And—Burns?" I asked. "How was it, if he was 'in it,' that he offered—nay, *went*—to fetch the doctor and you?"

"He did neither. I sent a policeman for the doctor, and came of my own accord; Mlle. Seslagin's house has been watched for the last week, for (unless she was in danger of her life) I made up my mind to wait and catch the whole gang at No. 1 Mortimer Street to-night. The driver's mistake has put me out rather, in my calculations, for Burns had time to warn the others before I managed to 'nab' him. However, I hope for better luck another time. Meanwhile, you have indirectly saved that poor lady's life."

As he finished speaking I was busy writing; I handed him a cheque.

"Thank you, sir, though really I am so pleased at to-night's work I almost feel like refusing this."

"Nonsense, I may need you again. Good-night."

After that I was at last allowed to go to bed in peace.

I was a bachelor of long years' standing, and quite unaccustomed to such doings and goings on.

Still—though I can't say that the events of that night were exactly pleasant ones, I always, in after years, remembered it with something like gratitude, for that long, coffin-like box, which I thought held a practical joke, was the means of my making the acquaintance of the lady who afterwards became my wife.

CONSTANCE CRAIGIE HALKETT.

The Christmas Number of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, which costs sixpence, was published on November 17th. It contains complete stories by Beatrice Heron-Maxwell, George Griffith, Baroness Orczy, J. Le Breton, Basil Tozer, Mayne Lindsay, Alice Callander, Maud Coleborn, Ulysses Rogers, A. O. Tibbits.

The Number, which is inclosed in a coloured wrapper, includes three coloured plates.

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DISENCHANTMENT.

When Don Luis became aware of his granddaughter's decision he was very much displeased, but yet it was, in the main, the surprise which irritated him. How was he to explain to himself this sudden wilful rupture which would put an end to a marriage arranged to the entire satisfaction of two families, and, above all, of the lovers themselves?

What had passed between them? What had actuated this step on the part of the young girl? Considering her intelligence, goodness and discretion, thought the poor old man, undoubtedly it was a grave and sufficient cause.

So the good gentleman, irritated by this turn of affairs, and spurred on by affection, determined to know the truth. Throwing aside the newspaper that he was holding in his hand, and confronting his daughter-in-law who had just given him the disagreeable news, he inquired:

"Is she in her room?"

"Yes, Señor; finishing her toilet, so that we may go out for a walk in the air. Heard you ever the like?" replied the mother with an expression of utter disgust.

"To walk—the same day that this scandal has occurred?"

"Just as you hear."

"Then I shall speak to her. Do you go first, tell her she may expect me, and leave us alone."

In a few moments and in a very bad humour, though without losing his outward calm, Don Luis entered the apartment of his granddaughter, where everything was extremely simple, but in which there was nothing great or small but revealed to the most casual observer the wealth of the family and the exquisite taste of the girl.

The walls were covered with a delicate tapestry, almost pure white, with tiny garlands of roses and buds running in slender lines from ceiling to floor, the furniture was upholstered with the same, and the carpet very light in tone. On the mantel stood a clock of antique porcelain between two tall, slim Venetian glasses, filled with white chrysanthemums.

The little accessories of the toilet table were of cut glass and ivory, bearing monogram and crest, and upon the table, beside a Sèvres vase and an elegant workbox, there were three photographs, two recent ones of the parents of the young girl, and one, yellowed with time, of Don Luis, in the uniform of lieutenant-general, his breast covered with crosses, and the medal of Africa.

The little señorita was seated on a low chair fastening the buckles of her shoes, when, observing the entrance of Don Luis, she instantly sprang to her feet, darted to his side, and putting her arms about him, exclaimed with the utmost tenderness:

"Little grandfather, dearest, why hast thou climbed up here? I was just going to thy room. When do I ever go out without first going to give thee a kiss?"

The two faces pressed close together in an affectionate embrace, were a marked contrast. The old man's still bore, amid its wrinkles the traces of an arrogant youth, and the beautiful girl of twenty summers, kissing him tenderly, appeared eager to impart to him something of her own abundant life and freshness. But presently, Don Luis recollecting what had brought him to his grandchild's room, disengaged himself with gentle firmness, and endeavouring to assume a tone of great severity, though with little success, said confusedly:

"But what is this? What has happened? Thinkest thou men are puppets that thou canst play with them? Dost thou know the scandal thou hast caused? Is it nothing that at this moment all Madrid is talking of us, and blaming thee, Heaven knows how!"

"Do not be vexed with me, little grandfather."

"But to appear so fickle! With the house nearly ready, the presents made—and to break it in this manner. What are people going to think?"

"Oh, I have cause!"

"What hast thou to complain of? Does it appear to thee that a young man of an age proportionate to thine, of good family, handsome, rich, and disposed to marry thee is a thing to be encountered every day? What has he done to thee? Who has broken, he or thou?"

"He has done nothing to me; and as for the breaking I have done it all."

"Foolish girl!"

"What wouldst thou, little grandfather? We may be intimate with persons for months, whole years, believing that we know them, and suddenly we find they have deceived us, and we knew them not at all. Better to learn the truth while there is yet time."

"But has he done anything ugly? Knowest thou anything dishonourable?"

"A little thing, which to me signifies much. Some people will say that I have made myself ridiculous. I am satisfied that I have done right. But, come here, come, and do not quarrel with me till you know all."

She said this between smiles and tears, but with much earnestness; then drew an armchair near the fire, where a couple of logs were crackling, made Don Luis accommodate himself therein, and one moment seating herself on his knees, the next pacing the floor, she spoke thus:

"Handsome, rich, of good family, all this is true; and moreover, I confess I loved him. And, nevertheless, I have broken with him for a little thing, for something which for many women would have no significance and represent nothing——"

"But what? Relate it!"

"You know already that we have been in love for more than a year and a half. It all began soon after papa bought this house. From the windows of this room I could see all the Calle del Obelisco as far as the entrance of the Castellana. I watched for Manolo every morning at ten o'clock, behind these windows, and almost always, with the punctuality of the true lover, he arrived in a few minutes on horseback. I would see him appear where the boulevard crosses the Castellana,

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She sprang to her feet.

presently he would urge Lucero to a trot, and in a few minutes more he would be here."

"And what a handsome horse that is—a jewel!"

"Lucero would come with arched neck, his head drawn well in, and sensitive to the bridle, with froth dropping from his mouth, steps so airy that he seemed to spurn the ground from beneath his feet, and his tail erect and restless. It almost seemed that the intelligent animal knew he was coming to bring me an hour of happiness, and hastened in order to please me.

"In the twinkling of an eye he arrived at the iron grating.

"Unless it was raining, I went down to the garden, as at that hour no one ever passed this way, and there by the gate was a little time of chatting with Manolo; and I always gave to Lucero a biscuit or a couple of lumps of sugar. You cannot conceive how well he knew, how he would turn his head from side to side expectantly, until I stretched out my hand with the dainties through the iron bars of the gate.

"Of course, the principal occupation was talking with Manolo, hearing pleasant nonsense, pretty speeches, making plans for the future—you can imagine it all, little grandfather. With the horse I occupied myself but a moment; but, in truth, I loved him. I had a great tenderness for him; it was he who brought Manolo to me, and bore him as though upon wings. When I lay down to sleep I used to think of the hour of our meeting, wishing that the day might be fair, so that I could go down into the garden; when, at the window, my heart beat with expectation, my imagination pictured first of all to me the prancing of Lucero, his sudden appearance round the curve of the Castellana, his rapid trot clattering loudly on the hard ground, and then his waiting below, restive, with smoking flanks, and pawing the ground, down there by the rose bushes and hedges of the garden, which was where I would stand——"

"But why do you recall all this?"

"Was I truly in love with Manolo? With my hand upon my heart—so I believe. Above all, even more than handsome, well bred, loving and very chivalrous, to me he seemed good, above reproach, a man of fine feelings."

"And then?"

"I have nearly finished. Ten or twelve days ago, one morning Manolo came on a different horse. Naturally, the change surprised me.

"'And Lucero?' I asked him.

"'He is sick.'

"'What ails him.'

"'I do not know; some trouble in one of his feet.'

"'Poor horse!'

"'Oh, we will cure it yet.'

"We spoke no more of it. In the days following I inquired for the horse, and it struck me that he evaded a reply. Finally last week his servant unfortunately came to bring me a letter, and, as he knew that I always bestowed upon him some little present, he asked to see me. The horse coming to my thoughts I asked him:

"'How is Lucero?'

"The boy assumed a very singular expression between sadness and stupidity, and answered:

"'He will never eat again, I am thinking.'

"'Is he dead?'

"'Yes, senorita. Ah, if it had been no worse than to die—poor beast!' said he.

"'Then what has happened?'

"Upon this the servant, like one who fears having spoken too much, remained obstinately silent, I had to draw the words from him by force of cunning. Until I had promised to say nothing on the subject to Manolo, he was unwilling to relate what had happened. To be brief: He told me that the horse had sustained some injury to the hoof, the nature of which I do not know, save that it was swollen and very sore. And here comes what is horrible and cruel. The veterinaries said to Manolo that for this there was no remedy, that the horse would remain very lame, if not perfectly useless, and Manolo, instead of allowing him to die in his stable, even though it cost him something—and how fortunate he should have counted himself that he could so easily bear the expense!—instead even of granting him the mercy of a bullet, sold him, sold him to the Plaza de Toros! And thou knowest——"

"What brutality!" exclaimed Don Luis, unable to restrain himself.

"And what is worse, that was on Friday, then on Sunday I was present at the Corrida, and I saw the poor Lucero die in the arena, as they die there—I can say no more, little grandfather!"

At this point the young girl dried a tear which flowed perhaps both in pity for the dead horse and bitterness for her shattered ideal, and continued, saying:

"It is a pleasure for me to go sometimes to *los toros*, for the excitement and the crowd, and to attire myself in the mantilla, but what Manolo has done is unspeakable. It was the horse which brought him to me, which I watched for, and which I loved because he came flying! I have often heard thee tell of thy great sorrow when thy horse was shot from under thee at the battle of San Pedro Abanto, and so," concluded the girl with extraordinary energy, "it seems impossible to me that this man can be good, and marry him I never will!"

K. Dombey.

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THE LOOKING-GLASS.

THE evening of the 11th Pluviose, year II. of the Republic (February 1st, 1794), Mademoiselle Nanine de Leigrealles, who, at this period of the Terror was called simply "Citoyenne Leigrealles," retired early to her sleeping chamber. In these troubled times she lived alone with an old nurse in a country house inherited from her mother and situated at Eillons, near the village of Ecouviers, a short league from the Belgian frontier.

After passing a large part of her childhood and youth in this retired region, she had again taken refuge there on the occasion of the sequestration of the patrimonial hotel where she was residing in Verdun with her father, the Marquis de Leigrealles, whose property was confiscated as that of an "emigre" when the Marquis went to join the army of Conde. Eillons and Ecouviers not being agitated by the revolutionary fever, Mdlle. de Leigrealles, loved and respected by all the peasants in the neighbourhood, found herself there in almost absolute safety.

This evening, all through the supper, her old nurse, Bastienne, had told her exciting stories in relation to visions and revelations on Candlemas night. She had even assured her young mistress that by placing a mirror under the bolster and pronouncing certain words, one could see that night "during one's sleep" the man whom one was to love and afterwards marry. Nanine, who was slightly superstitious, longed to test the truth of this legend. It was for this reason she went to her room immediately after supper.

Once alone and half undressed, she took a looking glass in her hand, and before hiding it under the pillow, looked complacently at what it showed her.

Mdlle. de Leigrealles was entering upon her twenty-fourth year, and her beauty had attained its full development. Tall, slender, stately, *fait au tour*, as they said in those days, she had pretty, curling, black hair, large brown eyes, a white skin, and a little mouth, with tiny dimples in the cheek when it smiled. Her blood was hot, an inheritance from a long line of gay and gallant ancestors, and her heart was very tender. Although the Terror was at its height, people thought none the less of love and its secrets, and this adorable girl, while living discreetly, inwardly lamented her loneliness, and grieved to have no lovers. But what could be done? Chances became more and more rare. the young men of quality who might have loved her had all emigrated, and she was too proud to marry a boor.

Stifling a sight of regret, half amused and half credulous, she decided to repeat the sacramental words which Bastienne had taught her.

"Mirror, make me see while sleeping
Him who is to be my lover!"

Then she slipped the mirror under the bolster, went to bed, and soon fell asleep.

Well, almost immediately the charm took effect. In the midst of her first sleep she saw in her dream a long perspective of mirrors, in which there moved as in a fog a multitude of eccentric heads. Gradually the fog lightened, the figures defined themselves, then blended into a single apparition—very distant, in the recesses of a church chancel. The apparition slowly approached, and then Nanine distinguished an old man with hoary head and wrinkled cheeks, in French costume, who advanced towards her, and held out his hand to her. The idea that she was destined to marry this old nobleman, at least sixty, so shocked her that she awakened suddenly. She had great difficulty in going to sleep again, and rose the next morning still agitated by her dream.

As she completed her toilette, Bastienne entered her room and said, in handing her a letter:

"Mademoiselle, a gentleman has just arrived, who asked me to deliver this note to you, and wishes to speak with you."

Nanine glanced at the superscription of the note, which she hurriedly unsealed as she recognised the handwriting of her father, the Marquis de Leigrealles, as follows:—

"My dear Nanine,—This note will be transmitted to you by one of our countrymen, Count Frehaut, who has been charged by the Prince de Conde with a confidential mission in Lorraine. Receive the Count with all hospitality, and conceal him until he shall find means to arrive at his destination. He will inform you of our affairs and give you intelligence of your father, who embraces you tenderly.

FRANCOIS DE LEIGREALLES.

Luxembourg, January 30."

With a beating heart Nanine hastened to descend to the drawing-room, where the traveller had been received. She saw a gentleman who appeared to have passed his fiftieth year, muffled in a brown great coat, and vaguely resembling the old man of her dream. Not-

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withstanding his apparent age, his drawn features, his creased eyelids, the Count had a lively eye, and his fine brown eyebrows contrasted with the grey hair which he wore very long, and tied at the back of his neck with a black ribbon.

After ceremonious greetings and brief tidings respecting the situation and health of the Marquis de Leigrealles, M. de Frèhaut admitted to his hostess that he was broken down with fatigue, having made the last part of his journey at night, on foot, and asked permission to take the rest of which he was in great need. Nanine gave orders that a room should be prepared for him. He retired to it as soon as it was ready, and did not appear again during the day. But towards evening, Mlle. de Leigrealles having inquired after him, he notified the young girl that he was completely restored, and that he would come down to supper.

He presented himself accordingly at about seven o'clock, freshly shaven, and simply dressed in a coat of coarse brown cloth, with two rows of buttons, in grey, tight-fitting breeches and scalloped half-boots. Despite his wrinkles, his grey hair, and bent shoulders, he had a very pleasing air, distinguished manners, exquisite courtesy, and extraordinary vivacity for his age. They went into the dining-room, and sat down together at a table before a good fire of blazing wood. The menu, superintended by Mdlle. de Leigrealles, was substantial and delicate; the wines were of the choicest quality.

M. de Frèhaut did honour to the repast, and showed himself a charming guest, and brilliant talker. He had sprightliness and imagination, and related with much humour his adventures as an "emigre." Was it the effect of the pretty, sparkling wines to which she was not accustomed, or perhaps of her youth and her protracted solitude that inclined her to susceptibility? When the dessert came, Nanine de Leigrealles had begun to find her guest very fascinating for a man who was approaching his sixties.

They took coffee in the parlour, and, as the harpsichord stood open, M. de Frèhaut inquired of Nanine if she were musical. Upon her affirmative reply, he admitted that he had been in his day quite a pleasing vocalist. Nanine proposed to accompany him, and, without waiting to be urged, he sang her an air from *Orphee*, "I have lost my Eurydice." His voice, uncommonly fresh and young, confirmed the impression already made upon Mlle. Leigrealles. Music, we all know, acts marvellously upon the senses and the heart. When they quitted the harpsichord, the conversation had taken quite naturally a more sentimental, a more intimate turn. While maintaining the reserve imposed upon him by his age, M. de Frèhaut had become eager, almost admiring; his conversation hovered discreetly over the theme of love; his blue eyes had an expression which became more and more insinuating, more and more penetrating. When he retired at eleven o'clock, he lingeringly kissed the hands of his hostess, and left Nanine much moved, and quite ashamed of the emotion produced in her by this *tête-à-tête* with a man more than double her age.

She passed a restless night, recalling with too much pleasure the trifling incidents of the evening, letting her fancy wander in singular dreams, then blushing at her own folly.

Her awakening was equally agitating, but in a very different fashion. Towards noon the Mayor of Ecouviers arrived at Eillons by a private road, and warned Nanine that she was suspected of entertaining an emissary of Pitt and Coburg. Some bad fellows had seen M. de Fréhaut enter her house, and had hurried to denounce her to the Revolutionary Committee of Montmedy. A domiciliary visit was impending; he came to warn her as a friend.

"What can be done?" exclaimed the terrified girl.

"You must rid yourself at the earliest possible moment of this dangerous visitor," replied the worthy man. "At the foot of your park there is a pavilion hidden by the trees. Hide this gentleman there until night. When it grows dark my son will come for him, and will conduct him through the woods to the frontier. As soon as your man hears the owlet's cry, he has only to step over the window-ledge of the pavilion, and he will find my boy at the foot of the wall."

This was indeed the only means of safety. Nanine, trembling with fear, went to apprise M. de Fréhaut of the peril that menaced him. She made him breakfast hastily in his room, and herself conducted him to the pavilion, where she remained with him, shuddering at the faintest noise, her ear on the alert, and at each movement fearing some surprise. He, on the contrary, habituated to similar alarms, showed himself very philosophical, and regretted but one thing—to so suddenly leave his charming hostess. Seeing her great terror, he endeavoured to reassure her by his affectionate manners, at first paternal, but gradually more and more tender.

The hours of the afternoon wore thus away, with alternations of anxiety and of melancholy interest. Despite her fears, Nanine was surprised and grieved to note the rapid passage of the hours.

At Candlemas, night comes early. Towards five o'clock the little octagonal room of the pavilion grew dark.

"Alas!" sighed M. de Fréhaut, "the moment of our separation approaches."

He took Nanine's hands.

"Before going away, permit me, Mdlle. de Leigrealles, to thank you for your kind reception, and to assure you that I will preserve an unbroken recollection of it."

While speaking he drew her to him, kissed her brow and then her eyes.

Nanine, bewildered, her heart contracting, felt herself dominated by a sudden impulse. Her head swam; but it was a sweet faintness, a delicious bewilderment. Suddenly she laid her lips upon the cheek of M. de Frehaut, who, trembling and with quite youthful fervour, responded by passionate caresses. For a moment they forgot everything in this transport of love. Then the owlet's cry, resounding from the end of the road, recalled them to the present.

"It is the signal," stammered Nanine; "adieu!"

He wished to enfold her again, but she withdrew herself firmly.

"Go!" she entreated.

De Fréhaut stepped lightly over the window-ledge and disappeared down the gloomy path.

Recovering herself, and deeply agitated, greatly confused because of her weakness, Mlle. de Leigrealles returned to her house. It was time. Officers armed with search warrants were arriving. They got nothing for their pains, showed themselves, on the whole, sufficiently obliging, and went away after drinking large bumpers to the health of the "Citoyenne."

Nanine shut herself up in her room in order to avoid the eyes of old Bastienne. It seemed to her that anyone could read in her face her remorse—and also her regrets. Even while dreaming of the fugitive she blamed herself

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for the unpardonable weakness which had thrown her into the arms of a man almost as old as her father.

The following day the Mayor came to reassure her as to the fate of M. de Fréhaut.

"He crossed the frontier," he told her, "without being disturbed, and my boy conducted him as far as Verton."

"He must have been faint with fatigue," sighed Mlle. de Leigrealles. "Think of it—so long a stretch on foot—at his age."

"At his age!" repeated the peasant with a burst of laughter. "Ah, he is not over thirty! He was smeared and powdered so as not to be recognised. But once in Belgium he threw away his wig, and our Claude found himself confronted by a handsome young fellow!"

"Ah!" murmured Nanine, growing dreamy and agitated again. At the same time, her eyes moistened, and she mused over the brief moments of their love which perhaps would never return.

When the Count de Fréhaut returned in 1815 with Louis XVIII., he was really ripe and grey. The King, in recompense for his services, created him Inspector of Forests in the Mersin region. M. de Fréhaut inquired for Mlle. de Leigrealles. She had remained unmarried and continued to live at Eillons. He called to see her, found her still attractive, notwithstanding her forty-five years, and the following year they were married.

It was thus that her vision of Candlemas night came true for Nanine.

B. COLLINS.

AN UNSUSPECTED HERO.

THE doleful sound of the old bell had been our childish terror. The autumn wind or winter's blast sent out its measured sounds, and above the noise of the summer storm we could hear its regular notes.

We lived nearer to the Old Red House than anyone in the parish, but others heard its melancholy tones, and were secretly afraid.

It had been ringing that way for ten years or more. The bell was the first in that neighbourhood, and had been hung in the forks of a young maple by the dead master of the Red House. Rust covered its sides, and the tongue, said men who had looked to see, was half gone, but tongueless as it was, the wind, swaying the tree, still sent forth those weird, tolling sounds.

Decay was king at the Red House now. A solitary green blind hung at an upper storey window and creaked in the wind, adding its sharp notes to those of the bell. Gnarled old apple trees grew in the front by the roadside, and the tall lilac bushes obscured the windows, close by the settling porch. The paint was off in great patches, and rags filled the place of many broken panes in the windows.

To the left the ground sloped into a deep ravine. The raspberry and blackberry bushes near the gulch had grown into a wild and tangled mass. Other shrubs and bushes had come up and made a copse of impenetrable density. Here, almost entirely hidden by the growth, three tombstones, yellow and mossy, marked neglected graves. It was within the deep and unbroken shadows of this copse our childish fancy pictured the home of the Ghosts and Goblins who rang the bell and made fiendish merriment when the wind was high.

The legends said it was the oldest house in the neighbourhood. Its paint was bright and new when my father was a boy, and its master was the "aristocrat" of the country round. I think he must have been a gentleman in every sense of the word, reserved and never understood by his neighbours. Most of them had lived to see him die and the bats and birds take up their abode in the great cornice, the tall grass to grow each year, and die uncut.

Other farms were neat, or if not, showed signs of some progress. You could almost see that young life was about them, the grass was so trodden down, and the places where children play were everywhere apparent. The Red House might have been the home of a tottering, feeble old man, with no hands but his to do the work.

The builder of the Red House had died five years before, but the place was still peopled. No one called on its inmates but a lawyer, the guardian of the son, Joseph Shepard.

Physically, the youth was as his dead father had been. He had broad shoulders, was tall, and his muscles were of iron. A light brown beard grew upon his face, for

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he had never been shaved. His vacant, staring eyes, half-open mouth, and shuffling, undecisive walk told the story. The massive head was empty. Quiet and harmless, he played boyish games with us at the door of the country school and at our homes. But he never let us go beyond the gate at the Red House. Everyone was confronted with the same remark:

"You cannot come in." And young and old knew, as they looked at him, that it would not do to disobey.

I know we all felt sorry for Joe, and never fully understood why he should be simple. Sometimes he would be morose and sullen, and stay within the damp and musty walls for days. His three sisters lived there with him.

Two of them we had seen, but the other was never seen out of doors in daytime. Once, at night, when, in a storm, my father and I were hurrying home, the bell began to toll and fearful cries and shrieks came from the House.

My father stopped his horse and listened. He thought it might be the solitary, creaking blind. The cries continued, lower, and more like a wail of pain than before. I crept close to his side, and I know he shuddered involuntarily.

A flash of lightning illuminated the scene, and the Red House stood out in all its decay. Near the great lilac bush, her hands extended, was the ghostly form of a woman. We were close to the fence, and I could see the look upon her face.

"Annie!" whispered my father.

All was darkness again. A sound of a heavy voice, which I knew was Joe's, a shriek which sent the blood freezing in my veins, and then another flash.

The figure in white had disappeared, and my father drove on.

"There is a bane upon the household," said our neighbour, Mr. Talbott, the next day. "First, the mother dies, and a sweet, pretty woman she was, too; mourning for a son who was, and was not. I didn't know much about him, but leastways I know he broke his mother's heart, not coming to see her or letting her know where he was. I knew them intimately. They said as how he went away and died."

"That was what somebody said," replied my father.

"But he didn't. Oh! I know, he had it, too, and it's a duty of mine, seeing you are a guardian of the parish, to impart this in my humble way. He died in an asy um."

"Insane?" was the astonished question.

"Mad. He knowed it was coming on. It's hereditry. Father had 'em, grandfather had 'em, and children's gettin' hereditry, too. So Shepard knowed it was a-coming. He felt it in his head, and arranged things for the children. He hung on so long as he could, and then he went in an asylum."

"Horrible!"

"It's nothing to what follows. I have been doing business for the guardian for many years. I know how things is. Annie's got hereditry now, and last night shows how bad."

"Why, she's been more or less so for years," said my father.

"But it isn't a bad sort, and Joe——"

My father groaned.

"And Joe"—Mr. Talbott rose. His ruddy face had turned white with excitement—"is gettin' bad, very bad, and when he goes out I tremble for the lives of the children of this neighbourhood."

My father forbade us playing with Joe from that moment. It was only two weeks later that the wide road was filled with clouds of dust made by a long funeral procession following behind a plain hearse which bore the remains of Annie Shepard.

We went over the fields to school that winter to keep from possibly encountering Joe. We never mentioned his name above a whisper. It seemed cruel to us sometimes to be deprived of his assistance in all our childish amusements. But we had an inward fear of him, and hid many times behind fences when he appeared in sight.

One cold winter's morning when we arrived we found the bigger boys and girls all talking in great excitement.

Joe had done something awful. He had nearly killed Mr. Talbott, and fled, no one knew where. The teacher, a gentle, timid little woman, kept the door locked all day.

Once little Jimmie Parker screamed out in fright.

"It's Joe!" he gasped, pointing to a window.

But no one else saw him. The woods came up so close, and there were no windows in the back wall.

When three o'clock came, the teacher said she would not hear the spelling, and dismissed us at once. No one went our way. We lived in the last house on that side of the village. So half-frightened, but telling everybody we were not afraid, we started across the field towards home.

We did not loiter, but wound in and out among the fallen logs, covered with little roofs of snow, and the brush-heaps, casting furtive glances behind every pile, and trembling at every noise. My sister Gertie was ahead. It was only fifty yards now to run, her inward fear accelerating her speed at every step.

As she came to the open space, a dark object leapt forward and struck her to the ground. I stopped, too frightened to move.

"Joe!" I had said under my breath.

But it was not Joe. It was Mr. Joslin's great brown bull, which had always been tied in the stable. Now its red eyes gleamed fire through shaggy brows, as it leapt over the prostrate body of Gertie, but whirled and turned to trample her. She had risen to her feet, and with more presence of mind than I displayed, started to run.

But the brute was close to her.

Then I saw a great shuffling figure rush between them.

It was Joe.

I danced with delight.

"Run for the fence, Gertie!" I shouted.

I never knew just how it happened, but with those mighty arms of his, his head uncovered, and his long flaxen hair flying in the wind, Joe was fighting a terrible battle with the bull. I ran to the fence, and my sister and I stood fixed to the spot watching the combat.

* * * * * *

They let us look upon his face as he laid there in the front room of my father's house that night, I remember it so plainly. There was a smile of defiance on the dead face, the eyes, which had been so vacant, were closed, the high forehead might have been that of a Shakespeare.

My father shed tears as he said then:

"You can't always tell where you will find a hero."

And I believe it.

MERVYN CARTWRIGHT.

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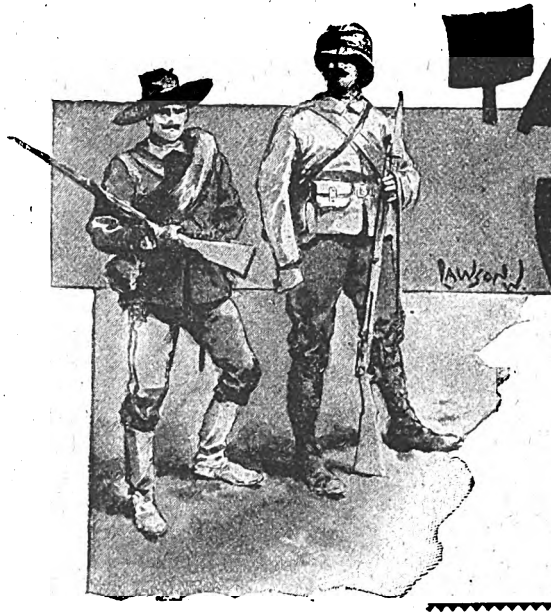

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Across America in Sixty Hours.

A change indeed had swept over popular sentiment in America.

All those little outbursts of irritation, those fretful taunts at the Mother Country, those frail manifestations of national hatred, of which so much had been made in the past, showed themselves to be superficial and unreal. In part, these were evoked by the calm assumption of superiority by Englishmen who travelled in the dominions of America; in part, too, the stern mastership of England, strong in her centuries of honourable growth, and resting on foundations set long back upon the elements of national character, was galling to a young, unsettled country. And, in lesser degree, these excitations were but the signs of increasing strength—the "growing pains" of a great nation.

But deep below such fitful and transient moods there remained in the heart of the United States a strong and abiding love for the Old Country. No one who knew America doubted her constancy.

Wayward, impulsive, she might deceive herself in days of calm and prosperity. But it needed only the presence of danger, the loud imperious call of kinship, for her to cast off her indifference and reveal herself as she is, the western branch of the great Saxon race, the other England, one with Britain in blood, in history, in language, in feeling, in character, in destiny.

This was what had occurred.

As from day to day came news of repeated dangers threatening England, American opinion became restive. The Jingo party in the Senate mourned to find their speeches no longer applauded; Presidential messages failed to charm. Horror of horrors, even the great name of Monroe, though interjected skilfully where enthusiasm was most wanted, fell cold and dead upon an ungrateful people.

"Jehosh!" exclaimed one patriot, "it's mortal slow at Washington with nothing but Monroe, Monroe, Monroe, morning, noon, and night. If these blamed pulpit-slappers imagine that the whole American nation is going to exist for ever on Monroe, they'll find themselves darned well mistaken. It's about time for a change of menoo!"

And they soon had a change of "menoo."

The growing excitement in the country, finding an outlet in demonstration and public meetings, gradually spread to the great American journals, and began to sway the opinions of Congress. And when it was whispered that Russia had joined the allies, and would attack the defenceless shores of the great home of the Saxon race, there swept through the States a convulsive shock which rocked the very throne of Government, and threatened to tumble down President, Cabinet, and party, in disastrous and utter collapse.

The Democrats sought for a brief moment to stay the storm and pacify the tumult of public opinion.

At a meeting of Congress, the Government spokesman hurled forth anew the mystic name of Monroe, and bade his fellows remember their duty to the doctrine of neutrality on which American polity was based.

It was at this point that Jeremiah P. Sloker, of Wilmington, Pa., achieved undying fame.

Springing to his feet, he rushed into a wild and turbulent speech, passionate with sympathetic feeling for England, and then in a vehement peroration he declared:

"Mr. Speaker, we have heard too much of the Monroe doctrine (Loud cheers). Are we such hoodoos that we have only one string to play on, and like a superannuated fiddler ding away at it till everyone's distracted? Who was Monroe? An excellent gentleman who made a very sound remark. We appreciated his remark, and we treasured it up. But I guess he's dead. It's high time to dandle a fresh baby in the face of Europe. It is quite as easy to make a new doctrine which will have just as much authority. *I*, sir, am, I trust, an excellent gentleman. And *I* will make a very sound remark (laughter and cheers). And you may call it, if you like, the Jeremiah P. Sloker Doctrine. And this is what my doctrine is. It is our duty, sir, to remember the claims of kindred, to succour our brethren, to assist those hard pressed in unjust war, to fight for truth and liberty. We must side with those of our blood who call upon us for our help and ask us to renounce our selfish, indolent, and impious inactivity. (Loud cheers.)

"There, gentlemen," continued the orator, turning round suddenly to the house, "that is the Jeremiah P. Sloker Doctrine, and I'll back it against Monroe's as I would a lively infant against a mummy." (Loud cheers.)

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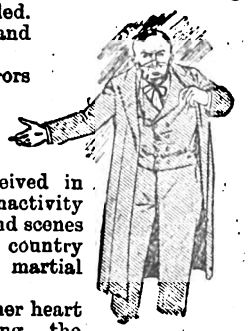
The extraordinary speech acted like a spark on gunpowder. The whole House, save for a small knot of Ministerialists, was enthusiastic. The real inward feeling of the American nation prevailed. Two days later President Cleveland was constrained to declare war.



He rushed into a wild and turbulent speech.

In that one act all his former errors were forgiven and forgotten. No Minister had ever had the opportunity of doing so popular a deed. The silence and indifference with which he was received in Washington during his weeks of inactivity changed to enthusiastic ovation and scenes of wild excitement. The whole country was inflamed with the fire of martial ardour.

For it was what America in her heart yearned for. To stand among the nations, no longer youthful, immature, undeveloped; no longer to be patronised as a land of promise; no longer the excitable irresponsible country which older civilisations indulged with a smile; but as a strong man, equal in power, in wealth, in wisdom to the oldest great peoples of the earth—this was what she had so ardently desired.

And now she had stepped forth, free from boyhood's privileges, a giant into the arena, and was standing side by side with England—the ally and defender of the greatest country that the world had known.

At last would commence her real national history—the history of a people made one by suffering and by activity. For she could not look back upon her first melancholy war with England, still less on the ghastly struggle amongst her own sons, and regard these as the prouder epochs of her life. Civil war cannot make a people great. America longed for some such splendid struggle as this that was now before her, a struggle against all Europe, as the starting point of a new and glorious period in her history, as something which would give her character and solidity, and establish her place firmly amongst the nations.

Excitement grew keener still when the newspapers published a telegram of quite extraordinary novelty. Had such a message ever passed between two nations before? Thus it read:

Queen Victoria desires through President McKinley to thank the American people for their generous action. The cause of both nations must for ever be the same—to give to the whole earth freedom and abiding peace.

From north to south, from east to west, the great centres of population throbbed with high resolve.

Throughout the marvellous changes of climate and soil and sky and country which make the vast continent so mysterious, there was the same eager animation, the same desire to swell the ranks of the newly-created army.

States hoary with civilisation, and States yet rugged with crude primitive life, vied with each other to send forth battalions.

Had the Americans had their own way, a volunteer army of five millions would have been raised in a week.

"Everyone's helping," observed Hiram K. Thatcher, "and it's deuced funny. Who ever saw our chief cities all singing the same tune before?"

"They each want to do their share," said someone to him.

"I guess so," was his reply. "And they're well fitted to divide the business between them. Boston can do the thinking, 'Frisco the fighting, Chicago the feeding, and New York the paying!"

Even the Universities were aflame. A battalion of 1,000 strong came from Harvard and Yale—fine, manly, well-exercised young men whom baseball and rowing had formed into superb specimens of their race.

The standing army was not large, but Americans soon adapt themselves to military requirements, and General Smithson, who was in command, had no trouble in drafting to Boston and New York 100,000 men who formed the First Army Corps for service in Germany. Owing to the vast distances in America and the delays rendered necessary by questions of outfit, the whole of these were drawn from the eastern states lying within reasonable distance of the two ports of embarkation.

This was a blow to the City of the Golden Gate. The San Franciscan does not care to wait for his excitement. He wants it quick, and he swore loudly when he sniffed the battle from afar and found that he was left out.

It was sad, and sad beyond all others to Mr. William J. Ritchie, commonly called "Gu," on the authority of certain ingenious persons who translated his first name into Spanish. He was a gentleman in whom activity was almost a disease, and who was equally at home in a bluff at poker and in holding up a Mexican card-sharper. He was a familiar figure in most European capitals, and had the useful faculty of making his visits memorable by business deals which brought himself many fortunes and left the older civilisations the better for some excellent lessons in commercial smartness. He was now enjoying the fruits of a season spent largely in Tattersall's, where he made himself dreaded for his luck and popular for his princely way of celebrating it.

And now, at first mention of a war, his restless spirit yearned for triumphs in a new sphere, for it was his firm conviction that operations on the Stock Exchange and Turf fitted a man admirably for strategic manœuvres in the tented field.

He read with joy the proclamation that any American who raised and fitted out a regiment of 800 men became *de facto* its Colonel, and in less than twenty-four hours he had gathered round him such a body of San Franciscans as was calculated by every appearance to excite apprehension in the German mind.

Now Col. William J. Ritchie knew General Smithson, so he took care to wire him asking that he might be permitted to join the First Army Corps. General Smithson was a good friend, but he was also a wily soldier. He found he had no room for the gallant Colonel, for the first expedition was absolutely full. But he also knew that there were only three days and a half before the date of embarkation, and that his prompt consent would enable him to confer a favour of which Colonel "Gu" could not avail himself. Thus, duty and friendship seemed thoroughly harmonious.

But herein the General over-reached himself. He had not thoroughly estimated the resourcefulness of the Westerner.

Colonel Ritchie's heart gladdened when he received the telegram, and he was soon in deep conference with the railway officials. Shortly before lunch that day he calmly informed his friends at the club that he would have to leave them. He intended to join the First Army Corps for Europe.

They looked at him in amazement.

"My dear fellow," said one of them, "it's 3,000 miles to New York."

"Three thousand odd," corrected the Colonel gravely.

"And you have three days and a half!"

"Yes," he admitted cheerfully. "A good margin for accidents."

"But look here, old man," exclaimed another. "You must be jesting. The fastest train takes six days. And even if you work miracles, what about your men and their uniforms, their arms and accoutrements!"

"By Jove, yes!" responded Ritchie reflectively. "Really it's high time I saw to that. Ta, ta! It'll take me till lunch. Don't begin till I come back."

And he calmly left the room.

Unconcerned as were his movements he lost no time. He drove to the office of a well-known contractor, armed with a

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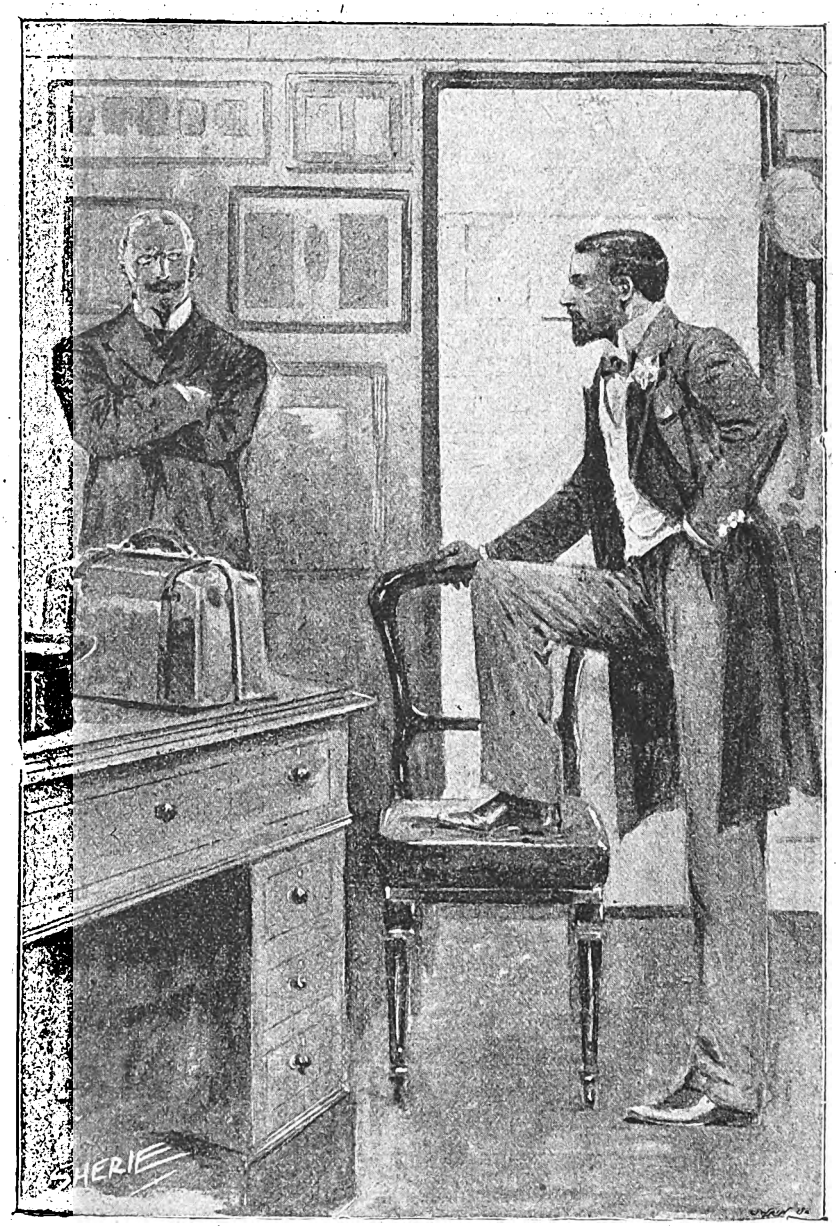

"Say," he said, "I guess you are open to a deal."

small portmanteau, which he dumped down on the table.

"Say," he said, "I guess you are open to a deal. Now, I want 800 military outfits delivered complete in twenty-four hours, with all arms and accoutrements. Mustn't be a moment late or you fall flat. Can you do it, or must I go lsowhere?"

The contractor looked at him in a startled sort of way. But he knew his man.

"It's a bargain," he said. "I'll do it at two hundred dollars a head."

"Good!" exclaimed Colonel Ritchie. Then, opening his portmanteau, he discovered it full to the top with hundred dollar bills. He counted out 1,600 of these with much solemnity, and as the other proceeded to check them he sat down and rapidly wrote a form of agreement.

When the contractor had perused this document he smiled. For he saw that his apparently nonchalant customer had added these words: "400 dollars to be forfeited for each and every fit-out unfinished." But he signed without a murmur. Colonel Ritchie got back as his friends had commenced on the soup. He sat down unconcernedly.

"That bit of business has cost me twenty-five cents," he complained.

"Twenty-five cents! What do you mean?"

"For a stamp: look at it." He carelessly tossed the paper across the table, and went on with his lunch.

He had left himself only two days and a half, or sixty hours, for the journey of 3,000 miles across America. The feat looked impossible. But Ritchie regarded nothing as impossible. He calculated that by maintaining a uniform rate of fifty miles an hour he could just manage it.

The railway officials whom he interviewed were first amused, then amazed, then impressed by his proposal. When Ritchie drew out his cheque book and began to figure out sums of money they were half won. When he spoke of patriotism they agreed to consider it. When he pointed out the tremendous advertisement they would get they were convinced.

Immense excitement was caused by the announcement of this extraordinary journey. The difficulties were stupendous.

But the companies were American and energetic. By telegraph, twenty engines with cars complete, were stationed at equi-distant points along the road. Each set would run for 300 miles, and the passengers would then change cars during motion by the attachment of another engine and train placed back to back. Every minute of delay was thus obviated, and the journey would be practically unbroken.

Could it be done? That was what everyone asked, in particular the New York papers, and not least of all General Smithson.

On Tuesday the Colonel and his company entered the train, with the 800 uniforms and accoutrements duly delivered, and left San Francisco amid ringing cheers, and the train dashed off on its wonderful journey.

Fortune favours the brave. The arrangements were perfect. At the same superb speed, aided where needed by additional engines—the train flew along, passing towns and cities and villages, across vast plains, up mountain slopes, through verdant valleys. Everywhere along the line scattered groups of spectators assembled to gaze at the sudden apparition of the spectral train, which seemed to disappear as soon as it came in sight. And as it flew past there came to the occupants the sounds of cheering. It was a journey unparalleled in railway annals.

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Within, the troops had a good time. They were terribly crowded, but poker and revolver practice varied the tedium and difficulties of the way. Nor was there lack of drink and infinite smoke.

But the leader of the party was serious. He passed most of his leisure in walking from one engine to the other. Every time that the hour's run showed below fifty miles he offered the engineers fifty dollars to bring up the average in the next spin.

They invariably succeeded, but they burnt the fire-boxes out of fourteen engines.

At midnight on Thursday, the train drew up at the Central Station, New York. It had completed the journey in sixty hours exactly, and without a moment's unnecessary delay. Accompanied by a whole city of shouting and cheering admirers, the regiment marched through the streets to the quay-side. They were in time!

General Smithson smiled grimly when he saw them, for he had been compelled to charter an additional steamer.

"We must make room, I suppose, Colonel," he said to Ritchie. "And if we are a bit crowded by your men, at least I can say that there will always be space available in my army for such an officer as you!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

In the Fatherland.

"Vas iss dass?"

"Das iss von telegram from der Kaiser."

They were not Germans, but New Yorkers, who spoke in this strange tongue, the lingo of the cheap clothes store in the vernacular of the American humourist. They stood on the deck of a transport which, out of sheer curiosity, had approached too near to the fleet under command of Sir Nowell Salmon, at that moment engaged in the second and more serious bombardment of Tronning.

As a consequence, the alert gunners on the shore forts, knowing the damage they could effect by striking an unarmoured ship, had sent a range-finding six-inch shell screaming over the foremast, and in obedience to an imperative order from the Admiral the transport rapidly stood out to sea again.

But it was not for long that the combined armies of England and the United States were thus kept in a state of inaction.

Admiral Mahan's ships, added to the tremendous array of British vessels which composed the three squadrons commanded by Sir Nowell Salmon, Admiral Fitzroy, and Vice-Admiral Erskine, made up a flotilla against which even the strong fortifications guarding the western entrance to the Kiel canal were of little avail.

For three long weeks the best troops of Germany, headed by their Emperor, had spent themselves in vain against the lines of Stralsund.

Sir Evelyn Wood had harassed them terribly. If they delivered an assault in force and retired after several hours of fierce and ineffective fighting, they were at once subjected to a bitter counter-attack by fresh troops hurried up by rail to some unexpected point.

When the German generals prepared a trap for this second instalment of the British plan of defence, it was either not forthcoming, or took the form of a feint which provoked and wearied the Germans.

It must be remembered that the country immediately behind Stralsund offers extraordinary difficulties to the effective manœuvering or concentration of troops, and there was no element of the impossible in a splendid British force being thus able to resist the whole of the armed strength of Germany.

The secret of Sir Evelyn Wood's success lay in the fact that the enemy could not get at him.

Truth to tell, the Kaiser Wilhelm behaved magnificently during this disastrous period. Untiring, undaunted, unostentatiously heroic, he inspired his soldiers by his presence and example. Where danger and difficulty were most intermixed the Emperor shared both with his men. The arrogance and petulance of his showman days were gone with the trivial considerations now perforce banished by the stress of the war.

The train dashed off on its wonderful journey.

His really powerful nature was developed and broadened by adverse circumstances. Unfortunately for his own happiness, he was still an actor, and what his histrionic ability had lost in naturalness it had gained in art.

For the cheerful, self-denying, valiant Emperor, who had ever a pleasant word for all ranks, and a resolute bearing in the field, was secretly tortured by the knowledge that he had been led into a foolish and disastrous war.

The quiet tenacity of purpose displayed by England, coupled with her brilliant achievements during the earlier stages of the campaign, had opened his eyes to the realities of the case. At first it was preposterous to suppose that Great Britain could stem the torrent that poured down upon her. But she did, and even pressed back the tide. Maddening as was the thought, it seemed that she might succeed from the outset against the fearful odds she was called upon to face. Now that the United States had joined her there was no longer speculation but probability, nay, even certainty, of the allies being defeated.

His kingdom impoverished, his people torn by faction, his throne in danger, no wonder that the Emperor mourned in solitude or sought a glorious death at the head of his devoted troops.

But fate had better things in store for him. Great monarch as he was, his personality was a mere item in the strange sequence of events which this, the last of all wars among civilised nations, was destined to produce.

Thus it chanced that whilst his officers and men did not spare themselves in rescuing him from obvious peril, they were aided and abetted by no less a personage than the British Tommy. For the latter could not be taught to regard the Kaiser as other than a pronounced comedian. Every camp joke centred round him and his acts. No canteen song failed to have reference to him, and stories of his prowess and oddities were in all mouths.

So Tommy took care not to kill him. That is to say, whenever a battery had a clear chance of sending a shell at the Imperial staff, it was purposely directed elsewhere, and a corporal of the 1st Royals boasted during the rest of his days that he once spared the Emperor's life during a cavalry *mêlée*. "I could have given him No. 2 as clean as a whistle," he said, "but I didn't fancy having a smack at the Colonel, so I jobbed a Uhlan in the eye instead."

There was not the slightest doubt that, apart from the chances of war, the Emperor must have been killed or wounded by direct design of his opponents if they had so chosen.

An intolerable feeling of helplessness paralysed the German staff. It is easy, therefore, to understand that an absolute thrill of joy manifested itself when it became known that Tronning was occupied by a mixed force of English and Americans, under the command of H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught. At last they would meet their adversary in the open.

Lord Wolseley had courteously offered the chiefship to General Smithson, but that sturdy veteran declined the honour

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"I allow that I am here to do my share of the fighting," he said modestly, "but the quarrel is yours, and your men must carry it through. I calculate that we've got to see you ain't licked."

The Duke of Connaught had gained his proud position by sheer merit. His soldierly qualities were such that he must have risen to high rank in the Army were he quite destitute of the accidental help of Royal birth.

Whether in India or in Aldershot his tactical skill was often manifested in divisional operations, and in Egypt he had seen something of the actualities of war under the distinguished general who was now intrusted with supreme control of the British armies. So well was his worth known and appreciated by the people of England, that everyone believed his selection to command the second German expedition to be a wise and unprejudiced one.

Moreover, he had accompanied Sir Evelyn Wood to Stralsund, and the practical value of his acquaintance with the arrangements then made soon bore fruit when he came to dispose his forces on shore.

It will simplify matters if the main idea of the subsequent operations be now briefly outlined.

The Duke's first business was to seize the Kiel Canal, and, with the aid of the fleet, to capture Kiel, the strong fortress which dominates the Baltic end of the water-way.

He was concurrently to concentrate his forces upon Neuminster, where three lines of railway, that from Heide on the north-west, Rendsburgh on the north, and Kiel on the north-east, converge.

His next forward movement would be towards Oldesloe, where he might expect to meet serious opposition, whilst to left and right of his front lay the fortified towns of Lubeck and Hamburg.

If he succeeded in breaking through this difficult barrier, Sir Evelyn Wood would forthwith advance upon Rostock, and thence strive to join the Duke of Connaught somewhere in the neighbourhood of Wittenberg on the Elbe, whence a combined effort could be made to reach Berlin.

In England much uneasiness was felt concerning the outcome of the new departure, and more than one speaker gave voice to this sentiment in the House of Commons.

Mr. Balfour silenced these doubters in a sentence.

"This war cannot end," he said with solemn emphasis, "until we have either occupied Paris, Berlin, and Mo cow, or the rulers of our enemies have sought for peace upon terms to be dictated by us."

Thenceforth there was no questioning, but grim perseverance towards the yet distant goal.

At first the Duke of Connaught was much puzzled to know how to deal effectively with his curious allies. Personally accustomed to the rigid and punctilious methods of English military life, he was astounded at the seeming carelessness of detail that obtained among the United States troops. Indeed, he was secretly scandalised by their free and easy methods, and by the unwonted familiarity between officers and men.

But he was far too keen an observer to fail to note that beneath all this outward laxity there was an unfailing obedience, a strong sense of duty, and a readiness to make light of difficulties which went far to atone for the absence of external discipline.

Anxious to meet their views to the utmost extent, he consulted General Smithson upon the matter.

"You must leave 'em to me, Prince," said the U.S. commander, with a quiet twinkle of mirth in his eye. "Send along an aide-de-camp or two to act with brigadiers when you want your ideas explained, but, for goodness' sake, tell the gentlemen in gold lace to leave things alone once they are in motion! My men do the thinking for themselves, and they'll get cross if they're expected to fight like machines. They'll obey orders all right enough, but they must be left to carry 'em out in their own way."

"I assure you, General Smithson," replied the Duke, "that it was furthest from my thoughts to dream of interfering in any way, save to seek your full co-operation in my detailed scheme, of which you will always know the complete scope and purport. I was thinking rather of commissariat and departmental arrangements."

"Nearly every man in the crowd has been accustomed to help himself since he was able to walk," said Smithson, indicating his vast army with a comprehensive sweep of his field-glasses. "If the eatables and ammunition are alongside, Prince, they'll get 'em all right."

The Duke smiled genially and the conversation ended. He trusted to the future to elucidate all matters of which he was in doubt, and it did.

An effective column was constituted for the occupation of Neuminster. It consisted of 5,000 British and 5,000 American infantry, with a strong backing of guns and cavalry.

From Hamburg and Lubeck a somewhat similar German force had been thrown forward along the Ahrensbok line. Unknown to both parties, a race ensued for the possession of Neuminster, and of course the defenders won by some hours, as the resources of the country were fully at their service.

Viscount Falmouth commanded the little expedition, and with him, as the lawyers say, were Colonel Ritchie, in charge of the United States troops, Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. G. H. Gough, of the 14th Hussars, with his own regiment, the two regiments of volunteer cavalry, including the Middlesex Yeomanry, and Colonel Lockyer, A.R., with the guns.

The Germans . . . placed Neuminster in a state of defence.

The Germans speedily took advantage of their priority in time to place Neuminster in a state of defence. Field works were at once started on the north of the town, houses loopholed, roads barricaded, and guns mounted in advantageous positions.

After a severe march across the level and sandy plains of the Schleswig-Holstein peninsula, the British advance guard met and drove back the German cavalry scouts, and Viscount Falmouth rode rapidly to the front to try and ascertain the enemy's disposition.

"They are strongly posted," said the Brigadier.

"Guess we'll have trouble before we see the inside of the town from this end," said Ritchie.

Something in his voice caused Lord Falmouth to look at him.

"Don't you think we ought to deliver a direct attack?" he inquired.

"I guess not," was the reply. "They're kinder expecting it straight away, and they'll raise us a hundred before the draw. All their preparations are made to meet us on this side, and I think it will pay to be a bit shy of coming in on their terms. Now, supposing the guns and horses were to stop here and keep all snug whilst we squirm round to the rear of the town, it will upset their pot. There can't be any shelter trenches on the south, and our German friends won't fight any better because they are cut off from any possible help."

"In other words," said Lord Falmouth, who knew the language of poker, "if we ante high enough, they won't feel inclined to bluff."

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"That's a principle of the American Constitution," answered Ritchie.

General Reichshoffer was puzzled to account for the delay that ensued. True, his guns were actively engaged by the British artillery, and a cloud of skirmishers enveloped his front, but there was an absence of the definite attack which he expected.

The reputation enjoyed by his assailants did not warrant any assumption of undue timidity on their part, and at last the German general lost patience.

He sent out three regiments, supported by a battery and two squadrons of cavalry, to conduct a reconnaissance in force.

The line of British skirmishers fell back steadily before this development, and the guns also were compelled to change their position.

Anxiously watching the progress of events from a church tower, Reichshoffer was still more astonished as he beheld this manœuvre.

Elated by his success, the commander of the reconnaissance allowed his men to get a little out of hand in the eagerness with which they achieved their task, and he did not see the rapid detour made by Gough's horsemen through a slight declivity, with the evident intention to take the advancing Germans in flank. From his elevated position, Reichshoffer perceived the movement clearly enough, and he roared orders from the balustrade to a staff officer beneath, to ride his best and recall the detachment.

It was too late.

Barely had the officer started on his mission, when the rattle of rifle-fire in the rear distracted attention to the determined attack now being delivered in that direction, and long before the aide had reached the reconnaissance party, Colonel Gough had dissipated them into thin air, capturing their guns and cutting the cavalry support into ribands.

The beautiful order and precision of the German forces in Neuminster now gave way to the wildest confusion.

A rush was made to line the hedgerows and garden walls on the south of the town, but before an effective defence could be arranged, the 7th Pennsylvania and the 1st Battalion of the Derbyshire Regiment, were racing up the Markt Strasse.

The struggle for the possession of the town was short but stubborn. It was characterised by more than one noteworthy incident of personal bravery on the part of both attackers and defenders.

A German officer, deserted by his company when a fierce onrush was made by the Derbyshires, stood alone in the centre of a narrow street.

His sword-arm was broken by a bullet, but he calmly drew a revolver and fired steadily three times into the mass of his assailants. The Englishman leading the advance called upon him to surrender, but the gallant Brunswicker's reply was a bullet which ripped off his adversary's shoulder-knot.

An instant later he was knocked down, and it is to the credit of the chivalrous Tommies that they did not give him a vicious bayonet thrust as they passed, for he had wounded two of their comrades.

An American officer, cheering on the leading company of the 7th Pennsylvania, who had now penetrated to the north end of Neuminster, carelessly leapt his horse across a barricade and rode forward for a few yards.

He was momentarily separated from his men, and at that instant half-a-dozen Uhlans, returning precipitately from the wreck of the reconnaissance party dashed up to him.

Half frenzied with the sudden collapse of their assumed victory, the Uhlans resolved to pay off the score in the person of one enemy at least. It did not seem that the life of this fine soldier from West Point was worth a moment's purchase.

But he was an excellent horseman, and cool as an iceberg. Pulling his charger back on to its hind legs and wheeling him simultaneously, at the imminent risk of a headlong fall, the American disconcerted the aim of the first two lances levelled at him, and received a sword cut on the forte of his own weapon.

Yet another lance darted forward, but again missed, for the West Point man had bent forward on his horse's neck and fired a revolver shot under the animal's head. More by luck than design, the bullet found a resting-place in the thorax of one of the six, but still the odds were terribly uneven.

Grasping his rifle by the barrel, he smashed off the stock against the head of the first Uhlan he encountered.

The Uhlans were desperately in earnest and heedless of their own safety, for rifle-shots were now whistling through the crowd, as the men realised that they must risk hitting their officer if they would save him.

But a remarkable diversion occurred just then. A youthful but gigantic private of the Derbyshire Regiment, who had early grasped the niceties of the situation, caught a riderless German horse on the near side of the barrier, jumped on to his back, and in a few powerful bounds was in the midst of the fray.

Grasping his rifle by the barrel he smashed off the stock against the head of the first Uhlan he encountered. He raised the heavy weapon again to put it to a similar use, but only in time to save himself from a well delivered cut from a man on the near side.

Carried forward by his first wild rush, the Derbyshire man was driven, unarmed, between two of the Uhlans. Never losing his head for a fraction of a second, he saw that neither was ready to lunge at him, so he threw out his arms, kicked his charger fiercely to urge him on, and succeeded in dragging both of his opponents backwards out of their saddles. He clashed their heads together as though they were feather pillows, and flung the pair senseless to the ground.

By this time the American had run one gentleman from Brandenburg through the body, and the sixth having got clear of the *mêlée*, galloped off in the hope of escaping. But the officer rode after him, and within a few yards the Uhlan threw away his sword and raised his right arm aloft in token of surrender.

The West Pionter trotted back towards his rescuer, held out his hand, and said heartily: "Shake!"

The Englishman responded as cordially, and then dismounted to rejoin his regiment.

Lord Falmouth had witnessed the whole incident. Leaning over towards an officer of the Derbyshires, he said:

"What is the name of that youngster?"

"Oh," was the reply, "that's Jones of Balliol."

"Jones, of Balliol?" repeated his lordship, puzzled by the glibness of the answer.

"Yes. He failed for Sandhurst, so his father hoped to cure his thickheadedness by sending him to Oxford for a couple of years. He has won undying fame by getting himself chucked out of the Empire last boat-race night at 8.15."

"The Duke must know of this," observed his lordship, and the acute reader can be trusted to understand which of the two incidents he meant.

Anyhow, Jones of Balliol came out of the campaign a better man than he went it, for he commanded a company in his own regiment.

(To be continued.)

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TWO FRIENDS.

PIERRE DURAND and Jacques Duval had been brought up together, so to speak.

As small boys their parents, friends of long standing, had taken them to play in the Luxembourg, and it was while making sand-houses that their intimacy had commenced. A little later, when short trousers had taken the place of kilts they had been sent to the same pension. Seated side by side at their studies, always in the same classes, they had continued to see each other regularly every day. Their fondness for each other was so great that they were not contented with merely their hours of work in common, but when Sunday came they passed the afternoon together at the home of one or the other. From the pension to the Lycé, from the Lycé to the Business College, their affection had only increased.

When the time came for starting into business, as each one judged the other perfectly indispensable to him, they decided to form a partnership. And, in fact, it was a very happy idea for the house, "Durand & Duval, Wholesale Hardware Merchants," enjoyed an unequalled prosperity.

Durand and Duval lived in the same building in which they carried on their business, and went downstairs at seven every morning, and worked industriously in the shop until seven in the evening, thus affording their clerks an example of faithfulness overseeing everything, and, on occasions, not even disdaining to serve a customer. They allowed themselves barely an hour at noon for luncheon, and, it is needless to add, took this meal together.

In the evening they were the last ones to leave the shop and go upstairs to dine.

Of course, the thought of attending a theatre or dance without the other had never occurred to one of them. Besides, no one of their acquaintances would have thought of inviting one without the other. To their friends, Pierre and Jacques formed a sort of household which one would have hesitated to break, and, usually, one invitation did for the two. One wrote as naturally "Monsieur Durand and Monsieur Duval" as one writes "Monsieur and Madame Dupont."

Pierre and Jacques—have we said that they were the same age?—were in their thirty-third year at present, and this existence which they were leading seemed as if it were to continue indefinitely, when a cable dispatch from America came to break up the monotony.

An uncle, of whom Jacques had formerly been very fond, had fallen ill in New York. He summoned his nephew to him.

Pierre, to whom Jacques read the message, uttered a cry almost of anguish.

"And you are going away?"

"But, my dear friend, I must go! If it were merely a question of money I should not hesitate to refuse to go. We are rich, happy, accustomed to our way of life, and I would not for a good deal run the risks of such a long journey and leave you all the care of our business; but it is a sick man who calls for me—and a poor man, which is a greater reason why I should go."

"You are right, my friend; you must go."

And Pierre pressed Jacques' hand.

"At least, don't stay too long," he added. "Remember that I am alone here, and how desolate I shall be without you. You will see something new your mind will be taken up studying the ways of a new country, which you have never before seen——"

"Yes; but if I make any friends there I shall have to leave them on my return—and you are sure to find me unchanged towards you—while you, you will go about by yourself, you will amuse yourself, you——"

Here the voice of Jacques trembled a little.

"You will perhaps meet someone you will wish to marry, and then what is to become of me without my lifelong companion?"

"But I never think of it."

"No, not now. But you may think of it. At times, I have seen in you already a tendency in that direction. You have resisted it up to the present, a little through love of your liberty, and a great deal on account of your old comrade and because you fear his sarcasm—but once away from me——"

"Do not fear that, my friend! I have no more desire than you have to put a chain about my neck, and what would become of our card games and our fine walks in the evening? No, indeed; have no fear!"

Jacques packed his trunk, telegraphed for a stateroom, and that very evening set out for Hayre accompanied by his old friend, who bade him an affectionate farewell at the pier.

Jacques was kept three months at the bedside of his uncle, whose recovery was slow. Regularly twice a week the two friends wrote to each other.

Jacques' letters were always filled with accounts of his

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health, his new existence, the interesting customs of this new and clever people. He did not neglect, in his correspondence, even to give his partner the most minute information concerning the hardware business in the New World, and to advise some changes suggested to him by the good, practical sense of the Americans.

Pierre's letters had, on the contrary, gradually diminished in interest and length. Toward the last he had sent but notes of a few lines, as if he were afraid, if he wrote at length, of letting some secret, which he was trying to guard, escape him.

This brevity, of course, had surprised Jacques.

What is this mystery? he wondered.

But, as the hour of return was approaching he had silenced his curiosity, certain of soon being enlightened as to the reasons for this new attitude of his friend.

"I shall arrive this evening.—Jacques."

When Pierre received this telegram he turned pale and called to his wife.

"Jacques is coming back, and I have never dared to tell him of our marriage."

"Really; this very dear friend, of whose disapproval you stand in such dread! When I think that it was fear of his blame which made you hesitate to marry me——"

And putting her arm round the neck of her husband Madame Durand seemed to reproach him for his lack of eagerness.

"Yes, I confess it," said Pierre, smiling. "I hesitated, but not for long; and these beautiful eyes made short work of my indecision."

A kiss finished the sentence—from which it was easy to conclude that if Jacques' opinion had had a moment's weight with his friend, the latter did not to-day regret the step he had taken. He added, however:

"Poor Jacques! this will be a blow to him! Just think, we lived together so closely united—when I remember that he is expecting to take up our life again in our old apartments——"

Madame Durand smiled.

"Are we not better off where we are? And whatever pleasure you found in the company of your old friend, are you not happier here, pampered by your wife? Pampered by two women, for my sister lives with us."

"Certainly; and if I have a regret, my dear, it is for not having known you sooner; but it is not myself that it is a question of just now, but Jacques. What will be the best way to break it to him?"

"Come, don't get nervous. There are two hours yet. He doesn't get here till seven. Before that we may perhaps find some ingenious method."

"Yes; I beg of you, my dear, think of some way. I trust myself to you. I am so troubled, so worried at the thought of his consternation——"

"Take courage. Women are more clever than men, and I have hopes of arranging everything. Let me consult with my sister."

* * * * *

Jacques had just entered his home—their home he still believed.

Pierre was awaiting him, and the two friends fell into each other's arms.

"At last I see you again," said Jacques, after the first greetings were over; "and now you will explain to me the mystery. When I think that in your letters——"

But he did not finish the sentence, his glance fell on Pierre's coat, a coat of the latest fashion and cut, which contrasted strongly with the clothes he used to wear—generally worn to the thread. From the coat his eyes rose to the cravat—and what a cravat! Brilliant in colour and so artistically tied!

"Did you tie that cravat?"

The proof of the crime was obvious. Pierre did not even try to deny it. He had no desire to, besides.

"No; I did not."

"A woman did—only a woman could have!"

"Yes; I am married!"

"Unhappy man!"

A little later, and it was the word "wretch" which Jacques, in his anger, let fall.

The other excused himself as best he could.

He said:

"It was a chance which did it all. She is so charming, so pretty! I met her one evening—at Martin's. They had invited you and me—I was bored all by myself—I went—I did not suspect anything, I assure you—she was there—I was conquered at once—and you would have been, too, I am sure of it."

"Oh!"

A gesture of denial from Jacques, but Pierre continued.

"Yes, you would have been—to see her was to love her. If you could know her! what grace! what charm! Ah, you will not be long in understanding me—come, and you will pardon me!"

"Never!"

"At least you will dine with me this evening?"

"Indeed, no!"

It took a good half hour for Pierre to persuade his friend, but at last he yielded.

"Yes; I will go with you, because I do not wish to appear to sulk; but it is purely from politeness, and that I may not seem to be on bad terms with my partner's wife—for now it is all ended. I see very plainly—I have no longer a friend, only a business partner!"

Pierre made no answer to this, but his moustache hid a slight smile.

They started to Pierre's home. On the way Jacques thought. "What a fool Pierre is! I am sure his wife must be ugly-looking or ill-tempered. A widow, he said—doubtless a good schemer, who worked upon his 'naiveté.' Oh, it's enough to make one laugh!"

On their arrival Pierre presented him.

"Madame Durand, my friend, Jacques Duval!"

Jacques was all ready to salute her coldly, but at the sight of the pretty face he saw before him his coldness vanished, and he met her with a compliment.

"I am delighted, madame."

And, in a low voice to Pierre:

"You rascal, but she is charming!"

Pierre excused himself for a moment.

"I leave you two together—get acquainted!"

And Jacques was invited to come and sit upon the divan by the side of the mistress of the house.

At the end of ten minutes he was completely won over.

She talked to him on the subjects in which he was most interested, as if she guessed his taste and preferences.

She was a most charming listener, and suddenly he found himself envying his friend's fate.

"She is absolutely delightful, this woman! What luck Pierre is in! Ah, I understand how for such a woman he could renounce bachelorhood, and I have not the heart to wish—"

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The dinner was delicious, and Jacques had to admit to himself that he had never had a better appetite.

"You will come to-morrow, of course," Madame Durand said to him on leaving.

"I?"

"Yes; to-morrow, and every day—I wish it."

"But——"

"You must, otherwise I should reproach myself, for not for worlds would I be the cause of coldness in your relations with my husband."

And as Jacques still hesitated, "I wish it," she said, and laid her white, soft hand lightly on his.

"So be it, I obey," Jacques answered, moved by this unexpected caress.

An adorable smile rewarded him.

The next day Jacques returned, and the next, and every day of that week.

"Well, what do you think of my wife?" Pierre asked him, when the two were alone together in the shop.

"Ah, my friend, I think her——"

An expressive gesture completed the sentence.

"Then you no longer disapprove?"

"Say rather I was a fool ever to blame you—if I had been in your place, I——"

"It makes me very happy to know you and my wife are congenial. Just think how I should have felt if you had not liked each other! I only hope it may be lasting, and that you may not change your opinion."

"I change my opinion about your wife? The more I see of her the better I like her, my friend."

"Heaven help you!"

And saying this the rascal Pierre had the same enigmatical smile under his moustache.

That happened which was bound to happen.

Submitted daily to the same influence, entertained by the amiable conversations of his friend's wife, touched by the marks of affection which she lavished upon him, flattered by the importance which she seemed to attach to his slightest word, Jacques passed helplessly through all the gamut of sensations and suddenly—he had been home not quite two weeks—he recognised the fatal truth, he was in love with Madame Durand.

"Well, this is fine," cried the poor man, when he had looked clearly into his own heart. "What must I do now?"

"As soon as the shop closes you will join me?" said Pierre.

"No," answered Jacques; "don't count upon me this evening."

"Why not?"

Jacques tried to make an excuse, but it would not come.

He hesitated, stammered, and urged by the questions of his friend, he ended by bursting into tears, and telling the truth:

"Ah, my friend, I am a wretch, I love your wife!"

"Very well, marry her!"

"What?"

"You idiot! Do you think I should have submitted to such a course if I had not known where it would end? But it is not my wife that you know. The same day of your return she went into the country—and I am going to telegraph to her to return this evening. You will like her, too, I am sure; but, by the way, it is her sister with whom you are in love, and nothing hinders you from marrying her."

"Ah!"

"Come, shake hands, brother-in-law."

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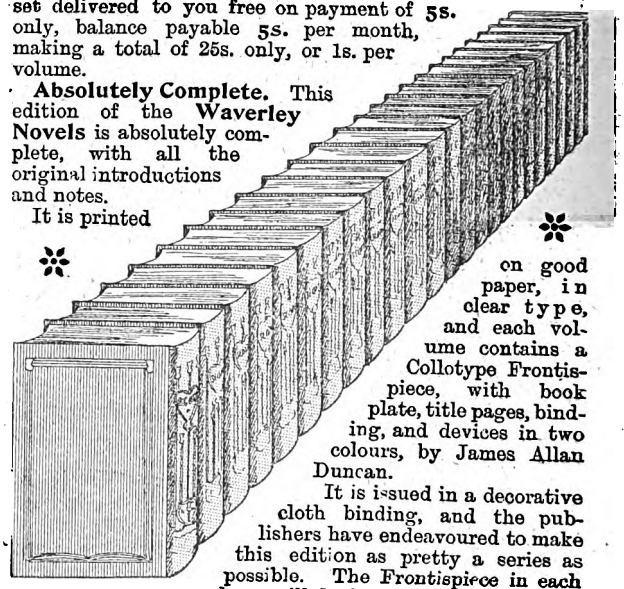

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AIDS TO ACCURACY.

In the Christmas number of *Short Stories* will begin a new serial by C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, author of "Captain Kettle." It will be entitled "Sandy Carmichael," and will be profusely illustrated. Do not fail to tell your friends about it.

Amateur.—Next time you endeavour to take your baby's photograph, why not try the method adopted by a certain North country photographer, which, I am told, is a great success. He has a little kitten, which at these times he places on the top of the camera, and during the process a few pulls at the animal's tail suffice to make the animal active, and at the same time to fix the child's gaze.

R. D.—To keep a racehorse in even moderate condition in England, with proper attendants, costs £325 a year.

S. T.—It is quite a mistake to suppose that the pilgrims introduced into the presence of the Pope, kneel down and kiss his bare toe. The real facts of the case are that the pilgrims kiss a cross embroidered on the toe of one of the shoes which His Holiness wears on these occasions.

Uni.—The unicorn was one of the supporters in the naval arms of Scotland. When James VI. of Scotland succeeded to the throne of England as James I., he introduced the unicorn as a support for the Royal arms in substitution of the red dragon of Wales, introduced by Henry VII. The fabulous animal has the head, neck and body of the horse, the legs of the stag and the tail of the lion.

W. E. S. asks: "Are there any parts of the body that do not grow old with the advance of years?"———The brain and the heart, if properly used, do not grow old like the rest of the body. The nutrition of the brain is specially provided for by Nature, and thus remains vigorous to the last. With regard to the heart it is a well-known fact that it attains its greatest development, in both men and women, in old age.

T. H.—I am told that the Prince of Wales's daily correspondence amounts to five and six hundred letters.

W. H.—Yes, it is true that the majority of the book-keepers and cashiers employed in Japanese business houses are Chinamen. They are given the preference for such positions because of their honesty. Although it is commonly understood that a Chinaman will cheat if he gets the chance, as a matter of fact, if he is entrusted with money he keeps it safely, and if, in making a promise, he utters the words "Can do," these words are as good as a bond.

P. B. asks: "Do the muscles of the face ever grow tired?"———Rather, if you use them sufficiently. Anyone who has spent the best part of a morning in the dentist's chair knows for himself. Caricaturists are often troubled with this complaint. After an hour or so of contorting their faces in the efforts of trying to assume the expressions of other people, they find it necessary to rest their faces, either by lying down for a few minutes, or to go out for a walk with the determination to look at things and not at people.

P. P.—Paper made from seaweed is a growing industry in France. It is so transparent that in some instances it has been used instead of glass.

Nellie writes to ask why a photograph often looks so grotesque in a looking-glass.———Both sides of a face are hardly ever alike, and when a photo is seen through a looking-glass, the differences are exactly reversed, and the peculiarities belonging to the right side are seen on the left side, and *vice versâ*. This often entirely alters the expression of the face, and so makes it quite unlike the original portrait when seen through a mirror.

Athlete anxiously inquires whether gymnastic exercise is at all likely to check a man's growth.———I should say not. A man is not made of indiarubber or any such substance of the kind, that can only be increased in breadth by diminishing in length. I should not be surprised, however, if great muscular development would not tend to slightly check a weedy growth. In any case, it might easily appear to do so, for a well-proportioned man of six feet never gives one an impression of as great a height as a lean and lanky individual of the same stature.

Litho.—The best lithographic stones are obtained from Bavarian quarries. These quarries are approaching exhaustion, and the stone is consequently increasing in price.

An American Reader of *S.S.*, who is also an ardent cyclist, writes to tell me what riding in the prairies is like. "Of course," he writes, "the chief feature is the almost total absence of hills. For hundreds, and, in certain directions, thousands of miles, one can spin along the trails without encountering a hill big enough to affect one's speed either way. For the greater part of the year the old Indian trails, now the generally accepted roads of the country, are as wide as a waggon, and the smooth surface is composed of a very thin layer of soft soil that makes one think he is riding over velvet. The great and only drawback to cycling on the prairie is that when the wind blows you can only ride in one direction.

H. B. N. asks: "How long should one stay after a formal lunch?"———The usual thing to do is to go back to the drawing-room for a short time, and take one's departure after the lapse of about half-an-hour.

N. H.—Emperors and empresses, kings and queens, write to each other as brothers and sisters. Reigning grand dukes also enjoy this privilege when addressing kings, but monarchs not possessing royal honours are designated as cousins.

D. W.—The scientific reason given for the curly nature of the African's hair is that the curls deflect the rays of the tropical sun, thus preventing their more severe penetration into the brain. In the transmission of light it is a law that every intervening object with which a ray comes in contact bends and diverts it in another direction.

B. B. D. asks: "Can you tell me when it first became fashionable to go out of town during certain seasons of the year?"———This is such a very ancient custom that it is impossible to tell you when it originated. Evidence is gathered from the Egyptian monuments that the leading members of the aristocracy had large estates in which their mansions stood, and upon these were kept horses, cattle, poultry, and a large number of servants. The contemporaries of Cicero not only dwelt in Rome, but at certain seasons left the city, and went to reside in their villas on the shores of the Mediterranean.

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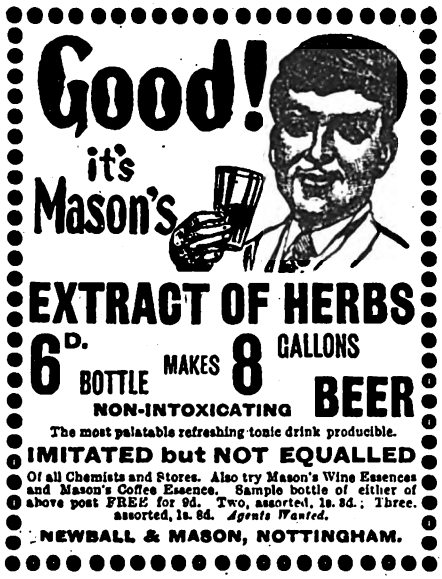

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BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

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THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

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ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc., POST FREE, if mentioning *Short Stories* 26/11/98 when writing.

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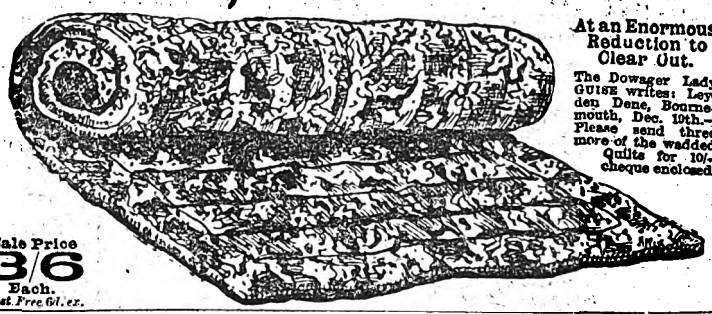

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6ft. by 12ft.	10/6	REDUCED	9ft. by 15ft.	19/6	
9ft. by 9ft.	11/0	SALE	12ft. by 13½ft.	22/0	
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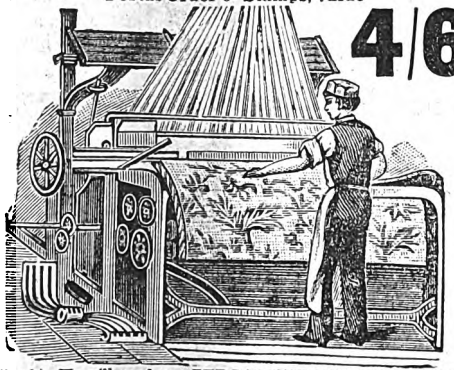

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Extraordinarily Heavy, very Best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for parting down):

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TURKEY PATTERN CARPETS (Regd).

Reversible, woven throughout, bordered, richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

Size.	Each.		Size.	Each.
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7½ft. by 9ft.	5/11	REDUCED	12ft. by 12ft.	12/9
9ft. by 9ft.	7/6	SALE	12ft. by 13½ft.	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft.	9/6	PRICE.	12ft. by 15ft.	15/9
9ft. by 12ft.	9/6		12ft. by 18ft.	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft.	11/6		12ft. by 21ft.	22/6

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg.), to match above Carpets sent for 1/6 extra, size 2yd. long and 1yd. wide. Special Offer. Three Hearthrugs for 4/3, or Six for 8/-, or Twelve for 15/6, sterling value.

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On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

SPECIAL 1898.

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1 Magnificently Rich Cream-Coloured Curly Sheepskin Hearthrug, average size 6 feet by 3 feet, perfection in quality.

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THE LOT 10/6

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 518. FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 3RD, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

LET

no foreign power disguise from itself the consequences of forcing war upon this country. The men of Great Britain are, without doubt, the strongest and most determined on sea or land. In a just quarrel they are stern, invincible, and undivided. Their wealth and resources are incalculable. Their energy without bounds. Still, there are many individual exceptions in this great national bulk of fearless strength. Some are found who seem hopelessly out of the running; who go about their share of the world's work listlessly, in a half-hearted manner. To

THEM

the "wild joy of living" is an unknown sensation. If they eat or drink, or do anything out of the ordinary course, they are liable to the severest penalties of headache, nausea, indigestion, nervous tremors, and many other disagreeable reminders that they are but feeble folk. The real truth is, they are ***Never Well,*** and they generally despair of attaining to that degree of health which so largely contributes to make life worth living. It is to

ALL

such that **BEECHAM'S PILLS** are particularly recommended. This medicine is the most effective ever discovered for the successful treatment of nervous dyspepsia—and it is generally nervous dyspepsia to which these gloomy, languid, silently-suffering individuals are a prey—but **BEECHAM'S PILLS** will change all that; will so tone up the stomach, so improve nutrition, so perfectly regulate the functions of the liver, and so purify the blood, that with vigorous manhood or womanhood again established, happiness must surely

COME!

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TO THE READERS OF

"SHORT STORIES,"

INCLUDING A

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THE GIFT OF A

HANDSOME WRITING CASE

Will be presented to every Reader of "Short Stories" forming not less than twelve words out of the letters in the word **"ENGRAVINGS,"** as for instance, SING, RAGE, VAN, SAGE, GIG, etc., whilst the Reader forming the **LARGEST** number will receive, in addition,

A Cash Prize of £50.

HAVING PURCHASED AN ENORMOUS STOCK OF

HIGH-CLASS CHRISTMAS CARDS,

At considerably less than half the original cost, we have decided to offer them direct to the Readers of "Short Stories," and we are therefore making up Monster Packets (sold in the ordinary way for at least 3s. 6d.), containing one dozen choice assorted Christmas Cards for 2s. per packet, Post Free to any address in the United Kingdom (Foreign Postage, 1s. extra). With each of these packets we shall **PRESENT GRATIS** a Certificate giving the rules, and entitling the Holder to compete, absolutely and entirely free of charge, for the above Gifts and Prizes. Every purchaser of the above Packet of Christmas Cards forming not less than twelve words out of the letters in the word **"ENGRAVINGS,"** will receive a handsome **GIFT**, being

A BEAUTIFULLY FINISHED WRITING CASE,

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GOOD FELT HAT, Black, Navy, Brown or Grey **2/6.** Carriage 4d.

THE John Noble

HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

promptly sent by Parcel Post, safely packed, direct from the Largest Firm of Costumiers in the World, and made to look smart and yield faithful service.

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Exceedingly well-made and carefully finished Chesterfield Coat, and full-wide Tailor Skirt. Price complete Costume, 10/6; carriage 6d. Skirt alone, **5/6**; carriage 5d. Good value. **10/6**

Stylish blouse bodice and neat skirt. Bodice lined through, and made with gathered front and shaped belt, *as sketch*. Lengths and Prices:

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These Costumes are supplied in the following two good durable Cloths:
I. **John Noble Cheviot Serge,** weighty and weather-resisting.
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Any other size can be specially made to measure 1/6 extra.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 518. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending December 3rd, 1898.

Testing a Coward.

OVER two centuries ago. Fair Virginia, in her most rugged, uncouth state, yet rich in the dignity of an advanced settlement, the favourite ward of England's sovereigns.

The crude fort at Jamestown held a merry garrison, the Governor having impressed upon royalty across the sea the importance of troops in a land where unexpected rebellions against authority might succeed the partially triumphant uprising in 1676.

The commander of the garrison was Colonel Fortune. The number and quality of his troops are not important factors in this tale. Among the men were a dozen or more young subalterns, fresh from England, undergoing their first rough work in the forests of Virginia.

Near the fort were the homes of the officers, the Governor's residence being but a short distance down the rough, winding lane, which was dignified by the name of street. Colonel Fortune's home was the handsomest, the merriest of them all, a typical frontier mansion. A mansion of those days could be little more than a cottage in these, yet the Colonel's was far brighter than the palace of to-day. In his house gathered chivalrous

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subalterns from English homes and stalwart Virginians of inherited gallantry.

His board was more hospitable than that of the Governor, his favours were coveted even more eagerly than those of his superior. Stern, exacting, yet affable and courteous, he was the idol of a people whose hatred for those who ruled them had wrought ruin more than once.

Mrs. Fortune, a lady of gentle birth, shared the power of her husband.

But there was a colonial queen whose reign was of more consequence to the youth of Jamestown than was that of the august person across the sea. She was queen of hearts, this daughter of theirs, light-hearted Kate Fortune. Daintiest maid in all the land, famed for her wit, her pranks, her loveliness, her dimples and her sunshine, she was the wiliest tempter who ever laid unconscious siege to man's indifference.

The English officers called her an angel, the more deferential Virginians moaned that she was a witch, yet loved her.

In that year, Jamestown was a veritable cauldron of rivals, fair suitors all, some bold, some timid, none hopeful.

Strange as it may appear to those who live these two centuries later, there were no jealousies, no bitterness among them. In those good days the favoured man's best friends were his beaten rivals. Kate's kingdom was not large, but her sceptre was mighty. It was made of tenderness, beauty with discretion, with an occasional shadow of ridicule involved. It was the shadow which her subjects feared more than the rod.

For months the Governor's nephew had been her most ardent admirer, notwithstanding the fact that he had been in Virginia but sixty days. His surrender had been instantaneous.

Ordinarily, the nephew of the Governor, who was a peer of the realm, might be considered a superior rival, but in this instance he was not even feared. He had come to Jamestown with exalted ideas, a haughty demeanour, and what Virginians called a supercilious air. He dressed better, talked better, and lived better, and he seemed to hold every man in the colony at a distance. Friendly, courteous even to the lowest soldier, he still gave the impression that he was condescending, not alone to those beneath, but to those above him. That this man should have drifted to the colonies from the drawing-rooms of London seemed incredible.

Moreover, he had refused to wrestle in the contests at the fort, and had failed to fight the man who had hotly called him a coward in the presence of others.

Tales of his conduct in that and other exhibitions had been spread, and the good-looking young officer was eventually made a laughing-stock. One day, however he pulled the nose of an impudent lieutenant. When the red-faced lieutenant insisted upon satisfaction with swords, he merely turned pale and ignored the challenge.

"I came here to fight the Indians, not to kill my comrades," he had said, and a disdainful laugh followed, bringing a flush to his face as he walked away.

Kate Fortune rather admired the easy elegance of the stranger, yet despised his show of cowardice, the story having come to her promptly enough.

She began to treat him coldly, and he was at last driven to feel that he was her most unwelcome suitor. One day he bluntly asked her why she treated him so unkindly.

"Captain Studford, I will be frank with you," replied the girl. "How can you expect me to admire a man who submits to the ridicule of a whole fort full of men, not one of whom seems able to cope with him in strength or the experience of arms? I am the daughter of an English soldier; that should be sufficient reason for my conduct."

"So I am an object of derision to you, as well as to them," he observed quietly. "I shall not intrude again, Miss Fortune. I am brave enough to tell you for the first time, and in the face of your evident dislike, that I love you better than I ever dreamt I could love a woman."

He was turning away in apparent indifference as he concluded this strange avowal.

Kate planted herself squarely before him, her pretty, perplexed face twitching between a smile and a frown.

"Isn't it cowardly to say that when you know how I feel? You are safe in saying what you already know I could not entertain," she said.

"I would rather not discuss it. You may treat it as a jest, as cowardice, or what you like. I cannot control your treatment of the best thing an honest man has to give a woman."

He left the girl standing upon the tips of her toes in sheer surprise at this extraordinary situation. She was at no time a dignified queen, but she was an inquisitive one.

"But, Captain, you must not go away fearing that I shall treat lightly what you have said to me," she murmured.

"Fearing? Why should I fear your ridicule more than that of others? You are brighter, more bewitching, more tantalising than any woman I have ever known—you are maddening—do you hear? Ah, I crave your pardon for so far forgetting myself as to dwell upon a matter which I should have forgotten in your displeasure.

"By the way, I should like to tell you why I will not accommodate those young fools with a duel, why I have controlled my natural desire to resent their insults.

"I have fought one duel and I have killed a man. These men would have no more chance than that man. You may tell them so. Farewell!"

That same night half-a-dozen young men, with as many maids, dropped in to spend the chilly evening before the Colonel's roaring fires. They were toasting apples, and chatting gaily, when Kate suddenly turned to a young Virginian, and, with taunting eyes, cried:

"Martin Crask, I know why Captain Studford would not fight a duel with you."

"So do I," responded Crask. "Because he feared me."

"'Twas no such reason. He says he does not choose to kill anything but Indians."

A laugh went up from the men.

"The fool! Did he say that to you?" cried Crask.

"He truly did; and, besides, he has fought and killed a man."

"Ho! ho!" laughed Crask disdainfully.

"Did he stab him in the dark?" questioned Farring.

"He lies if he says he fought aught save a boy," sneered Crask.

"Yet he pulled your valiant nose until it was red for near a week," said Kate cheerily.

"Oh, would that I were at him—the coward!" cried Crask, white and trembling.

"You can pull his nose when next you meet him, Martin; it is your turn, you know," said Kate laughingly, and Crask glared at the burning logs in angry silence.

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"Please forgive me, Martin; I did not mean to hurt you by recalling a previous injury," cried Kate, and Crask's pout grew with her contrition.

"I cannot see why you defend the Captain, Miss Fortune," ventured Farring.

"Why not? He will not defend himself."

"But you surely cannot approve a coward?"

"Are you sure he is a coward?"

"I should consider myself one under the circumstances, I believe," he cried evasively.

"Would it not be cowardly to fight Martin Crask if he knew he could kill him?"

"Bah!" came from the angry Crask.

"He could, at least, have given Crask satisfaction for an insult," said Varney. Kate wavered.

"That's true," she said; "he should have been a gentleman. Still, that does not prove him a coward."

"I'll wager that I can prove him a coward," observed Lieutenant Holmes. "And safely, too."

"'Twere wise to do it safely," supplemented Miss Fortune.

"Once, at home, we exposed a boasting captain, who would have had us think him the bravest man on earth——"

"But that does not seem to be Captain Studford's object," interrupted Kate.

"True," went on Holmes, "but that has nothing to do with it. This captain was one night approached by five of his fellow officers, disguised as highwaymen, and despite his declarations that he had fought dozens of men, he ran like a hound, screaming murder all the way. Why not test your captain's courage as we tested ours, Miss Fortune?"

"In the first place, I could not be a very impressive highwayman, and in the second place he might shoot."

"You have plenty of men at your command who would serve as Indians for such an experiment," speculated Varney.

"We all would!" exclaimed Holmes.

"So you might!" she cried. "He would be willing to kill you if you were Indians."

"We might as well give up the plan, for we could not force him to leave town without a bodyguard," sneered Crask.

"Fie! That is easy. Miss Fortune could ask him to ride with her into the forest, and he would go blindly enough," said Holmes.

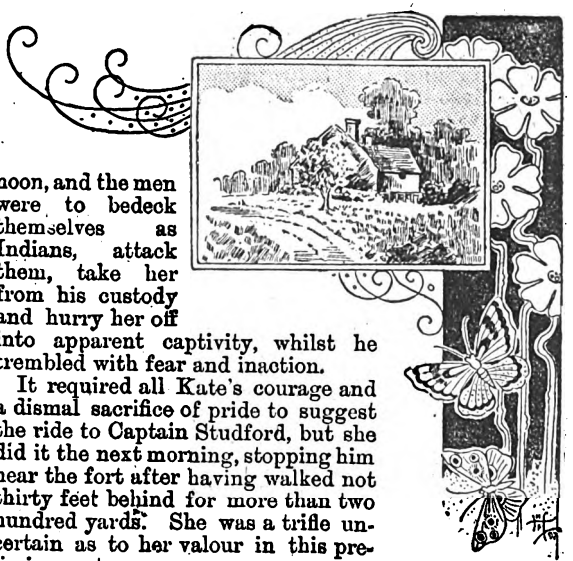
"I?" cried Kate, blushing to think of herself in that position after Studford's declaration. "I could not, would not do such a thing. Prove him a coward, but do not ask me to help you."

"Holmes is right, and Miss Fortune should be willing to make the test. She is his defender; she cannot refuse to satisfy herself of her error in this harmless, yet effective way," announced big Farring, and every member of the party laid siege to Kate's faltering opposition. The fun of it all finally appealed to her, and she rather timidly agreed to the proposition.

But how could she ask him to ride with her after what had passed between them? He would think her unwomanly, and, strangely enough, with that thought she began to feel that she must have his good opinion. Yet she went, half dubiously, into the plot to prove a coward the man she was beginning to admire.

The details of the scheme were submitted by the men, and were as follows:

Kate was to ask him to ride on horseback with her to "Big Fork," five miles through the forest, on some afternoon, and the men were to bedeck themselves as Indians, attack them, take her from his custody and hurry her off into apparent captivity, whilst he trembled with fear and inaction.



It required all Kate's courage and a dismal sacrifice of pride to suggest the ride to Captain Studford, but she did it the next morning, stopping him near the fort after having walked not thirty feet behind for more than two hundred yards. She was a trifle uncertain as to her valour in this preliminary step.

Captain Studford's heart thumped unusually fast as he looked down into the piquant face and blue eyes.

They were very soft and timid this morning—there was something appealing in their tempting depths.

"May I not walk with you? I am going your way," were her first words as she reached his side.

"Whither, pray?"

"Oh, to—" and here she blushed, for in truth she had no destination— "to Anna Corwin's," she concluded in relief.

"But Mistress Corwin lives back yonder. How came you to be going this way?"

"Did I say Anna Corwin?"

"If I am not deaf."

"Then I must have meant someone else; to be sure I did—how foolish of me! I am going to Lucy's. You cannot say, Captain, that she does not live in this direction. I'll not walk with you if you are bound to be particular, though."

"I beg you to forgive me and allow me to walk with you," cried the Captain eagerly.

"I like that much better. No matter if I were going to Anna's and chose a roundabout way, you should not be so impolite as to remonstrate. As a rule, Captain, the men prefer the roundabout way."

"Be it miles, I would walk it with you," cried he, smiling at her merry vanity.

"Oh, would you do that?" she asked, suddenly seeing her way clear. Yet in spite of all, her composure deserted her, and she blurted it out, turning red again. "I am dying to ride to 'Big Fork' to-morrow, but I have no one to accompany me. Would you like to go?" Then to herself: "What a fool he thinks me!"

"Gladly; but are we sure there are no stray Indians about?" he asked rather quickly.

"He is afraid," she thought, with strange disappointment. "If you are afraid, we will not go," she said a trifle coldly.

"Afraid? Not for myself, but for you. We will go if you like, and I should rejoice to meet all the Indians in Virginia if it would please you."

So they made their plans, and she was so loth to

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leave him that he was forced to remind her that they had passed the house of Lucy Gaines a full furlong or more. He left her at the door, his heart exultant.

The next afternoon the two rode forth from Jamestown and into the forest, following the well-made road which led to the westward.

Half an hour previous to their departure, five young men had ridden from the home of Lucy Gaines, strange bundles strapped to their saddles. Above all things, they had cautioned Kate to demand the Captain's proof of marksmanship at a point near Big Fork.

It was with some consternation, notwithstanding all the plotting, that Kate observed the big pistols at the Captain's side and the heavy sword which jangled against his leg. T at jangling sword gave her the tremours, and she cast many furtive glances towards its chain and scabbard. At last she was compelled to ask:

"How can you, I pray, use such a monstrous sword, Captain Stud ord? It must have been made for a giant."

"It was; it was my great-grandfather's over a century ago. See! It is serviceable, even in my hand."

He pulled the gleaming blade, long and heavy, from its scabbard, and swept it downwards through the air so fiercely that it resembled a wide sheet of silver. Kate's blue eyes grew wide with apprehension, a cold chill seized upon her and her ruddy face paled. He returned the weapon to its sheath with such a forceful crash that she started violently in her saddle, her little teeth clicking in sheer fright.

"I could cleave a man's skull in twain as easily as you can cut an apple. Would that we could meet a warlike Indian that I could show how it merits my praise."

"Goodness!" gasped Kate hopelessly. "You would not strike a—a—man with it, would you?"

"If he were an enemy. For you, loved one, I could cut down an army."

Their horses drew more closely side by side, and the fierce, strong hand was gently laid upon her trembling fingers.

Tenderly clasping the little one, the big one raised it until it touched the lips of him who leant across to kiss it.

Their eyes met and he raised his head. His were full of love, hers with a pleading dread, the uncertain quiver between love and fear.

Without a word he dropped the hand, suddenly sick at heart.

"I could die for her, and she despises me," he groaned to himself.

"Oh, what have I—have we done?" she thought, a thousand fears gathering in her heart. "He is no coward, and he will kill one of them! How can I tell him—how can I save their lives? He will despise me! That awful sword! A man's skull! Oh, dear! He called me 'loved one!' How big and strong he is! He called me—how can I keep him from using the sword? The pistols I can manage, and—perhaps they will not be there. He will kill them all—horror upon horror! What have I done? Oh!"

The last exclamation was so loud and so sudden that the pale Captain turned quickly.

"What is it? What is it?"

She laughed wildly, even gleefully, almost in the face of her companion.

"Nothing—nothing at all!" she cried.

"I am glad to have afforded you amusement, Mistress Fortune. You may tear my heart to shreds."

Her manner changed instantly. Tears flew to the blue eyes and her hand crept towards him

"Forgive me, pray, Captain Studford. I—I did not mean to hurt you. I—I—am very foolish, very unkind. You must hate me," she faltered.

"Hate you! How could I? You do not love me—why should I have hoped? I can but blame myself." Her hand had fallen to her side because he had not touched it. "And it is our last afternoon together."

"Last?" she repeated faintly.

"Yes; for I shall not see you again."

"Oh—you—you—do not mean that!"

"I have asked to be transferred to Williamsburg. I—I have not one friend in Jamestown; why should I stay here?" he cried bitterly.

"But you have," she exclaimed eagerly; "you have, I am your friend."

"Friend! That is not what I ask of you," he said almost gruffly.

Silence, broken only by the clatter of the hoofs upon the road, followed his words. In her confusion she had forgotten the terrible sword, but it recurred to her, and with it, the thought which had given birth to her untimely mirth, the thought that was to lead her from the chief predicament into which she had been cast. She would ask the Captain to turn back to Jamestown at once, avoiding the possibility of conflict.

"Captain Studford, I believe we had better turn back." Her face grew crimson beneath his calm gaze.

"As you like. You will grant me time to adjust my saddle girth; it is slipping," he said coolly, dismounting without another word.

They were fully three miles from the village, and in a dense piece of forest. On either side of the narrow road grew the thickest of un erbrush with the great, gaunt trees stretching above like silent sentinels.

A suppressed scream suddenly called the Captain's attention to Kate. Her staring eyes were blinking with consternation.

Deep in the underbrush she had seen the form of an Indian warrior. Horrors! The sword!

"What do you see?" cried he, starting towards the now deserted brush.

"Nothing—nothing!" she gasped. The young men were here instead of at Big Fork! "Yes, I mean that red bird. See? Do shoot it for me—I must have it! Isn't it beautiful?" She was excitedly pointing towards a red bird in the top branches of a big oak.

He drew his pistols and deliberately aimed with one of them. The shot missed, and the bird darted away.

"Oh, goodness!" she cried. "Try the other ones."

"But the bird is gone."

"Is it? So it is—but quick! See if you can cut off that twig up there, the one with three red leaves. I wager you cannot. Quick, and then we will ride home."

"Why are you so excited?"

"I am not the least bit excited—I never am! Why do you not shoot at that twig?"

"You try it," he surprised her by saying, pushing a pistol into her hand.

Without a word and without taking aim she blazed away at the sky and his firearms were useless. She handed the smoking pistol to him with a laugh.

"Would it not be awful if Indians came upon us?" she cried, with strange exultation. "But mount, and race with me to the spring!"

As the Captain placed his foot in the stirrup a yell burst from the thicket, an arrow whizzed above their heads, and half-a-dozen fierce warriors were dashing towards them.

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"Do not use your sword!" she screamed.

Before the bewildered soldier could catch his breath an ugly brave was in the road, not ten feet away, knife n hand.

Out whizzed the sword!

Kate screamed in agony, clasping her hand over her eyes.

"They are friends! Do not strike!"

But it was too late.

The streak of steel cut through the air. A sickening thud, a gurgling howl, and the assailant fell, his head half severed from his body. An instant later the big Englishman was in his saddle. A second slash and an Indian at his side went down beneath the ancestral blade.

The two horses plunged forward as a brawny redskin grasped her arm, and she felt herself being dragged to the ground. Then, a hand clasped her other arm, a big form leant over behind her, far across the back of her horse. She heard the hiss as of something cutting the air, the crash as of splitting wood, a scream of agony, and the Indian's ruthless grasp was loosened.

Her horse stumbled and seemed to totter beneath her, but again that arm from aloft exerted itself, and it seemed as if she were being lifted to the tree tops. Almost before she could realise it she was upon another horse, clasped in the arms of the rider, and they were off like the wind.

Suddenly she felt the form of the man who held her so closely drop forward with a groan and then straighten again slowly. Exultant yells came from behind them, several arrows whizzed past, and then naught was heard but the thunder of the horses' hoofs upon the frozen ground. As her eyes opened involuntarily, terror possessing them, they fell upon the scene far behind. Two hundred yards away her own horse lay struggling in the road, two human forms stretched near it, another dragging itself to the roadside. Three feathered Indians were some fifty yards nearer, gesticulating wildly.

Her brain whirled and buzzed, and—consciousness was lost.

When she regained her senses she was lying upon the ground. With feeble eyes she glanced wonderingly about. To a tree near by a horse was hitched, beneath her body were the blankets from the horse and certain garments from the back of man.

All was as a dream; she could account for nothing. Studford was leaning against the big oak coatless and as pale as a ghost. Deep lines stretched across his brow and down his mouth; his eyes were closed, as if in pain.

An involuntary moan escaped her lips, and the Captain was at her side almost before it had died away. She was crying:

"Oh, what have I done! What have I done!"

"Calm yourself, dearest! You are safe, entirely so. See, we are alone, far from those fiends. It is bnt a mile to Jamestown. Be brave and we will soon be at home," he murmured hoarsely, kneeling at her side and lifting her to a sitting posture.

"Home! I can never go home! Oh, you do not know—you do not know!"

"There—there! Now be quiet——"

"How could you know? I am the murderess, I am a wretch! Kill me; I cannot live!" she wailed.

"Hush!" he cautioned lovingly.

"You could not know—you did not know them, Captain Studford!" she cried, sitting bolt upright, glaring wildly about her, then shudderingly plunging her white face against his bosom. "They were not Indians," she almost whispered.

"Not Indians!" he gasped.

"Heaven forgive me, no! It was all a trick—to test your courage—forgive me—to test—to test—oh! and I allowed you to kill them! Heaven forgive me!"

"Are you sure, mother?"

"Speak! Go on! What do you mean?"

"They were our friends—not Indians. My dearest friends! Please Heaven let me die!" she wailed.

"Good Heavens!" he exclaimed, after the first bewildering shock. "A trick—and I have killed—oh, it cannot be true!" He leapt to his feet, allowing her to fall from his side to the ground, where she lay, a wretched, shivering heap.

With a ferocious oath he snatched the big sword from the ground and turned upon her, with eyes blazing, muscles quivering.

She was looking up at him, those wide blue eyes gleaming piteously.

"Kill me!" she murmured, and closed her eyes to await the stroke.

His big arm relaxed, the sword fell from his nerveless grasp, clanging to the ground.

When she re-opened her eyes after an age of suspense, she saw him leaning against the tree, his body shaking with sobs. A second glance and she started to her feet alarmed.

His broad back was covered with blood. Near his left shoulder the clothing was torn and an ugly, gaping wound leered at her.

"Oh," she gasped, "you—you are hurt!"

"Hurt!" he groaned. "They have killed me! You have killed me—you and your friends. I hope you are—satisfied—with—your—see?" As he sank to the ground, he pointed feebly to the cruel arrow which he had torn from his side. It lay not far away, grim and bloody.

The horrified girl glanced at it helplessly and then at the unconscious man, unable to realise. Then she cried aloud in her agony and threw herself upon the prostrate form, moaning:

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"Dead! Dead! Speak to me, Ralph,—look up! I love you—I worship you! You shall not leave me!"

She kissed the pallid face, caressed the chilling head, sobbing:

"Forgive me—forgive me!"

Shortly afterwards the clatter of hoofs upon the road aroused her from the semi-unconscious condition into which her grief had resolved itself. Through the gathering darkness she saw horsemen approaching—Indian riders! A moment later they were dismounting at her side, and well-known voices were calling to her:

"Are you hurt?"

"What has happened?"

"Killed? Good Heavens!"

It was Farring, Crask and the other plotters, wild with excitement.

Their horses were wet from the fierceness with which they had been ridden.

"Do not touch him! You have killed him!" she cried, striving to shield the body from Farring's anxious touch.

"Killed him? Good Heavens, Kate! Where did you meet them?" cried Farring, as Crask pulled her from Studford's side.

"Are you not dead?" she finally whispered to the men.

"We? He killed three of them—split their heads! But the wretches put an arrow into him, after all. What a dreadful thing we have done. Fairly tricked him to his death!" cried poor Crask.

"Then—then it was not you?" cried Kate.

"Heavens, no! We found the Indians dragging their dead from the road, three miles back, and knew that something terrible had happened."

"Thank Heaven! I am spared that! But he must not die—he shall not! I love him! Do you hear? I love him!"

For three weeks the victim of that ill-fated trick hung between life and death. Surgery was crude in the colonies, and the first evidence of restoration was due more to his rugged constitution than to the skill of his doctor.

The poor fellow rolled and tossed upon one of Mrs. Fortune's soft beds, oblivious to the kind offices of those about him.

They had taken him there at Kate's command, and she had worn herself to a shadow with anguish love and penitence. She watched him by day and by night—in her restless dreams; her whole existence was in the tossing victim of her folly. Every twitch of that pain-stricken body seemed to show that he was shrinking from her in hatred.

Her pretty face was white and drawn, the blue eyes dark and pitiful, the merry mouth plaintive in its tender hopelessness.

And those jovial tricksters—those who had jeered over his lack of courage, the testing of which they had undertaken?

They were haunted by their own shame. The fiery Crask, the polished Farring, the ingenious Holmes, with all Jamestown, prayed for his recovery, and spared no pains to bring to life and health the man who had won that which they had relinquished hope of having—Kate's love. They were tender, sympathetic, helpful—true men and good.

Kate could not forget the look of distrust she had seen upon Studford's face as he stood above her with the great sword in his angry hand.

His first thought was to kill her!

Sitting beside him bathing the fevered brow, caressing the rumpled hair, holding his restless hands, she could feel her heart thumping like lead, so heavy had it grown in the fear of his awakening.

Finally the doctors told her that he would recover, that the fever was broken. Then came the day when he slept, cool and quiet, no trace of fever, no sign of pain.

It was then that Kate forsook him, burying herself in her distant room, guilty and heart-broken, fearing above all things on earth the first repellant glance he would bestow upon her. Once, while he slept, she peered through his door, going back to her room, the swimming tears blinding the plaintive blue eyes.

At last, one day, her mother came from the Captain's room and said to her gently:

"Kate, Captain Studford asks why you do not come to see him. He tells me that for three days he has suffered because you have been so unkind. Go to him, dear; he promises he will not plead his love if it is so distasteful to you!"

Distasteful!

The girl grew faint with wonder, her limbs trembled, her lips parted, her eyes blurred, and her ears roared with the rush of blood from her heart.

"Mother!" she whispered, at last, slightly raising herself from the couch on which she was reclining. "Are you sure, mother?"

"That he wants you? My child, his eyes fill with tears when he thinks of you. I have seen them moisten when he lies looking from the window——"

But Kate was gone.

When Mrs. Fortune opened the door to the sick man's room soon afterwards she drew back quickly, closed it again, and, lifting her eyes aloft, murmured:

"God make them happy!"

Maxwell Brown.

He: "Yes, he called me a 'blooming' idiot."

Him: "As if any one could not see that you had gone to seed."

Young Doctor: "I am doing very well. I was called three nights last week."

Old Doctor: "That's good! I hope you never forget to appear annoyed on such occasions."

Dumbleton: "It's funny about Waverly; on shore he is an ideal of courage and fearlessness—a veritable man of iron; but once aboard a ship at sea, his mettle seems to leave him, and he becomes as timorous as a child."

Flasher: "That's natural enough; you can hardly expect one to be a man of iron when he's aboard."

Contributor: "You didn't use my article?"

Editor: "Was it written on both sides of the sheet?"

Contributor: "Yes, sir."

Editor: "Ah, there is where you blundered. It was promptly consigned to the waste-basket. You must write on but one side, sir."

Contributor (six months later): "My last article hasn't appeared."

Editor: "Written on both sides of the sheet, was it?"

Contributor: "But on one side, sir."

Editor: "Ah, you were not discreet. I wrote editorials on the other side of it."

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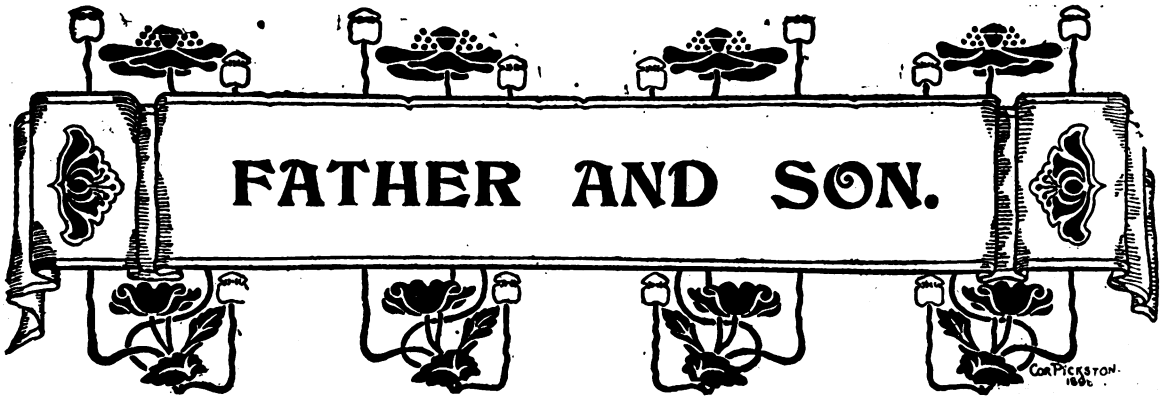
FATHER AND SON.



It was just six o'clock and nearing the end of September. The old city of Aix-en-Provence wakened lazily. Clothed in white linen, shod in slippers and crowned with a wide-brimmed Panama, M. Roumegas descended to his garden, took up a watering pot, filled it at the pump and began to water his hyacinths, as he did every morning of his life.

With infinite care M. Roumegas watered his hyacinths. One saw plainly that with him it was a serious business, and saw besides that here was not only a man who had nothing else to do, but an old man who had already done much.

Yes, decidedly done much. Few lives had been better filled than his. Till fifty years of age the years had counted double for him. Born in the outskirts of Aix, over there on the edge of the Gardanne, he had gone at fifteen to Marseilles. and gained a few sous by polishing shoes on the Cannebiére, near the Saint Louis racecourse. the clothes on his back, his box, his brushes and blacking, were all he possessed in the world.

Then, how, thirty-five years later, had this poor little bootblack become one of the greatest oil merchants of Provence? How had he been able to retire from business with fortune made and drawing great interest and income from the house created by himself and bearing always his name? By energy, intelligence and probity above all else. Probity! See you, in one word, the great strength of Roumegas, the chief cause of his great success.

One says in a generalising fashion that "honesty is the best policy"—an axiom for rascals that had been constantly put into practice by Roumegas, but without design, one may say spontaneously. It was as easy for him to be honest as for others to be otherwise. He would have died rather than take an unjust advantage, and the recital of an indelicacy put him beside himself; pure as crystal, shining as the sun—such was his reputation. Was there a contest or a dispute to be settled at Aix—M. Roumegas was always the arbiter; advice to be sought—M. Roumegas always the counsellor; a place to be given—M. Roumegas was always the judge to lend the deciding voice.

In the evening, when he went to walk on the Cours, hats were raised to him like flocks of swallows, and the old nobles of the city, so arrogant to people without the distinction of patrician birth, counted it an honour to be the first to salute him. One felt about him an atmosphere of calm and well earned repose. It was a good, honest man that passed.

Such a life merited reward, but Heaven had been unjust to this upright man and had not spared him sorrows. Still young he had lost the wife that he adored, and he remained alone with a babe of six months.

If ever a child was loved by its father, and well brought up besides, it was truly the little Antoine. Roumegas wished to make him not only an honest man like himself, but also an educated man, as he had not been able to be. He had felt the need of it always. It should not be the same with his son.

Oh! the beautiful plans that he made, the poor widower, sitting at his table revising the accounts of the day, between the cradle of the son born to him and the memory of the wife who had died. This little being who slept there so sweetly would one day be his joy and pride. Thanks to him the name of Roumegas, simply honoured to-day, would perhaps become illustrious.

Alas! the father had reckoned without the child. The soil was bad; the flowers sown with so much care did not come up. Not that Antoine was of a naturally vicious disposition—he was indolent, dissipated, weak—weak above all. At college he was the last of his class, which would not be so bad had it mortified him at all; but, unhappily, he lacked self-respect, that two-sided sentiment, sometimes a defect but always a desirable quality. His indolence weighed upon him lightly. It was perfectly useless, it seemed to him, to change his mode of life.

His graduation accomplished with great difficulty, he took up the law, in order to have a show of something; but, his law-reading finished, with more difficulty still, he promised himself cheerfully to do nothing at all.

What good to work? His father was rich, and not everlasting. To the wind with toil and with all save amusement.

And Antoine amused himself, continuing with greater freedom still the unhealthy life of the provincial idler. At the café he smoked perpetually, and ceaselessly swallowed numberless and various concoctions; at the club he played stupidly and heavily, as always, to be doing something. Little by little the fever of play took possession of him, and they were almost certain to find him leaning over the green cloth between three and six in the afternoon, and at night till three or four in the morning.

With other young men of the city, nobles or sons of simple citizens, he sat at baccarat, in the vitiated atmosphere of the club card-room, under the blaze of the gas jets, side by side with Baptistin and Durand, two card-

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room waiters and out-and-out rascals, who, at hours like these, disdained all form, stretched themselves in the great arm-chairs, joined with polite familiarity in all the phases of the game, encouraging this one, laughing with that one, listening to one and the other, but the boon companions of all.

He had recourse to his father.

One night there was a terrible run of ill-luck. The sum lost was heavy. Antoine did not have it. He had recourse to his father, who paid it on condition that he would promise to touch cards no more. Antoine promised. Eight days later he lost again. Fearing to confess the thing to M. Roumegas, whose immovable honesty frightened him, and who would not have been able to "comprehend it," as he said, Antoine borrowed.

Then began for him that fevered life of the gambler, with its alternating luck and ill-luck, its ups and its down, its joys always incomplete, its despairs always profound.

In order to provide funds Antoine played more furiously than ever. Strange as it may seem, luck, hitherto so hard and coy, turned in his favour. He won—won always—won as he wished and all that he wished.

Briefly, at thirty years of age, Antoine was the most absolute, the most complete nonentity it is possible to imagine.

In the city his name was never mentioned without a smile and a shrug of the shoulders; but when they met him in the street, that great, ruddy blonde, with heavy eyes and wearied face, regular featured and handsome, nevertheless, clothed with an elegance too foppish for a gallant of the province, they hesitated to bow to him till they thought of the father, and then the hats were raised. Antoine was saved by the name of Roumegas.

The poor old merchant suffered profoundly. His beautiful dreams of paternal ambition had flown away. He had done all he could to arrest his son on that fatal down-hill slope, but reasoning, threats, nothing that he could do had effect upon that weak and indolent nature. M. Roumegas had thought even of sending him among strangers, but in spite of all he loved devotedly this unworthy son, and he had not been able to decide to part with him.

Wounded in his hopes, his love and his self-respect, poor Roumegas had aged quickly. At seventy years you would have taken him for eighty; under his big straw hat his face appeared as wrinkled as a withered apple; his hair like silver threads, his form, already short, still more contracted, and going from bed to bed in the length of the garden, he was forced at times to rest the "sprinkler" on the ground to ease his weakened hand. He seemed like a little white old doll in the midst of the sunlight and flowers.

* * * * *

A hesitating step crunched on the gravel of the walk, M. Roumegas turned about; Antoine was before him, pale, leaden-tinted, with linen soiled, disordered hair and bloodshot eyes. The old man shrugged his shoulders.

"Ah, you've come!" said he, "and at such an hour! You should be ashamed of yourself! But come, go up to bed and try to be down by twelve o'clock."

With another shrug of the shoulders, full of weariness and resignation, he began again to water his dear hyacinths. Antoine did not stir.

"Father—" began the young man, taking a step forward.

This time Roumegas put down the sprinkler, placed his spectacles on his nose, and in a tone half-vexed, half indulgent, demanded:

"Well, out with it; what is it now?"

"Last night—at the club—" began Antoine, plucking up courage.

"You have played! You have lost again! Ah! misfortune of my life! You will kill me! And your promise to me, too! No matter, you have played; but one thing remains to do—to pay, to pay always, while a sou is mine! It is the honour of the Roumegas! Well, how much is it?"

Antoine was silent still.

"It is not play, then? Then, what is it? A quarrel? You have been insulted? You are going to fight? Ah, these gambling dens! where they smoke, drink, dispute, play, and——"

He stopped suddenly. A terrible thought had flashed into the old man's brain. Trembling, with shaking, supplicating hands, he turned toward his son.

"You—you have cheated?" stammered he.

Antoine's head sunk lower still.

Mon Dieu! It was true, then? His son, he, a Roumegas, was a cheat, a trickster, a thief? The poor father staggered as if struck with a fist.

"Father!" cried Antoine, springing to sustain him.

"Stop, do not touch me!" cried the old man sternly, gasping for breath but still waving him back, "but go, go to your room—your room, I say."

"But, father," cried Antoine, "let me explain a word. I am not as guilty as you think. I have been led away——"

"To your room—to your room!" repeated Roumegas inflexibly.

The son obeyed. Bending his tall form like one condemned, he passed into the house, and up the stairs that led to his chamber. Behind, with head erect, glittering eyes, and short, firm steps, the father ascended with him.

They entered the chamber together—a square, commonplace room, with windows facing the street, in great disorder, and evidently lived in but little. Torn books thrown here and there; and on the walls, hunting guns, swords, and pistols; on all the furniture, chairs, tables, and desks, pipes, pots of tobacco, and cigarettes M. Roumegas closed the door behind him and turned to his son.

"Speak," said he.

Antoine sunk heavily on his unmade bed, and, with eyes on the ground, stifled voice, and nervously twisting

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an end of the sheet in his feverish fingers, sought to comply.

"The first time," said he, "that I asked you for money, I promised to play no more. I had not the strength. I played again. I lost again. I d d not dare to ask you again. I lost, lost always. Then someone proposed to me to go into partnership with him—to play together. We still lost. He, the one that counselled me, prepared the cards, and I—had the weakness to accept. A madness, father; a madness, only! Pardon me!"

Antoine half rose with arms held out to his father.

"Continue," said Roumegas, erect before him, his own arms held crossed, his face set like flint.

"Last night," resumed Antoine, "they had suspicions, and we would have been caught but for me. They know nothing yet—understand, of me, I mean—and if Baptistin does not speak——"

"Baptistin, the club-room waiter, a valet, your accomplice! Unhappy boy, to what depths have you fallen?"

"But they know nothing, nothing as yet, I tell you. Other players in the game are suspected as well as I. Baptistin only is arrested. He will not speak."

"And you would leave him to bear the blame of all? To preserve the little honour that still remains to you, you would escape at the expense of him and others? Know you, Antoine, that this is infamy, nothing more nor less?"

"But father, father, I promise that for the future——"

"The future? You still believe, then, that there is a future for you?"

The sound of footsteps was suddenly heard in the quiet, sunny street. They stopped at the house door. Antoine sprang from the bed, panting for breath. The bell rang. The young man rushed to the window.

"Baptistin has told!" said he, in a strangled whisper, with an ashen face.

M. Roumegas looked in his turn. The Commissaire of Police stood at the door, accompanied by two members of the club, and two police officers. Roumegas let the curtain fall, strode across the wide chamber, took a revolver from the wall, assured himself that it was loaded, and held it to his son, gazing at him now with wide, startled eyes.

"Here," said he, "take it."

Antoine raised his hand mechanically, comprehending nothing. Below stairs the street door had opened. A colloquy was going on between the servant and the arrivals. The muffled sound of the voices was plainly heard in the chamber.

"Since you have lost your own honour," the father continued, "save ours, at least. Come, there is no time to lose."

The colloquy was finished. The steps sounded loud on the stones of the staircase, an old staircase, broad and sonorous as a chapel. They arrived at the door. Antoine shook convulsively.

"Coward!" murmured Roumegas. "Coward to the end!"

And then, still with unfaltering hand, he turned the revolver, aimed at the brow of his son and pulled the trigger.

They knocked at the door. Placing the still smoking weapon by the side of the body, Roumegas threw back the bolt, and pointed to the corpse lying across the bespattered bed.

"Too late, messieurs," said he, "he has done justice to himself."

HARRY SYDNEY.

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 6.

FOUR applicants receive a sovereign each this week. Their names are:

MISS S. YENDOLE, 53 Raymond Street, Dublin.

A. G. POPE, 70 Constance Street, Silvertown, E.

MISS M. L. COLLINS, Trevelyan School, 9 Trevelyan Street, Eccles, Lancs.

J. D. McAra, 57 Pemberton Road, Harringay, N.

Those who did not apply are:

W. J. Roome, 2 Whitehall Buildings, Ann Street, Belfast; Miss M. M. Forse, Englefield Green, Surrey; Mrs. Foulkas, 29 Sandy Road, Seaforth, near Liverpool; A. Sillito, Amington, Tamworth, Staffs; W. Leslie, 1 Paunermill Cottages, Aberdeen; S. Bevan, 8 Stanley Terrace Mount Pleasant, Swansea; J. R. Ibbotson, 18 Portway, West Ham, E.; I. W. Wright, 70 Mildmay Grove, N.; F. Gibbons, Moorland Road, Bournemouth; R. Keddy, 94 Milbourne Street, Carlisle; George Hunt, 24 Hinckley Road, Nuneaton; C. H. Kingdon, 41 Victoria Street, Newport, Barnstaple; Josh Little, Bank Road, Hoylake, Cheshire; R. Pugh, King Street, Oswestry; H. L. Shaw, 2 Saudringham Villas, Ashfield, Ross; M. Bennetts, 95 Bath Street, Ilkeston; W. Hancock, 2 Castle Place, Nottingham; T. E. Smith, 28 Ash Street, Bootle, Liverpool; F. M. Kew, 3 Albert Terrace, Farnborough R.S.O., Kent; C. Kille, 1 The Avenue, Minehead, Somerset; Miss E. Bringloe, 34 Tremlett Grove, Junction Road, N.; W. King, 105 Gaythorne Road, West Bowling, Bradford; J. Jackson, 5 Hanover Place, Coleraine; C. Cornelius, High Street, Killarney; T. Yates, 12 King Street, Leek; David Mills, 93 High Street, Ayr; J. Penlerick, 14 Berkely Place, Falmouth; C. Condy, Endsleigh Place, St. Mary Church; B. Isaacs, 41 Beaufort Street, Builth; J. Blunt, Aylesbury Street, Fenny Stratford; J. Donald, 74 Palace Road, Streatham; Rev. J. C. Brown, 37 Market Street, Haddington; Percival Owen, 98 High Street, Thame; F. Sharpe, 9 Waller Street, Luton; Mrs. Barber, 66 Midland Road, Wellingborough; J. Bloxham, 28 Main Street, Oldham; T. Worth, 27 Market Street, Stalybridge; John Young, 24 Marshall Place, Perth; D. H. Brown, 8 Lower Meyrick Street, Pembroke Dock; A. Blenkinsop, 13 Exmouth Street, Leeds; H. S. Hill, *Western Morning News* Office, Plymouth; D. Harrison, 52 London Road, Stoke-on-Trent; J. Ray, 34 Brewery Street, Kate's Hill, Dudley; J. Abel, High Street, Lye, Stourbridge; H. Barker, 1 Clarence Road, Croydon; W. H. Barnett, Market Place, Oakham.

A NEW SERIAL

ENTITLED

SANDY CARMICHAEL

Will begin in the Christmas Number of

. . Short Stories. . .

IT IS BY C. J. CUTCLIFFE HYNE,

Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle" in PEARSON'S MAGAZINE.

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CAP AND GLOVES.

"Oh, yes! And I forgot to tell you. You know your old flame is to be married in a few weeks?"

"Is she? Which?"

"You had a good many, hadn't you? Well, guess!"

"Let me see. Madeline Pierce. Oh, you tell me, sis! I'm too tired to guess. That train has shaken me all to pieces in the last fifty miles."

"Well, then, if you're too tired to exert your mind—Edith Barton."

"Oh! And she marries—?"

"Bob Bristol, of all men. Old enough to be her father, isn't he?"

Cortrell had been away five years in Scotland, and was spending his first long holiday at home with his mother and sister. He had come back, it seemed to him, much more than five years older. There was upon him now the steadying pressure of great responsibilities, for he was now a prominent official in a large business enterprise.

All that he saw—even the faces of his mother and sister—reminded him of what he had been, and he found himself, as he stretched at full length on the couch, wondering how he could ever have been so frivolous, and so joyously careless of consequences in everything, as he had been in the days that now seemed to him to belong to the dim distance of history.

"So women can forget sometimes, you see," said his sister, continuing her talk.

Bob's thoughts were wandering back to the past. Presently he exclaimed somewhat suddenly:

"By jingo, Clara, I believe I have something! Let me see. When do you say Edith is to be married?"

"In about five weeks, I believe."

"I wonder whether I ought to take it to her, or send it?"

"Send what? Wedding present?"

"Eh? Yes, of course, I must send a wedding present. I knew Bristol quite well. He's an older man than I am, isn't he?"

That evening Charles Cortrell unpacked a big leather trunk in the privacy of his own room. He took out a tin box that looked as if it had been designed originally to hold cash. He unlocked the box and took out package after package. Last of all, right at the bottom, was some tissue paper, and neatly folded in the tissue paper were a pair of very much faded kid gloves.

Cortrell took out the tissue paper package, replaced the various bundles, locked the tin box, and sat down to think.

He laid the faded gloves on a little writing table before him, drew up a chair, rested his elbows on the table, and supported his head on his two hands. As the faint odour of the gloves came to his nostrils, a smile, half of amusement, half of tenderness, played over his face.

"But the question is, how am I to do it?" he said aloud to himself after some minutes of brooding.

The smile on his face grew more and more tender. Presently he sighed, and then spoke again to himself.

"That has nothing to do with it now, old man. That was long ago. Yes, you can't keep these things now. You've got to do it."

Edith Barton certainly had been a little disconcerted when the news came to her that her sweetheart of five years before had suddenly made his appearance in the town just at the time when her engagement to Bristol had been made public.

She was not vividly conscious of any feeling for Charles Cortrell that could have been construed as disloyalty to her *fiancé*, but she knew only too well how recklessly tongues will wag in a small town, where each man's—or woman's—business is the business of all, and, considering many things, Cortrell's sudden appearance just then, after a continuous absence of five years, might very plausibly be made to bear a significance that would disturb the smooth surface of her engagement. There had been rumours that Mrs. and Miss Cortrell would, some time or other, go North to make their home with Charlie, but no one had expected to see him back in his former home.

Edith sat before the fire two days after Cortrell's arrival, and was meditating over these things, when Cortrell himself was announced. She was looking for a visit, not from him, but from Bob Bristol. Nevertheless she found little or no difficulty in meeting him with conventional care.

At first, that is. Her old friend—or sweetheart—lost but little time in coming to the particular business of his call, and it certainly startled her a little when he said:

"I am very glad I found you alone."

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"Glad?" she said. "Oh, yes. It is nice to be able to have a little chat. Tell me about what you have been doing up there."

"I can tell you about that at some other time," said Cortrell. "Just at present I have to discharge a duty. Oh, yes. It wouldn't be right. At least, I wouldn't like it, if I were in Bristol's place."

"Like what?" said the girl.

"This!" And he took a tissue paper packet from his pocket.

Edith opened the packet, wondering. When she saw the old gloves lying there, with the marks of wear of many years ago upon them, but also marked with the folds of many other—later—years of careful keeping, a whole procession of memories passed before her mind. She was silent for some moments.

"What ought I to do with them?" she asked. "I don't know. Tell me."

Not the least doubt of it, the whole affair was excessively silly. It was thoroughly in keeping with the rest that now this young woman, on the eve of marriage with another man—a marriage into which no one had forced her—should be looking with pitiful appeal in her eyes and with tears, at a man who had flirted with her five years before. Still, silly as it was, it was so.

Cortrell, on his part, looked extremely uncomfortable. He may have been wishing that he had sent the old gloves by post, or by messenger; but then again he may not have been altogether sorry to see that appealing look and those swimming eyes.

"I—I don't know," he stammered. "Perhaps I ought not to have brought them. But I don't see why not. I don't see how I could have kept them, could I?"

"You might have burnt them, mightn't you?" Edith said, with a rather mischievous smile.

"So I might," Cortrell answered quickly. "I give you my word, Miss Barton—I beg you to believe me—I never thought of that."

The manifest sincerity with which this was said and the ingenuous blush that accompanied the explanation were irresistible. Edith burst into a hearty laugh, which Cortrell was not long in taking up. But at that moment the street door was opened, and then the door of the room, where these two stood laughing over an old pair of gloves, and the servant girl, in her directed and distinctive manner, announced, "Mr. Bristol."

There was nothing really embarrassing in the situation; the embarrassment was only apparent. The event might have been different if all the persons concerned had looked at the case as it should have been looked at. But while the girl, with characteristic candour, saw only the reality, Cortrell was, for some reason, impressed chiefly by the appearance. Bristol, perhaps naturally, reflected Cortrell's view.

He at once walked to the table and, lifting the gloves, said, with eyebrows raised, "A present? Won't you let me into your joke?"

"How are you, Bristol?" Cortrell said, holding out his hand. "I hope you haven't forgotten me."

The worst of it was that Edith was still laughing. And there were the gloves. Bristol appeared to think that the situation demanded a display of quiet dignity.

"I remember you perfectly, Mr. Cortrell," he said, bowing slightly. "May I ask again what amuses you so much?"

Edith became serious in a moment, and, as she became serious she became angry.

"It isn't very much of a joke, Bob," she said. "If you insist on having it, however, Mr. Cortrell has just found an old pair of gloves of mine and has brought them to me, because it didn't occur to him to put them in the fire. Isn't it funny?"

"I hardly think so," Bristol answered. "Perhaps I might appreciate the joke better if I knew where Mr. Cortrell found these gloves."

As Cortrell opened his mouth to make some answer to him, Edith, putting up her hand, said:

"This is my business. I'm afraid you will not have an opportunity of fully appreciating the joke, Mr. Bristol, until you manage to get yourself into a better humour for that sort of thing."

She very carefully folded up the gloves and laid them behind the clock on the mantelpiece, while Cortrell stared at her and Bristol stood biting his nether lip.

Then there was an awkward pause for some moments, until Cortrell said something about going.

"Why, I've hardly had ten words with you yet, Mr. Cortrell," Edith said, with a wicked glance at the other man. "Please don't go yet. Perhaps—perhaps I may find something of interest to show you, if you'll wait a little longer."

"Then perhaps I had better call at some other time," Bristol said.

It was a very awkward situation indeed. Bristol could not stay after this last observation of his, and Cortrell could not run away after Edith's pressing invitation.

Half an hour later Cortrell said:

"What did you mean by saying that you might find something interesting to show me?"

"Did I?" said Edith. "Do you hold me to it? It occurred to me suddenly. Wait here.

"Do you recognise this?" And she suddenly produced an old faded red velvet smoking cap, with sides pulled down and an absurd brush at one side.

"By Jove!" Cortrell exclaimed.

"Yes," said Edith. "You had to go home bareheaded."

"It was that night, wasn't it, after we had all been to the mill—"

"Remember the water rats?"

"And you would pull off your gloves and try to reach water lilies."

Edith nodded. "And you wouldn't give them back to me."

"Jack stole my cap, didn't he?"

"Yes, and I made him give it to me—to keep in pledge for my gloves."

"When did you find that old cap, Miss Barton?"

"About a week ago," Edith said, looking a little confused. "I didn't know you were coming home then."

"Of course you were going to send it to me?"

"Of course I was."

"By the way, didn't it occur to you to burn it?"

They both burst out laughing once more.

As for the story that Bristol and Cortrell had high words after that, and that mutual friends with difficulty prevented them from fighting a duel, there never was anything in it. Bristol was a sensible man at bottom, even though irascible at times. He made some sort of an apology to Edith Barton for his exhibition of temper.

But the Bristol-Barton wedding was postponed in a quiet way. It never came off. The Cortrell-Barton wedding came off instead, though not until a year after the incident of the cap and gloves.

E. Fairfax.

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THE PACKAGE OF GEMS.

He had been a friend of my boyhood—one of many. I had not seen him for twenty years, but the day I saw him last had been as yesterday always, I remembered him so distinctly.

He was handsome and loved the things I loved, including a pretty girl who had gone her own way, in spite of us, long, long ago. I made a point of finding him when I came to London.

"You must come home with me to-night," he said. "I am living alone this summer, and we can have a long talk."

I went home with him gladly, and was surprised at the plain way of living he had cut out for himself. He took me to a little flat and cooked his dinner and mine, and served it with his own hands. He had been a bit reckless at college, and along with high honours had carried off a reputation for extravagance that had had its influence on local prophecy.

"I'm leading a simple sort of life," said he as he passed the coffee. "Prodigality is one of the great sins of our generation—great because it is the father of so much evil. Many of the people in great houses in the West End are living on money that doesn't belong to them. They're living a lie, an imposture. I know what it is, for in a small way I've had my share of it. I've come at last to being just what I am, without fear, without shame—a poor devil who works for his living. I have no worry over debts and no fear of to-morrow."

"You surprise me, Jack," I said. "You once had the habit of spending, I remember."

"I know, I know," he said as he lit a cigar, "and it took me into the fire. It's a long story and I don't mind telling you, as we've gone so far, if you care to listen."

Assured of my interest he began his story.

"I married soon after coming here and went to live in a good neighbourhood. Was with a diamond importer, had a fair salary and remarkable success in my line. My work was to look after local dealers, and hard work it was, for I had to keep them coming continually to look at our stock.

"We had a large house. My wife was attractive and popular, and we had a lot of company and went about a good deal. Of course, I can talk to you frankly, Ned. We went the pace, and I found that we were spending more than I was earning.

"It wasn't my wife's fault, she would have put up with little. But I was proud of her and she was fond of dress. I gave her no word of warning or hint of my trouble.

"Well, the dogs of debt were after me in due time, a big pack of them, baying like hounds on the track of the quarry. I put on a cheerful face at home and cut my own expenses to the last farthing for the sake of my family; gave up cigars and billiards and all that. To be sure, my family should have come down to plainer living. I should have seen the breakers ahead and turned into smooth water. I thought of it night and day, but I couldn't see my way to doing the right thing. I tell you it's hard to turn back when those you love must suffer for it, walking down with you to the lowlands of humiliation.

"To sum it up, I thought of them and it made a coward of me. I kept on hoping and planning and praying for some bit of good fortune to help me out of my trouble. My eldest daughter—poor girl! she's dead now—had a fine voice. She would have made a prima donna, everybody said that. She should have had a thorough training in music. I tried to find a way to it.

"Every day of my life I was tortured by that problem, and I lay awake at night thinking and planning. I was sure that a couple of hundred pounds invested for that purpose would bring back a fortune. My wife and I had a long talk about it one evening—the frankest talk we had had about money. She planned how she could cut her expenses every week enough to pay for the lesson.

"It worked for a while, but my creditors were closing in on me, and it took more to keep them off my back. The small saving we had made by cutting down expenses, and more, was swallowed up by my new obligations.

"Then it seemed to me that I had robbed Peter to pay Paul, and had added my family to my list of creditors.

"My career had come near a crisis one day. I had to take some money home with me—a good bit of it. The rent had not been paid for six months; I owed the music teacher, the butcher and the baker as much as they would stand; I had fifteen shillings in my pocket. I was near a sharp turn.

"It was midwinter. The darkness had fallen early, and everybody had left the office but me. We had been taking an inventory of stock, and I had more stuff to handle than any of the others. In a drawer of my safe there was a package of 'sorts,' as they call them—stones that were off colour and imperfect. It had lain there for years, and I had handled it a hundred times.

"I had opened this package and counted the stones, and was folding it when I heard the latch of the door rattle. I stopped and looked about me. Nobody had opened the door; I could hear no sound in the shop. My heart was going like a sledge-hammer. Of a sudden I heard a whisper.

"'A good idea!' it said.

"I jumped as if one had pricked me deep. Heavens! those words had come out of my own mouth. I leant over on the desk in front of me and an awful horror came into my heart. The tears came into my eyes, but in a moment I had pulled myself together. Then I heard that whisper again.

"'Fool!' it said, 'you're no thief. You will put them back in a little while—within a year, anyhow.'"

My friend had whispered these words hoarsely, and then he sat still a moment looking down. He nervously took a sip of water.

"I don't know that I ought to tell you all this," he went on presently. "Somehow I like to tell it, and I've gone so far that I must finish."

"No matter what comes," I said, "I shall think none the less of you, Jack."

"Well," he said, "I put the package in my pocket, walked out, and secured a loan on the gems.

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"Well, I took a late train home, and I had the money I needed—about two hundred pounds. At the station I met my butcher and paid him. That was an unfortunate thing; I was up to my neck in it then.

"As soon as I had done it the devil left me. There came no other word of hope or encouragement. I was a fearful creature all at once, afraid to go home and face my wife.

"She was waiting for me when I came in. It was near eleven o'clock, and they were all in bed but she.

"'What's the matter, dear?' she whispered when I entered the bedroom and sank into a chair. 'You are pale and you stagger. What is the matter?'

"'Headache!' I answered, lying back in the chair and closing my eyes. 'Just one of my headaches.'

"'I've had an awful evening,' said she, bathing my head with eau de cologne. 'I've been thinking about you for some reason. I'm sure we've been living too expensively. Don't you think so, dear? I wish you'd talk with me about those things. I'm afraid I've been very thoughtless all my life. We'd better give up the house and go into a little flat. I shall be just as contented and happy as I am here, and you'll have less worry.'

"She knelt beside me and put her arms about my neck, and I was near breaking down.

"'Too tired to talk,' I whispered, 'turn down the light; it hurts my eyes.'

"I felt as if I were on the brink of a precipice, and thought the darkness would hide my peril from me. Every caress of my wife hurt me like the blow of a whip.

"What a relief at last when the darkness of the night covered me in my own bed!

"'I know what I shall do,' I said to myself, 'I can borrow that money off somebody and go and get the package.'

"'You're in trouble,' whispered my wife tenderly the next morning. 'Tell me what it is.'

"I made no answer for a moment, and suddenly I saw a little of God's purpose in making good women.

"'I'm a thief, dear—a thief,' I whispered.

"'You're crazy! My husband is no thief,' she answered proudly, and facing me as she would a slanderer.

"Well, Ned, I knew what a woman's love can do and suffer that morning; what it is to have a wife who is a true helpmate. I told her everything—laid my heart bare.

"'Put on your coat;' said she when I had finished. 'We must go at once and see Fordham and give him that money and tell him the whole truth—we must go.'

"We went away in the early morning. Neither of us spoke, but both were thinking the same thoughts, I suppose, and we walked as one person.

"It was still early when we came to the house of Mr. Fordham. He was the head of the firm. We rang the bell.

"I shall not try to tell you all that happened after they let us in. It is too painful. Men are apt to be hard on a fellow who's down.

"Fordham was that kind of a man. He had no pity for either of us, and I went to the police station that morning.

"I shall never forget the face of the magistrate the morning I came into the court. He'd some good mercy in him.

"'What have you to say?' he inquired.

"'Nothing,' I answered, 'except that I am guilty.'

"'Have you consulted a solicitor?'

"'No, sir,' I answered; 'I have no defence to make.

"'I shall not accept the plea,' he said.

"'Tell me about it—tell me everything,' he continued.

"When I had finished he turned his face away and sat thinking a moment.

"Then he sentenced me to one day's imprisonment, so I was free that same afternoon."

My friend rose and went and stood by the window in silence.

"It's a humble home," said he, coming back presently to sit by me, "but we're very happy here. My wife and daughter will return to-morrow, and I want you to stay and meet them." J. Ervine.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☞ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 9 distribution must reach us by December 5th, addressed to The 9th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Sixth Distribution appears on page 713.

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OLD RELIABLE.

Big, burly, good-natured Jack Woodford, the most popular engine driver on the line, ran the Limited Express eight years and eleven months.

Ordinarily a modest man, Jack was proud of his family and his railway record. Having married late in life, his family was small, consisting of a wife—a little woman, who led him by despotic power of pure love and faithful devotion—and two toddlers—Jimmy, aged five, and Sallie, a midget of three.

His record was absolutely clear; to acquire and retain such a record requires constant care and quick wit in emergencies.

Realising his position, Jack prized it highly. The time schedule was frequently shortened to meet the competition of opposing lines, and, with increasing business, the train became so heavy that to make time with it became a problem. One after another, engine-drivers were appointed to run in opposition to Jack, but, with discouraging regularity, they were removed for inability to make the time. Jack alone remained.

You are not to understand that during all those years his train had arrived at, and departed from, all stations with chronometric accuracy. That, indeed, would verge on the impossible.

There is a limited amount of time that may be lost without censure, and it was in accomplishing this feat with the Limited, in spite of the drawbacks, that Jack Woodford had established a record.

One perfect June day Jack's engine stood at the head of her train, the incarnation of latent power. The gentle regular puffing of the air pump exhaust gave her the appearance of enjoying a quiet smoke while waiting. She glistened and shimmered in the sun with a profusion of polished metal.

Jack was ready, his left hand grasping the throttle lever, and his head turned, watching the conductor for the signal to go. He had inspected her thoroughly, and had assured himself that everything was right, yet he was uneasy.

The recent heavy rains had fouled the water in the tanks along the road, causing it to foam in the boiler—nothing very serious or unusual on a locomotive, but there was no time to bother with foaming boilers on the Limited—no time for anything but to run at the very highest speed obtainable. Both Jack and his partner had reported "Boiler washed" on their last two trips, but, being a week ahead of her regular wash-out day, the foreman had not chosen to disorganise the routine of his work to accommodate a couple of men.

Jack might have reported him, but that wasn't his way, and, besides, he had promised to wash her out next journey, for certain.

The last passenger entered, the guard waved a signal to Jack; there was a hissing and spitting from cylinder cocks, and she was off.

Before he got clear of the station, Jack eyed the cocks uneasily—something was unsatisfactory beyond a doubt, he felt it.

But he gave the usual wave of the hand to the little group in the garden of his cottage just outside the town. There was an answering flutter of handkerchiefs, and the wife and babies gazed wistfully for a moment, their faces illumined with a light not due to the June sunshine, at the disappearing dust cloud left by the train at the curve.

The engine commenced working water at the first heavy grade, and Jack lost a minute. After that the fireman could count the mile-posts by the nervous snapping of Jack's watch-case. By taking water at a certain tank he could go in without stopping for water again, otherwise he would have to make two water stops, but it was there that he got the bad water on the last run, and it had caused him worry enough.

* * * * *

He had learnt that the water was about all alike on the road, but he determined, nevertheless, to make the two water stops; it might be a little better in the other tanks. He regained ten seconds of the lost time before reaching the water-plug.

Admonishing the fireman to hurry, he jumped down and oiled, finding, to his great relief, all bearings stone cold. In spite of their haste, he left here a minute and a half late, and she behaved so badly that he arrived at the next station two minutes behind time.

He was only half way yet, and the prospect was pretty blue. The next station was a junction from which three engines ran on a branch out to some coal-mines. One of them would be there when he arrived. He telegraphed ahead to have her ready for him, his engine being disabled.

His guard and an old friend, Phil Howard, as well as every regular traveller in the train, knew that Jack's record was in danger at last.

As the train pulled up at the station, all hands were ready to assist in uncoupling the engine. But in the midst of the hurry Howard called to him:

"Ah! Here's a funeral to go."

While the casket was being got on board, the station-master handed Jack a message which read: "No engine here. Have forwarded your message to Leyland."

* * * * *

Leyland had been the junction at one time. There were large sheds there, and several engines. The deferential care with which a casket must be handled caused them to leave that station three full minutes late—the limit. Neither Jack nor Howard knew that the other guard had uncoupled the air-hose, and in the bustle at the station, that worthy had forgotten to couple it again. So Jack pulled out with no brakes on the train, and determined not to lose any more time if it was possible to avoid it.

The shed foreman at Leyland received an order to have an engine ready to take the train on its arrival. She was due in twenty-five minutes, and, wondering what could have happened to "Old Reliable," as Jack was popularly called, he got his whole force on the work. Within five minutes of the train's arriving time he had an engine coaled, watered, and ready to start, standing on the main track just beyond the station. It was a good job, well and quickly done.

Jack would cut the "87" off, run up behind the extra engine, and back in on the siding. The man in charge of the extra engine would back down alongside, Jack and his fireman would move their things to her and back on to the train. The whole manœuvre would be carried out while the passengers and luggage were getting off and on, without losing any time.

After leaving W———, the "87" behaved a little better; she had thrown out much of the offending matter,

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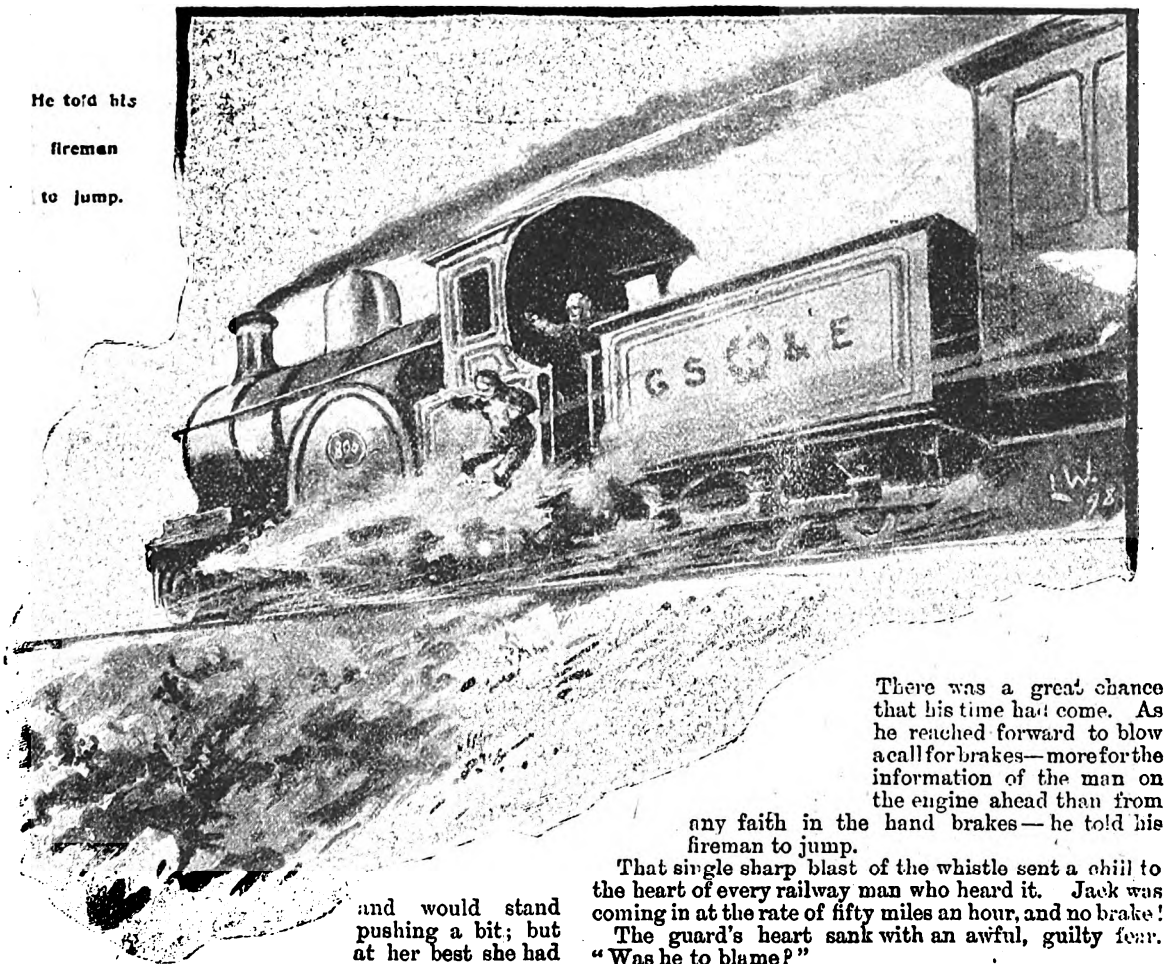

He told his fireman to jump.

and would stand pushing a bit; but at her best she had never made up quite a minute between there and Leyland—and she was far from being at her best now.

Jack took advantage of every little point in the line, and worked all he could to swing her along. She would gain a few seconds here, and drop them again there; it was a close, hard fight—one that many men would have given up in despair, but he stayed right with her to the end.

When he reached the summit of the hill from which he could look down into Leyland, a mile away, he knew he would arrive there only two and a half minutes late—technically in time. He knew to an inch how far he could use steam, and it was with a sigh of relief that he shut her off and dropped the lever down. He blew for the station, glanced curiously at the air-brake gauge—which showed the proper pressure—and leant wearily over the side with his hand on the brake-valve.

As the train rolled rapidly down the grade, he applied the brake-gently, to slow it up. He felt at once that it had no hold. He glanced in alarm at the gauge, and turned the valve all the way round. The truth flashed over him with a paralysing chill. He had no brake!

He set his teeth grimly, and the grey eyes flashed with determination as he swung his great weight on the reverse lever and turned her over into the back motion.

There was a great chance that his time had come. As he reached forward to blow a call for brakes—more for the information of the man on the engine ahead than from any faith in the hand brakes—he told his fireman to jump.

That single sharp blast of the whistle sent a chill to the heart of every railway man who heard it. Jack was coming in at the rate of fifty miles an hour, and no brake!

The guard's heart sank with an awful, guilty fear. "Was he to blame?"

The stoker leapt from the extra engine and ran half way across the yard. The signalman showed a blanched face at his window, and tried to think whether he had made a mistake.

Phil Howard, the veteran, understood his friend's wild appeal for help. Regardless of probable consequences, he jumped to a brake-wheel. But the onward rush of ten heavy express carriages was not to be checked by a single hand-brake.

With a crash and a roar, "87" ran her nose under the other engine's tender; she threw it, crumpled and battered, clear over its own boiler. The spare engine shot ahead, but again "87," her drivers sliding, was driven into her like a ram.

This time Jack's engine was derailed, and, as she ploughed into the ties, the force from behind slued her round, and turned her over on top of him.

* * * * *

The radiant light has gone from the eyes of the widow and her orphans; but it is one of the valued traditions of the line to this day that Jack Woodford was the only man who never lost time with the Limited.

H. E. HAMBLEN.

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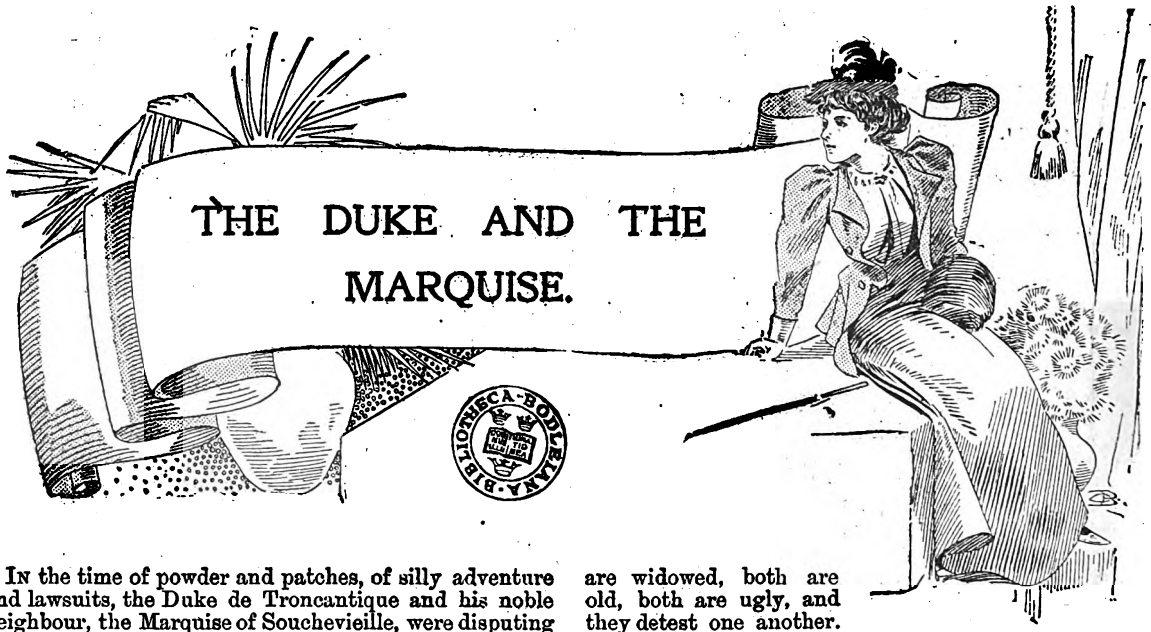

THE DUKE AND THE MARQUISE.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

In the time of powder and patches, of silly adventure and lawsuits, the Duke de Troncantique and his noble neighbour, the Marquise of Souchevieille, were disputing hotly over the possession of a certain hazel copse.

Which of the two belligerents had the best of it? A difficult problem, truly. Perhaps the Marquise—perhaps the Duke. The misanthrope Rochefoucauld has said that a quarrel can never last long unless there is wrong on at least one side. The dispute of the Duke and Marquise kept up seven years.

While the most illegible scrawls poured in without cessation upon the two châteaux, the two owners experienced an equal uneasiness as to the issue of their suit. To be sure, the decision of the tribunal could not cause great pecuniary loss to the vanquished, but since the "amour-propre" of each was involved, the rancour of the two disputants would have been quite as great with only a pin at stake. Indeed, so carried away did both become, with the fear of losing, as well as with the hope of winning, that they finally bethought them of a compromise.

One fine day the Duke de Troncantique (feigning, out of kindness of heart, to come to terms), solicited the hand of the Marquise in marriage, and she, pretending to be overcome by such graciousness, condescended to grant his request. Thus the hazel copse was to be owned by them conjointly.

The betrothal, hastily announced, set everybody agog both far and near, who had heard of the tiresome litigation.

The gentlemen of the law turned their backs upon them in disgust.

"Poor creatures," they said apologetically, "the idea of marrying to end a quarrel! It is as senseless as the crazy man who jumped in the river for the fear of getting damp."

The families of the Duke and the Marquise shrugged their shoulders, and cried:

"A lawsuit is more expensive than one would suppose."

But the world at large applauded the arrangement, and declared it most reasonable.

"They both," remarked the Countess de Languefine, "bear aristocratic names, and own fine fortunes. Both are widowed, both are old, both are ugly, and they detest one another. What more could one demand in a matrimonial venture?"

As to the bride and groom-elect they paid small heed to the gossips, contenting themselves with deploring the exigencies of fate, and retarding as much as possible the fulfilment of their mutual promise.

The gallant lover pleaded business in the city, and his fiancée pretended to have urgent duties in the country.

For the sake of the proprieties they agreed to write to each other while thus separated.

The Duke took refuge in a suburban hotel.

Seated upon a Louis XIII. chair, and looking almost imposing, with his white hair and amaranthine coat framed by the sombre tapestries on the walls, he absent-mindedly broke the seal of a letter bearing a coat of arms, which he had just received.

Glancing at the feminine handwriting covering the pages he remarked, smiling:

"Some work for you, my nephew Cleante."

Cleante was standing in the embrasure of the leaded glass window.

His twenty years, his eyes of periwinkle blue, his blonde hair, frosted with powder, and his violet doublet quilted with lace, brightened the old room. He was as piquant and catchy as a madrigal—as young and fresh as the springtime.

He seemed to have been created for the pencil of La Tour, or the pen of Marivaux.

"How my worthy friend would turn up her aristocratic nose if she knew how I disposed of her epistolary efforts," added Monsieur de Troncantique, fanning himself with his Mechlin lace handkerchief, while Cleante took the letter of the Marchioness, and read it over carefully, in order to acquaint himself with its contents.

It was so full of vivacity and sparkle, that one felt sure the heart of Madame de Souchevieille was still young even though her face was seamed with wrinkles. She

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wrote of serious things without pedantry, and amusing ones without frivolity.

Here and there was a hint of philosophy, and occasionally one of politics. Indeed, it was charming, this letter, written scarcely a century after Mme. de Sevigne, at a period when Mme. d'Epinay, Mme. du Deffand, and so many others conversed with their pens, like Voltaire and Diderot.

Cleante read each paragraph eagerly, inhaling at the same time the fragrance of the rose-tinted paper. And what images this subtle perfume evoked—a white hand, a rebellious little curl, a lace fichu crossed modestly over a young and palpitating breast. If he had only not known to a certainty that the writer was a grey-haired woman of sixty! The young man smiled to himself.

"Is it possible that I am becoming enamoured of a person of that age?" he queried.

"Well, nephew," demanded the Duke, awakening from a short nap, "is the Marquise as loquacious as usual? If you will reply to her letters for me, in my name, you will render me a service I cannot soon forget. Would to Heaven that you could permanently fill my place there!"

At the château of Souchevieille the Marquise reclined in an easy chair, surrounded by dainty trifles, and read the New Heloïse from time to time, having recourse to her enamelled snuff-box.

A few steps from her a young girl was busy writing at a rosewood desk. She worked rapidly, punctuating the phrases with graceful movements of the head, as though admiring the delicate black characters which, without speaking, expressed so much.

She was a graceful girl of sixteen, and her lithe young figure looked even more graceful than its wont, emerging from the voluminous paniers of her brocaded gown, while the velvet about her neck, and the patch upon her chin and under her left eye appeared indescribably black against her milk-white skin.

"In the name of Heaven, Doris, my child, how do you find so much to say to the Duke?" lazily demanded the old lady.

"Ah, aunt, dear, I have not yet written half as much as he wrote to you," replied Doris, with a smile. "The Duke must indeed be passionately in love with you to pen such pretty speeches, and I believe—yes, I really believe, that you will be happy with him. Such sentiments bespeak a bright mind and noble heart."

"The heart of a bailiff, the mind of a coachman, my beauty. Ah, if you were but forty years older!"

Still smiling Doris sealed her letter, then seated herself by the window, where she dreamily watched the clouds.

She did not dream, however, that she was forty years older, but that she received letters as loving as those of her aunt, and that the Duke de Troncantique was just forty years younger than now.

Twelve months rolled by, and the day was near at hand for the consummation of the marriage, when one morning the Duke landed at the château, and earnestly requested the Marquise to meet him at the hazel copse.

The Marquise consented, but upon arriving at the rendezvous—ah, thrice accursed mischance!—the Duke was suddenly seized with an attack of gout, besides suffering agony from an old wound—glorious souvenir of Fonteroy.

"Cleante, my boy, there remains but one thing to be done," he cried. "Go yourself to the hazel copse, and be the bearer of my regrets."

The young man obediently departed on the instant, and singular to say, his heart throbbed at the suggestion of meeting her who had so filled his thoughts.

"It is time for this nonsense to end," he said, taking himself to task. "A sight of the Marquise will dispel my dreams. I know she has white hair, an ungraceful form, and am not even sure that she does not limp."

Cleante had hardly reached the hazel copse when he caught a glimpse, at the end of the road, of a sombre-hued gown.

"Ah," he whispered, "the rose-coloured paper was eighteen years old at most, but this dead leaf frock is a sexagenarian at least." However he could but avow that the delicate silhoutte outlined against the trees, was by no means bent, nor was there the least halt in the gait.

She was approaching him—nearer, yet nearer—the old lady.

Unfortunately her head was bowed, and her eyes fixed on the pebbles of the walk, so that nothing was visible save her white hair, drawn back under the hood of a dark-brown cloak. The hair, however, was certainly very white. After scrutinising the wrinkled face, the faded eyes, the weary mouth, he would smile at his folly.

But while he looked the unknown raised her head, and he saw that her eyes sparkled, her skin was smooth, her lips fresh, and that it was powder, and not age, that had whitened her blonde hair.

Shortly after the hour for the rendezvous the Marquise declared that a headache, from which she had been suffering, was better, and took the path to the hazel copse, intending to secrete herself in the forest, and witness the discomfiture of the Duke at her non-appearance.

"What will my little simpleton say to the old dotard?" she queried, thinking aloud.

Walking softly Madame de Souchevieille entered the underwood, but paused, startled, for just in front of her, moving cautiously like herself, there came the Duke. The two former adversaries stared at one another in alarm for a second, and then simultaneously turned their eyes upon the cross roads of the hazel copse.

There insects hovered about the opening flowers that perfumed the air, the sunshine filtered through green leaves, and seated near each other, hand in hand, sat Cleante and Doris, smiling into one another's eyes.

"I love you, Doris," Cleante was saying.

"And, Cleante, I love you," murmured Doris.

In the flowering hazel trees above them there was a medley of bird notes.

For a moment the Duke de Troncantique and the Marquise de Souchevieille stood as though rooted to the spot, with eyes and ears for naught else save the sweet mystery before them.

Then recalled to their own paltry affairs, they cried with one voice:

"These two children are our heirs. Why not consent to their union, settle the hazel copse upon them, and so end our long controversy?"

And they both added, "in petto," with touching unanimity:

"Thank God! my pride is appeased without the need of marrying."

G. J. Worboise.

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The Attack on the Mission.

THE sandalled footfall of the Franciscan friar, going to and fro in sun-steeped California, has sealed certain nooks of it, here and there, to an eternal quiet. Such a nook is the valley of the San Diego River. Subject to summer drought and winter overflow, it is as lonely, perhaps lonelier, to-day than when in 1775 a Spanish "presidio" guarded its entrance and a Spanish mission crowned its head. For not only the Spaniard has gone for ever, but all those Indian peoples whose strongholds were in the mountains that still rise beyond the far levels of the *mesas* like islands out of the sea's edge.

But, however softly the valley sleeps to-day, some thrilling chapters of life were lived in it during its foreign occupation. In November, 1775, eleven Spaniards shared a cruel experience at the old mission then known as the mission of San Diego de Nipaguay.

Two monks, four soldiers and three mechanics—according to strict Castilian ideas of caste—are nine of the eleven enumerated in the military annals of the time. But the pair remaining to complete the tale of souls, fall together by a simple and beautiful law of nature. They were boys.

"My son," wrote Lieutenant de Ortega, commandant of the "presidio," in his official report of the affair, "and a little fellow of ten, the son of my corporal."

Francisco was the name of the commandant's boy, and Juan was the name of the other. They had been sent up from the "presidio" to the mission that they might dwell for a time with the good *padres* and learn to serve them at the altar. Francisco was thirteen years old, and both youthful acolytes were as thorough boys as ever ached for playtime to come.

So it was on that ever-memorable fourth of November. The last intonation of the vesper services had scarcely died away in the gloomy adobe church, when they were in the sacristy scrambling out of their white gowns, and then through a door opening upon the hill slope at the back of the church. There they made a grand rush for a favourite perch, climbing upon the low mud wall of the unfurnished building.

Often before had they sat there, side by side, to watch the files of Indian converts march by, retiring for the night to their brush village above the mission, and finding a perpetual incitement to wonder in those swarthy faces still so full of the smouldering fires of savagery. But on this particular evening a matter most vital and pressing, from a boy's point of view, choked up the well-spring of curiosity and brought their heads close together in a whispered conference.

"*You* ask!" urged little Juan, his fat face twisted with anxiety.

"No; you!" insisted Francisco.

"But you are bigger," piped Juan.

"And you are smaller," scoffed Francisco.

Juan drummed hard against the wall with his heels, not screwing his courage up to face a disagreeable necessity, but busy conjuring up fresh reasons why his companion should undertake it.

It seems that the corporal of the mission guard of three cuirassiers, himself an old presidial veteran, being bound on the morrow upon a grand hunt after stolen mission cattle, had suggested to the boys, fine riders both of them, that they might go along with him and see the country. The invitation had brought with it as much anguish as delight, for there were the *padres* to reckon with.

All day long the boys had hung back from the dread ordeal of asking permission, though each was for ever edging the other on to it. Now the thing must be settled.

"Your father is commandant," said Juan, returning vigorously to the charge.

For once Francisco was silenced. With his bringing-up, military rank was everything, obligation as well as privilege.

"Besides," Juan burst out, feeling that if this did not do the business he was at the end of his resources, "you are almost sixteen."

It was adroitly done. To be almost sixteen meant to be almost a soldier, a tune to which all Francisco's dreams were set. His soft black eyes fired. He glanced indulgently down at Juan—so far off from the glories of cavalry-jacket and carbine!

"I will ask Father Jayme," he declared, "the very next minute I see him."

Juan's countenance showed a veritable sunburst of relief.

"He can only say 'no'" mused Francisco aloud, preparing himself for the worst.

"But if he should say 'yes,'" squeaked Juan ecstatically.

Francisco allowed himself to catch a measure of his small comrade's enthusiasm.

"Why then, Señor Sleepy-Head," he said patronisingly, "if you are not up bright and early, the corporal and I will be off without you."

"But you will call me, eh, Frazquato?" said Juan, with a serene faith in the integrity of friendship.

"We start up yonder," was Francisco's reply, nodding towards a gap in the brown hills opposite them as they sat, and assuming a far more intimate knowledge of the old corporal's plans than Juan possessed. "We follow the river till we come to a valley ever and ever so much bigger than this."

"A hundred times bigger, eh, Frazquato?" suggested Juan, his comfortable acquiescence enlivened by a keen statistical zest.

"A thousand times bigger!" cried Francisco, his imagination bound to exceed a mere baby's. "With rocks and rocks piled up all round it into mountains brimful of Indians."

"If a thousand of them should come after us, eh, Frazquato?" chuckled Juan.

"If ten thousand should come?" cried Francisco. "What then? We will fire off our carbines all together, and you will see them run like wild deer!"

The two boys roused to a tickling sense of their superiority to such savage terrors, looked each other in the eyes and roared with delight. A grey robe appeared round the corner of the church and their faces fell.

Father Jayme was coming to call them to bed.

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They dropped to the ground with reluctant accord, and went forward to meet him.

"Ask! ask!" gasped Juan, not forgetting the secret business in hand.

The father who encountered them was a large man with rugged features softened by a mild benignity.

But just now a keen twinkle deep in his blue eyes told that he fancied he had all but caught his two acolytes in some piece of mischief—or why had master Francisco gone so pale, and why did little Juan wear such a hangdog air?

He inquired of them shrewdly. Had they been hanging about the barracks, taking in idle soldier-songs and stories?

The question glanced so near their hearts that Juan gave up all for lost. As for Francisco, though he turned paler still, had he not resolved? Were not the very words of his request ranged in order in his head?

"Señor Padre," he began as he intended, and then stumbled over something that must be added impromptu. "We were at the barracks—but only this morning. But only to speak to the Señor Corporal, and the Señor Corporal says would you please give Juan and me your most gracious permission——"

And so, the portentous inquiry being out, the two boys can only wait with their respective hearts in their respective mouths.

Padre Jayme has taken each of them by an ear, pinching hard. Is he very, very angry? They dare not even peep to see.

"So ye are aching, you two, to get leg over horse," he begins after a pause. "'Vaya,' why not?" He is gazing down beamingly at them. "A holiday never does boy or *burro* any harm. Keep close to Corporal Rocha, a trusty fellow."

The listeners could have leapt for joy. What they did instead was to kiss his hand, receive his benediction, and file demurely off to bed.

"No talking," the *padre* had warned them. They obeyed with devout exactness until snug in their little cots placed against opposite walls of the refectory. Then was heard suppressed whispers, with ecstacy in every syllable.

Juan was soon sound asleep. Francisco, excited by the morrow, was much longer in losing himself.

He awoke with a great leap of the senses. He thought that the corporal had come in and was holding a lantern to his eyes to rouse him to start. But the room was silent, and all in darkness, except where a single window opening high in the thick wall showed a dim grey square. Could that be the dawn looking in? Was to-morrow to-day at last?

Francisco slipped out of bed, and climbing into the window looked eagerly through the wooden bars, expecting to see the daylight. He was disappointed. The sky was only less dark than the earth. It could not be more than midnight.

The boy was in the act of sliding to the floor, when his eye was fixed by a point of dull light appearing in the direction of the barracks. He did not have time to hope that it was the corporal's lantern after all; the red glow mounted swiftly, approaching him, then passed, hissing like a serpent, high over the roof above him.

Instantly other fiery serpents were darting in many directions. One striking downwards revealed the thatch of the smithy in a dull glare—the glare shot aloft, a puff of flame.

Flames are kindling elsewhere. A bit of hillside, the triangle formed by barracks, smithy and *padre's* house, where a boy stands dazed, bursts into a weird illumination, is alive with frantic figures, striped like the zebra, spotted like the leopard. Heads bristling with wild feathers toss one above another, higher yet, in a fierce, elastic, soundless dance, and every bound brings the whirling swarm closer and closer to the *padre's* house.

It has needed this thrilling certainty to rouse the boy there from his stupefaction.

He drops to the floor.

Juan is asleep, with round face upturned to the unearthly glow broadening through the room.

Francisco seizes the child by the shoulders, drags him sputtering and stumbling towards the cell where Father Jayme lies.

Father Jayme drowsily sitting up in bed to wonder at the loud crackling of the roof above him.

"Indians!" gasps Francisco. "Indians! Indians!"

Father Jayme beats upon a wall, calling his companion monk by name.

"Fray Vicente! Fray Vicente!"

Little Juan, wide awake at last, is screaming at the top of his voice over and over: "Will they kill me?"

Nobody pays any heed.

Flakes of fire are falling in the refectory as the four run together there.

Somebody seizes some clothing for the boys, but there is no time to put it on. A wolfish, ear-piercing howl announces the savages at the door.

Father Jayme alone is calm; the others cling to him. He argues gently but firmly, against something that Father Vicente is eloquently urging.

"Surely if my converts are among them they will heed my voice."

A great horror falls upon the three when they see that Father Jayme is going to open the door.

What will become of him—them?

His hand on the latch, Father Jayme turns to give an order.

"Take these children to the barracks. Hold the soldiers back from violence until I come."

The door swings open. Padre Jayme steps forth into the midst of a thousand demons, leaping full in flames of mingling earth and sky, as serenely as ever in the sweet sunshine. The shock of his courage brings an instant's hush. Those within hear his voice in the customary mission greeting:

"Love God, my children!"

For only answer there is a yell of derision. Father Jayme is surrounded, whirled out of sight towards a black hollow beyond the awful glare.

Francisco, boy as he is, finds himself mechanically running with little Juan, making for the barracks. At the door Father Vicente joins them, though at first he would have followed Father Jayme. The three enter together. Alas, for that refuge!

The big room is thick with blinding smoke. Soldiers are darting about in what would be sheer panic but for a voice bellowing out orders:

"Into your '*cueras*,' every mother's son of you! Guard powder-horns as the apple of your eyes! Arm, and come this way! This way!"

Thus Father Vicente found Corporal Rocha in full preparation for flight.

"The *padre's* house?" demanded the corporal of him.

"Gone—and the church!" answered Father Vicente.

It remained to decide upon a last desperate retreat.

Not far from the barracks was that wall of an unfinished building, upon which two boys had been so glad and so tormented about the morrow that no one may

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live to see. It was a four-foot wall inclosing a square of ground used as a place for lumber, old boxes and casks, and generally known as the "*Ceradito*," the "Little Inclosure."

"To the *Ceradito!*" was the corporal's word.

He gathered his five fighting men about him, three "cuirassiers," a carpenter and a smith—one smith having been shot to death by arrows in trying to reach the barracks. At that instant the north wall of the building was already one sheet of flames. Oh, the horrible sound of it!

"Every man for himself and for the defenceless!" cried the corporal. "Keep close together. Out with you when I give the word!"

The door flew open.

"To the *Ceradito*!"

The yells drowned the roar and crackle of the fire. The open hillside was pouring a flood of savages that way. Even strong men held back. Then the wall of flame sucked towards them by the draught and drove the hapless Spaniards forth.

What a moment that was! The eight Spaniards, big and little, in a knot. Some fighters running forward, some running backward, that all might face the foe. The two children stifling in the struggle of strong-limbed men. Juan shrieking, and Padre Vicente lifting him bodily along. Arrows whizzing swiftly through the air; the roar of carbines; shouts, groans; the thick of battle; an eternity of anguish before a voice cries: "The Ceradito!" and all tumble in, two of the nine souls, soldiers both, never to rise again. But the anguish is by no means over.

So desperate was the defence to follow that the old military annalists, busy with the deeds of men, refuse to take any note of the presence of mere children. Hence history, though interesting itself in the suffering of the innocents of all ages, is forced to confess, "Nothing further is known of these two boys"—our poor Francisco and little Juan—"during the rest of this eventful night."

But the other figures stood boldly forth. The corporal called for the casks and the beams with which to barricade an opening left in the wall for a door; luckily material was plentiful.

In clearing the floor for the corporal's purpose some gunpowder was unexpectedly brought to light, fifty pounds of it in a canvas bag, thrust in there for lack of safer stowage, and forgotten. At first hailed with joy, this treasure-trove was speedily seen to be a deadly menace. For a score of Indians, leaving the attack on the barricade to their main body, rushed to seize a mound above the Spaniards and thence throw down blazing brush and tree branches upon them.

Father Vicente had been on his knees praying aloud. He rose at this moment, and seeing the danger, spread himself, a living prayer upon the powder, covering it with his robe, his breast.

But if here was one hero was there not another?

Arrow wounds in his body, his last comrade fallen, Corporal Rocha of the guard, still stood boldly up, firing as fast as two or three of the wounded could load for him, and shouting orders as if directing the volleys of a whole platoon:

"Steady, men! Aim steady! Send every bullet home! Death to the enemies of Spain!"

Gallantly his voice rings out above the din. One against a thousand is he, yet his eye remains keen, his brain brimful of determination to hold the Indians back from that rush, which would quickly end all. This is why he roars in trumpet-tones as if to direct the approach of a relief party from the "Presidio"—alas! six miles away.

"This way to the rescue! Santiago and succour! Close up, Spain! Shoot the renegades down from behind!"

While he is still hoarsely shouting, lo! the silent dawn is come, and the Indians have as silently melted away.

The besieged peer out to make sure of it. Then they turn to look upon each other, Their faces are strange each to each by reason of blood, and the havoc of fire. They are mere wrecks of men; but the corporal and the *padre*, at least, can speak, clasp hands and thank God.

Suddenly the corporal, staring about him, makes a discovery. Something as like a human creature as the rest of them, only on a lesser scale of inches, is sitting erect in a dim corner of the mud wall.

"*Santiago*!" ejaculated the corporal in a deep voice of amazement, "it 's Francisco!"

Arrows had spared the lad; not so the flames. His delicate oval face was darkly singed, his long soft, black locks were burnt away, his ten fingers were so many charred sticks.

"And Juanito!" half-blubbered the corporal, recalling that cheery, plump little rogue.

But the blackened spectre of Francisco was able to answer, and with a quick-flashing smile:

"He is here, Juanito!"

The corporal, joined now by the *padre*, stared harder, but could see nothing. Nothing, that is, except a wide-mouthed, thick-waisted water-jar lying on its side. He went over to investigate. Even the wounded craned their necks to see.

The corporal looked in the jar and laughed. He rolled it over with his foot, a frightened head was thrust out of it and instantly drawn back, and it was only under strong encouragement—the Indians were surely gone!—that there did at last emerge from that strange shelter, very reluctantly, a familiar, plump little form.

Juan was in his bedgown and had one shoe; but, except for the grime of tears on his fat cheeks, as whole and sound as if he had slept the night through in his cot, next the refectory wall.

"In there," said Francisco, explaining the situation with naive unconsciousness of self, "I could keep the fire off him."

"Juan of the water-jar!" grinned the old corporal, dubbing the child off-hand with a nickname that was to cling to him for life.

As for Francisco, least of our heroes—in years—Padre Vicente alone thought to lay a hand in silent approval upon his head, wherefore his good deed remained aware only of its own perfume and not of men's praise. Beside, for him, was there not Juan? A comradeship thus early tried was ever to endure; in saddle and out, in long years to come, Francisco and Juan were ever to remain firm friends throughout the many and varied experiences of two cavalry soldiers in a wild, savage-infested land.

But those who are able must now creep out of the "Little Inclosure," to gaze upon the mission in ruins, and the deserted Indian village above it; to search for good Father Jayme, and to find his dead body down in a hollow whence to-day some noble palm trees spring aloft, fit frame for the crumbling front of a later mission built upon the site of the mission destroyed on that November night of 1775.

T. Candler.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE RIGOUR OF THE GAME.

FOR two days and nights the English and American troops toiled unceasingly whilst they landed guns, stores, forage, and horses, and pushed rapidly ahead for the front at Neuminster.

What few moments of relaxation were snatched by the officers and men from the "old country" were devoted to items of gossip concerning the manner in which the Yankees "fixed up" everything in which they were deficient.

Proportionately to their numbers they were short of cavalry, and Colonel Ritchie proposed that his San Franciscans should be mounted on the German horses captured at Neuminster. General Smithson assented with equal nonchalance, and the English staff were amazed to see the change effected within a few hours. They argued, of course, complete disaster for the regiment should it come into contact with the highly-trained cavalry of the enemy, but they soon had cause to alter their opinion.

There were plenty of spare guns on board the transports and the Duke of Connaught, faithful to his promise of non-interference, did not even elevate his eyebrows when the chief of the United States staff applied for sixty 12-pounders so that he might "fix up" ten field batteries.

The American also asked that a number of non-commissioned artillery officers should be lent to him, until the men "got the hang of it," which he assumed would be the case before they would be needed in action—a statement which brought a sardonic grin to the face of the R.A. veteran whose duty it was to pick out the requisitioned instructors. Nevertheless it will suffice to say that although the United States gunners could not hope to so quickly attain the high pitch of excellence shown by the British artillery, they accomplished marvels in the shape of actual work when the next great battle was fought.

Nor had they to wait long for the much talked-of event.

When two great armies are spoiling for a fight, there is usually not any insurmountable difficulty in accommodating them. The British forces pressed on to Neuminster, and the Germans, on their part, did not let the grass grow beneath their feet in hurrying forward preparations for a strong attempt to hurl the invaders out of the Fatherland.

By a seemingly tacit understanding the British — by which term the United States' forces are quite naturally included—and the German commanders regarded Oldesloe as the ultimate theatre of operations. Although scouting by considerable detachments of cavalry and more determined reconnaissances were indulged in on both sides, there was no serious affair between the belligerents until they had massed their armies within thirty miles of each other, with Oldesloe lying midway between.

During one of these minor affrays a driver of the Army Service Corps earned immortality by a feat of remarkable endurance, which has seldom, if ever, been paralleled in the annals of war.

The company to which he belonged was convoying a quantity of stores along the left flank of the British lines of communication, when suddenly two squadrons of Prussian cavalry swept round the head of a dense clump of trees and delivered a well-timed charge, with the evident object of destroying the train.

The officer in command of the Army Service Corps detachment was young, and had never seen a fight outside the Long Valley, but he put into practice the precepts therein acquired with the ease and confidence of a veteran.

In obedience to his commands, men and horses started from the quiet jog of the march into a thunderous gallop.

Within half a minute they had formed a triangular laager, of which the waggons supplied the three external faces, the horses being safely ensconsed inside.

A sergeant spoke to him.

This is a difficult and dangerous manœuvre either in peace or war.

The waggons advance, for the most part, in echelon formation, and the slightest deviation of a vehicle will infallibly bring down the horses of its successor, possibly involving a section of a column in common ruin.

The formation was accomplished without apparent hitch, and the magazine rifles were soon busy in emptying German saddles. The incident was ended almost as soon as it had commenced. It was then noticed that the driver of one pair of horses did not rise from the

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ground, where he had fallen after getting his waggon into correct position. A sergeant spoke to him and then bent over him to hear the poor fellow say feebly:

"I can't get up, sergeant. My left leg was smashed at the knee-joint by No. 5 waggon when the row commenced."

This gallant soldier had nevertheless kept his seat and guided his team until his duty was performed to the letter. Then the anguish he was enduring conquered his iron nerve, and he collapsed.

At the close of the campaign the Duke appointed him his coachman, but the brave fellow was lame for life.

Field-Marshal Prince Albert of Prussia had been selected by the Emperor to command this second Grand Army. He led his own Westphalian Army Corps into the field, and had at his disposal nine other territorial corps, making a total force of 330,000 men, with 400 guns and 11,000 horses.

This gigantic force had been exercised together, as it happened, during the preceding autumn manœuvres, and Prince Albert was in command on that occasion. He knew his staff thoroughly, and his men had complete confidence in him, for his reputation as a general stood very high, dating back from his distinguished services as a cavalry leader in more than one section of the Franco-German War.

A thoroughly conscientious soldier, to whom fatigue or trouble were unconsidered trifles when duty was to be done, this German Prince had more of the Slav than the Teuton in his composition. Were one told that he was a Romanoff, the lofty forehead, square, stern face, and firm chin, with its heavy underlip, would not belie the story. Such a man, at the head of such troops, was a very solid fact in the way of the British advance.

To oppose him, the Duke of Connaught surveyed at Neumin-ter two fine English army corps of 70,000 men each, and slightly over 100,000 United States soldiers. This total of 240,000 was split up into twenty-four divisions, each containing four small but compact brigades. There were 250 guns of field and horse artillery, and some 12,000 cavalry, to which arm the Americans contributed 5,000.

On the night of the 16th of June, all preparations having been made for an advance in the direction of Oldesloe on the following day, the Duke of Connaught summoned a Council of War.

He briefly stated his plan of action, so far as this could be foreseen prior to actual contact with the enemy.

"From information gathered by a very daring bit of cavalry scouting carried out by the 14th Hussars," he said: "it is evident that the Germans are in greater force towards Hamburg than on the Lubeck side. The British right wing must consequently be of exceptional strength, and I will be glad if General Smithson will regard that as his special post."

General Smithson smiled with the air of a man who has a responsible but highly pleasant task intrusted to him.

"My own troops," continued the Commander-in-Chief, "will form the centre and left wing. With the exception of a small cavalry escort for the guns, which will at the outset be massed in the centre, I propose that the four cavalry brigades be equally divided for service on the flanks."

All present agreed that this arrangement would facilitate the next day's march, as the men could proceed to their allotted positions with the least expenditure of energy, an important consideration, for they were already suffering from the severe strain of the debarkation and subsequent events.

"I take it, Prince," said General Smithson, "that you have not yet made up your mind as to the programme?"

The Duke by this time knew his man fairly well, and understood, without possible reason, that the American officer had some ulterior motive in asking this apparently aimless question.

"I cannot decide definitely upon a certain course until I have learnt something of the enemy's intentions," he replied.

"Of course, of course," assented the other. "I was only figuring things out on general principles, so to speak."

"Well, and won't you tell us what you have figured out, sir," said the Duke, turning earnestly towards his colleague.

"If you think hard enough you'll take the same view."

"You see, it's just this way," was the answer, given in deliberate and convincing tones, "tired men can't fight well, nohow. We'll allow that the enemy is as dead beat as we are after we get jammed close together at the end of the day's march. Nobody will feel particularly bad if there isn't any trouble to-morrow night. Next morning both parties will want to get to business quite early, and the affair won't end in ten minutes. In this sort of country, with nothing but grass plots and bits of forest dotted about the view, there's likely to be more give-and-take fighting than in broken land, where position is half the battle. And I calculate the Germans are about three to two of us."

General Smithson paused to arrange his cigar more comfortably, and every man in the Commander-in-Chief's quarters felt that this shrewd American was about to propound some scheme as the result of his cogitations.

"Odds are odds, all the world over," he continued, "and, on paper, we ought to get a considerable licking."

An impulsive cavalry officer here broke into Smithson's slow speech.

"That is a poor spirit in which to begin," he cried, a hot flush mounting to his face.

The Duke promptly interfered. "Have the goodness to permit General Smithson to proceed. So far, I agree with every word he has uttered."

"If you think hard enough you'll take the same view," said the United States commander, pointing the stump of his cigar at the interrupter. "Now, it seems to me," he went on, "that if we can select the best possible position near Oldesloe, Prince Albert will hurry up to attack us. Two men can hold a place against three, but they cannot turn three out of their location unless they choose to quit. If we can make the Germans sweat themselves against us, our boys taking it fairly easy in between times, we might be able at the close of the game to play them up strong when they have already done all they want to do for one day."

This advice was so obviously sound that it was unanimously adopted, and the impetuous cavalryman seized the earliest opportunity to apologise for the unnecessary heat he had displayed.

"Cork up your energy," said General Smithson good-humouredly. "You'll want it before you go to sleep on the 18th."

Following the example set by Lord Roberts before the recent operations in the valley of the Seine, the Duke of Connaught issued, in the "Orders of the Day," a stirring reminder to his men of the anniversary of Waterloo.

"To-morrow," ran his words, "we will be fortified by the reflection that in facing a vastly more numerous foe we shall be only following the glorious precedent of our forefathers on another 18th of June.

"The firmness, the discipline, the calm courage which enabled the men of Waterloo to crush Napoleon's troops are hereditary qualities in the English-speaking race.

"Whether from east or west of the Atlantic, we are equally the successors of the heroes who fought under Wellington in Spain and France. I have never entered upon any solemn undertaking in the course of my life with

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such certainty as I feel upon this, the eve of our first great battle on German soil.

"Do we need deeds to emulate—they are supplied by our comrades afloat and ashore. We are fortified by the knowledge of their achievements; we are strengthened by the conviction that the guardianship of the sacred cause of our nation is as fully committed to our hands as to theirs.

The Duke rode out in front.

"I have but one instruction to add for the common guidance to-morrow. There is plenty of ammunition. Shoot often, but—above all else—shoot straight."

Both Thomas Atkins and Brother Jonathan read these utterances with much approval. These gentlemen now rejoiced in a common title, "The Busters." For a little while they were at a loss for a synonym which briefly expressed the composite elements of the army, until some pretty wit devised this word, which not only gave an elegant combination of "British" and "U.S.," but also supplied phonetic expression to their peculiar attributes in the robust vernacular of the streets.

There was a philosophic value in the phrase. It conveyed the idea of complete unity, and at once swept aside possibilities of jealousy and differentiation.

The "Busters," then, took affidavit in approved form that they would "plate" or "get the drop on" the Germans to their best powers.

The anniversary of Waterloo should certainly not want a fitting celebration.

The Commander-in-Chief was wise enough to give his men ample rest on the night of the 16th. Not until noon of the following day did the march of the infantry begin. But in the early hours the Duke and General Smithson, safeguarded from risk by a strong cavalry escort, surveyed the country near Oldesloe, selected the ground to be occupied by each division, and gave specific instructions to the staff-officers who would accompany divisional commanders to their particular stations.

On the night of the 17th the weather was fine and clear. From the absolute quiet that obtained in the vicinity of Oldesloe, one might have thought that nowhere on earth did more profound peace and restful security prevail.

The inhabitants of the little town had long since fled.

It was now occupied by the advance Guard of the German army, which was spread over a front of nearly four miles. The British front was more extended, running to fully five miles, and the men lay in the formation already described, two British and one American divisions supplying a reserve stationed a mile in rear of the centre.

Despite the apparent stillness of the allies they were individually as busy as bees. During the few hours of dusk, officers and men of the Sappers worked with feverish activity along the crest and on the slope of a marked undulation in the ground which fell away towards Oldesloe. They hammered tent pegs into the soil, tied long lines of thick cord to these, and measured, and paced, and triangulated as though their lives depended upon a nice pattern being traced upon the face of the earth.

Infantry officers attended these operations with great earnestness, and then hurried off to divide all regimental duties between half battalions.

The result was that 120,000 men slept, whilst their comrades toiled unceasingly with pick and shovel in the construction of field works and shelter trenches.

This quantity of labour skilfully adapted, and every man applying himself like a little steam-engine, can shift a good many cubic yards of earth, and when *reveillé* sounded at 4 a.m., the entire British front was guarded with two complete lines of entrenchments.

The now weary men—who had, as it transpired, already won the battle by their unflagging industry—retired to eat and sleep. Not even the tornado of lead and gunpowder that soon sprang into demoniacal life disturbed their repose for the few brief hours of rest vouchsafed to them.

Shortly after the relief had been effected firing commenced.

The German artillery tried to devote themselves to a general shelling of the allied position; but our gunners soon altered their views, and a fine duel ensued.

This was damaging enough to both sides while it lasted, but Prince Albert did not delay his infantry attack, which, as the Duke of Connaught had anticipated, assumed the most pronounced form on the right.

Three successive German Army Corps hurled themselves with splendid *élan* upon the Americans, and were driven back with a precision and loss that must have brought joy to the heart of Jomini himself, could he have witnessed the scene.

At the imminent risk of his life the Duke rode out in front of the centre to a point where he could observe the proceedings. Not one word did he speak to the small staff with him until the third German line reeled away into nothingness before the hail of bullets that beat upon them.

Then he turned his horse's head towards the English lines, observing as the charger broke into a trot:

"If we do as well, this will be the greatest battle in history."

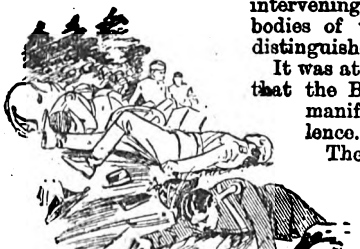
Prince Albert had now got his huge army within striking distance. Although he was surprised and annoyed at the manner and method of the first repulse, he resolved to deliver a sledge-hammer blow at the entire British front.

Six army corps, aggregating nearly 200,000 men, advanced simultaneously across the plains and entered upon the second important phase of the struggle. They were formed in brigades of 5,000, of which one-fourth supplied the fighting-line and the remainder acted as supports and reserves.

This great movement took nearly two hours to complete itself, and when the final impact came it had a directness and power wholly unprecedented in modern warfare.

The battle was now entirely one of the rank and file. Unlike most great engagements, every man was individually and actively engaged.

Notwithstanding the vaunted smokeless qualities of the gunpowder used by the combatants, a murky haze filled the intervening space, and even large bodies of troops could only be distinguished at short distances.



The scene of carnage . . . was one huge canvas of death.

It was at this supreme moment that the British plan of action manifested its real excellence.

The artillery and machine guns had already obtained mechanical range for their different classes of projectiles, and the infantry, by resting their rifles in grooves pressed into the shelter trenches, were able to secure a reliable point-blank trajectory. Fifteen thousand Germans were killed or wounded during that awful half-hour's advance, but still

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they pressed on, indifferent to death or disablement, and only eager to vindicate their hardly-won reputation as the one invincible army of the world.

Yard by yard they doggedly struggled forward, firing with vigour and precision into the ill-distinguished lines in front, staggering oft before the gusts of lead that whistled through them, but still grimly resolved to achieve their object or die in the attempt.

At the precise moment when it seemed that they would succeed, when already this living torrent was about to fill up the British dykes and swamp the whole line in inextinguishable disorder and, perhaps, disaster, two cavalry brigades swept round the flanks at a headlong gallop, whilst the rest of the British horsemen, hastily recalled to right and left of the centre, poured through chaussées left for such a movement across the entrenchments, and struck the disintegrated masses of German troops as lightning darts through a thunder-cloud.

Scattering in small detachments along the entire front, they whirled through the enemy's ranks with appalling effect. For a moment the advancing swarms quivered in the struggle against the shock, and then melted away with the mist that rapidly dissipated owing to the cessation of firing.

When the dust and smoke had cleared somewhat, and the half-frenzied troopers were trotting back to the British lines in twos and threes, the scene of carnage along the five miles of front, for over a mile in depth, was one huge canvas of death.

"Which hand will you have?"

It was pitiable, heart-sickening, more awesome than a plague-stricken city. It moved the victors to compassion, and the vanquished to unalleviated agony. They were most content who laid there, motionless and silent, for even the wounded were yet paralysed with the shock given to the frame by the modern projectile.

Prince Albert of Prussia now knew that he was beaten.

Nevertheless, with the icy coolness of despair, he determined to grasp fate by the throat.

If he could not succeed, it was at least possible to strike such a blow as would render it a question of weeks of delay before the British would be able to advance further into the interior.

The Duke of Connaught, who had grown ten years older during the last hour, anxiously noted some significant changes in the enemy's formation.

Guns and cavalry were being massed in the centre, and infantry were hurrying off towards the flanks.

The Duke was now called upon to solve a momentous problem, and he did so with the acumen and directness of a born leader of men.

He dispatched gallopers to warn General Smithson on the right, and Sir Richard Sheridan on the left, to expect simultaneous flanking movements by infantry, whilst he summoned all the cavalry and guns to assemble in rear of centre with the utmost possible dispatch. By this time, too, the second half of the British army was in the trenches, and the men who ought to have been relieved felt mutinous when ordered to retire. So they were left alone.

Not one moment too soon had the Duke made his new arrangements.

Precisely at eleven o'clock the Prussian Commander-in-Chief launched his final blow.

Under cover of a continuous artillery fire, 15,000 German cavalry, led by the Field Marshal in person—for the secret desire of the Emperor was strong within his own breast—trotted towards the British centre with the intention of repeating Von Bredow's Death Ride at Mars la Tour.

If this avalanche of men and horses could ride through those lines as their predecessors dashed through the French on that memorable day, they might double up the British front, and render successful the progressing flank attacks.

If they gained their object they committed both parties to indescribable slaughter; if they failed, it meant annihilation.

Breaking into a gallop at a distance of 1,000 yards from the British, and heedless of the shrapnel now plunging through their ranks, the German cavalry swept splendidly forward.

They had barely traversed a quarter of the distance when the English and American cavalry brigades appeared on the slight crest of the infantry position, formed in line of columns with quiet rapidity, and Major-General Luck, the divisional leader, placed himself at their head, twenty paces in front of the centre regiment, the 2nd Life Guards.

The right of the line was taken by Colonel Ritchie's followers, who had been christened, no one knew why, the "Sacrament Horse."

No orders were given, for amidst the din they would have been inaudible.

Urging his charger into a canter, General Luck raised his sabre high above his head, and looked back, to the right and left along the line.

A great cheer broke forth, not alone from the troopers but from every living man on the ridge, and the great charge commenced.

As the opposing bodies of cavalry neared each other, the sounds of conflict died away, and the thunder of the horses' feet upon the hard ground grew momentarily in volume.

When they were but a hundred yards apart, a member of the Duke of Connaught's staff yelled hysterically: "Great heavens, the Americans have not drawn their swords!"

They had, but the weapons were dangling by the sword knots from their wrists, and in each man's hands were a couple of revolvers, which he discharged point blank at the German cavalry in front ere the final crash came.

The effect was stupendous. Men and horses fell, the leading squadrons came to grief before they could strike a blow, and in the *mêlée* which ensued, not a sabre was called into use until each American horseman had emptied the twelve chambers of his weapons into the mass of his opponents.

The result of this decided novelty in an affair of cavalry was soon seen. The three Uhlan regiments which met the soldiers of the United States were beaten immediately.

So rapid and decisive was their discomforture that Colonel Ritchie, who acted as brigadier of the right wing, was able to wheel his men and take the rest of the Germans in flank.

It is no discredit to the English horsemen to say that they did not find their task quite so easy. Lance met lance and sword clashed against sword, and for fully ten minutes the fight was the hardest any man present had experienced.

Locked as they were in the throes of a deadly struggle, for a little while they seemed to be a mere rabble. But at last the Prussians wavered and fell back. At this moment came the diversion of the American attack on the enemy's left flank, and almost before the watching army had realised what had happened the Duke of Connaught gave orders for a general advance from the centre.

Smithson and Sheridan seized the same opportunity to rush at the deploying German infantry, and when the sun sank to rest in the west, Prince Albert of Prussia was lying in the British field hospital, and his magnificent army was non-existent.

The loss of the British forces was terrible enough, even under the circumstances of this glorious victory, whilst General Smithson said ruefully: "If we have a few more

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battles on this basis the United States will be broke with paying pensions."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The Women of England.

"Which hand will you have?"

It was thus that Irene addressed her friend Ethel, looking very saucy and mischievous the while, and holding both her hands behind her back.

"What do you mean, Irene?" asked Ethel quickly, turning white. Her little frame trembled as she caught the merry gleam in her friend's eyes, and a great wild hope thrilled her that perhaps—perhaps——

"Do not tease me, dear," she said with a quivering voice, and a suspicion of tears, "if it is something very, *very* important."

"You darling," whispered Irene, melted by the appeal, as she put her arm round Ethel's waist, and gave her a warm, impulsive kiss. "You have guessed it—I am so glad; for it's only your second!"

And with this she gave Ethel a letter, with queer stamps and strange marks upon it, and wearing a travel-stained and woebegone appearance.

Ethel's hand trembled as she took it, and she gazed with longing and tenderness upon the bold clear penmanship she knew and loved so well.

"From Simla!" exclaimed her friend. "What a wonderful thing—and, oh, what a funny system they have! It's numbered 114—whatever do they put that for?"

Ethel blushed as she answered with a nervous laugh:

"It isn't *they*, dear," she said; "it's *he*."

This vague explanation seemed clear enough to Irene, who made no attempt to disentangle these ambiguous pronouns.

"But what does it mean?" she asked.

"It's a little invention of Frank's," explained Ethel confidentially. "It means this is the 114th letter he has written me. We always put the number on the envelope, so that if any of our letters go astray we shall know at once. That little note I had from Malta was 113, so that I am certain Frank hasn't sent any in between that have gone astray."

"Dear me," said Irene, looking deeply interested, "what a clever notion! I had no idea Frank was half so practical. I must really make Teddy do it. You know, dear, men are sometimes lax; it would keep them up to the mark amazingly. I should like to see Teddy dare to send me No. 200 in answer to my 280!"

"And you always know how many letters you really have had!" added Ethel.

"H'm! rather awkward, won't it be, when it gets into the first ten thousand?"

Ethel looked archly into her friend's face, and smiled.

"You goose!" she said slyly; "long before we get to that, there won't be need of any numbering!"

At which profound but obscure remark Irene beamed with comprehension, and gave Ethel a sudden hug that nearly imperilled her balance.

"But I won't delay you, darling," she went on, with motherly consideration; "I will finish my nocturne whilst you examine your treasure."

And as the sweet strains of Chopin's exquisite nocturne in G floated through the room, Ethel opened her precious missive and, with beating heart and deep thankfulness, read and re-read her lover's message.

"Oh, Irene," she exclaimed, when she had thoroughly devoured its contents, "I don't know *when* I shall get another. Frank is attached to the Indian army that is invading Russia. He's second in command of the Naval Brigade."

"Is he, dear?" cried Irene joyfully. "You have cause to be proud, Ethel. He is being promoted as rapidly as my Teddy!"

"Our Teddy, you mean!" interjected Ethel mischievously. "But this departure takes him such a long way off, and you can't expect to find post offices available in Siberia. But never mind, we must both be brave. I know that Frank will take as much care of himself as an honourable soldier may, and if anything should happen——"

"Don't, don't," exclaimed Irene hurriedly. "We can at least be worthy of our soldier sweethearts. We must be brave and hope. Honour before love even, is it not? Even if my heart were broken, I should not grudge it for my country—would you, dear?"

The two girls were very silent for a few moments, and Irene, kneeling down by the side of her friend, pressed her hand in quiet sympathy.

"What does he say?" she asked, after a pause which seemed to both like a solemn prayer.

"He tells me he is just starting for the front, and that there is a long march before him; he expects that the army will find trouble in Afghanistan. But he is confident that they will force their way to the Caspian. He believes they will fight their passage through to Moscow, and then he—no, that's all; the rest is quite unimportant."

Irene smiled, and her friend's blush did not escape her.

"A good deal of Teddy's letters are unimportant, too," she said archly. "And, between you and me, don't you like those bits best?"

All Ethel's reply was to snatch up her letter and put it away in some secret lodgment in her dress. Then she turned upon Irene with a look of mock severity.

Lady Irene Vyne and Miss Ethel Harington were amongst them.

"It's really very frivolous of you, my lady," she said, "to be wasting your time in idle jests when we have so much work before us. Has it escaped you that we have each of us to organise our corps of nurses before the end of the week?"

Irene at once looked serious. A few days previously both of the girls had attended a meeting at Marlborough House, summoned by the Princess of Wales. For there was need now of the women of England. In the wake of battle and bloodshed they were wanted to tread with beneficent step, for already the wounded among the English troops had taxed to its utmost the resources of the ambulance corps. The first to realise this, and to plan a scheme of assistance, was the gracious Princess herself, who, after a long interview with Lord Wolseley, had invited the leading ladies of London society to meet her and help her to develop it and carry it into execution.

The Princess quickly found that there were as stout hearts and willing amongst the women of England as amongst the men. She briefly described the sufferings of our soldiers, and the kind of assistance that was needed. Before the meeting was over, nearly every lady of rank present had promised to organise and equip a corps of nurses for transport to on to France and Germany. It was further decided that two trained hospital nurses should accompany each corps.

But this was not all. It was felt that every woman in England, who could afford her time or her money, should be allowed to share the satisfaction of this patriotic work. There was need of money, of lint, of bandages, of appliances—for these requirements had grown beyond the power of the Army Aid Society started by the *Times*—and the deft fingers of wife and maid alike would find unlimited occupation.

The appeal that was made was taken up with enthusiasm, and in a few days the ambulance question was settled on a scale so magnificent that even the War Office was compelled to admiration.

"But, Ethel, dear," said Irene, when they had discussed

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it fully, "do you know, I have been thinking that for some of us—the younger of us, I mean—those of us who are strong and healthy, it is not enough to send others. Ethel, is it not my place out there, too?" And she looked wistfully at her friend.

Lord Salisbury occupied the chair.

Ethel crept closer to her.

"*Your* place? And isn't it *mine* too?" she asked softly.

"But I, that is you—I mean in France, darling?" Irene stammered.

"I cannot go to Siberia, if that's what you mean," and Ethel laughed gaily. "But if you go, I go also. We are both promised brides of soldiers—of gallant soldiers, Irene—of men who do their duty bravely, and do not shrink from danger even if their lives are at stake. Cannot *we* do something also?

"I have felt this inactivity a burden, I want to be up and doing. I think I could bear it better if I knew I was not sitting here in safety and luxury, but was sharing the difficulties, if not the dangers also. Irene, dear, let us both go—you and I. It will be something, will it not?"

Irene kissed her friend with a feverish joy. It was her heart's desire.

And when the first contingent of nurses sailed from Southampton, Lady Irene Vyne and Miss Ethel Harington were amongst them.

* * * * *

A few days previous to this, and prior to the landing of the Duke of Connaught in Germany, an important meeting of the Council of National Safety was held at the Foreign Office. Not a single member was absent, and the deliberations were very solemn.

Lord Salisbury occupied the chair, and near him were the Prince of Wales, Lord Rosebery, Sir William Harcourt, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Balfour, and Lord Wolseley.

Recent events had caused, not public elation, but a more buoyant spirit, a more assured confidence. But the leaders of the nation were grave, and gravest amongst them all was the Commander-in-Chief.

"Our difficulties become at least less overwhelming," Mr. Chamberlain had observed. "Each day has to some extent relieved the situation."

Mr. Balfour shook his head. "The most serious dangers find the stubbornest resistance," he observed reflectingly. "There is a time of heat, of exasperation, of recklessness. But when the most menacing obstacles are swept away, there comes the time when men need qualities that are rare—endurance, persistence, wearisome application to monotonous effort. In my own opinion, we have reached the supreme crisis of the war."

"And the moment," added Lord Rosebery, "when fortunately our best qualities will be called into play. For surely if English soldiers have an acknowledged virtue it is their stubbornness, their calm persistence, and their fertility of resource."

"Let us hope, Mr. Balfour," said the Prince, "that your fears may only prove a matter of philosophic doubt!"

A smile flitted round the Council.

"We are in this position," interposed Lord Salisbury. "Our army in Central Asia will keep Russia occupied. Sir Evelyn Wood is master in his defences, and when the Duke has seized the Kiel Canal, Germany will be unable to make any progress. We have inflicted severe defeats upon France. Locked as the situation is elsewhere, we have to turn our attention mainly to the last-named country. Retaliation must come sharply and vehemently. What are we to do to assist Lord Roberts? It is likely, in fact, that the great struggle of the war will be confined to France. We must concentrate our forces there."

All eyes were turned to Lord Wolseley.

"I am in agreement with Lord Salisbury," he said. "We cannot do all we should like. But whilst the Duke of Connaught and Sir Evelyn may be safely left to hold their own, there is grave peril in France. We have defeated two army corps, but the strongest of all remains—I mean that stationed at Chalons. It has long been mustered there for possible service with Germany, but it will assuredly be summoned to meet Lord Roberts. Our chief necessity, therefore, is to create a diversion, to make some new and counter attack which shall leave Lord Roberts to establish and confirm the advantage he has obtained."

Sir William Harcourt, who had been listening attentively, here struck in.

"A very curious coincidence," he exclaimed. "In one of my spare hours yesterday I amused myself with translating a portion of Homer into rough hexameters. It was the ninth book, when——" and he turned to Mr. Balfour, "you will remember that a similar situation occurs—but," stopping short with a smile, "you will tell me with justice that this will better serve the purposes of a magazine article. I presume, Lord Wolseley, that you propose to land a second army corps in France, and, I should guess, in the south?"

"That is so," answered the Commander-in-Chief a little surprised. "With the addition from Canada and other colonies, together with our new levies, it will not be difficult to land an army of 250,000 men at Marseilles or some such port. If we occupy southern France the Chalons army will necessarily be compelled to march to meet us to protect Lyons. We shall then relieve our forces in the north. It is highly important that we should do this without delay, and that we should be prepared to make a most successful and protracted stand. Indeed, upon the complete success of our operations in the south will largely, I may say entirely, depend the fulfilment of Lord Robert's plan of campaign in the north."

Lord Wolseley here produced a map of the south coast of France, and also a schedule detailing the strength of this new and formidable force he proposed to hurl upon it. For some time a close and eager discussion was maintained.

Then Lord Salisbury observed:

"It is a move of the utmost importance, and needing the finest generalship. Whom do you propose to place at the head of our Mediterranean Army Corps?"

And he looked at the Commander-in-Chief.

Lord Wolseley coloured slightly.

He yearned like a true soldier for actual service on the field of war. His position had kept him at Whitehall, where his extraordinary powers of organisation and his complete grasp of the minutest details had contributed more than the efforts of any other man to the success of English arms abroad. His was the controlling brain, the executive intellect. His foresight, his counsel, his elaborate plans for attack and defence, his unrivalled genius for commissariat, had given a unanimity, a solidity, a sureness to the British tactics, which largely accounted for their success. But he was still a soldier, and might he not now taste some of the active dangers and responsibilities of the field of battle?

Such thoughts had passed through his mind. So, in reply to Lord Salisbury's challenge, he said:

"Gentlemen, this new development in our system of attack is of the gravest and most responsible character. I have remained long in London, and done all that was open to me to expedite our affairs abroad. I think that now it devolves upon me to take upon myself more active duties still. I ask you that I may myself take command of the Mediterranean Army Corps."

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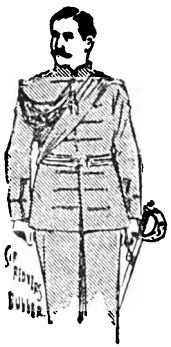
At these words a dead silence fell upon the Council, and despite the expressionless stolidity which comes of diplomatic training, a look of blank dismay settled for a moment upon every face.



There was not one present who did not know that the whole success of the war depended to a large extent upon the skill and resource of Lord Wolseley at the centre of operations—upon his clear, calm, swift decision exercised in his office in Pall Mall, where he sat at the converging point of all the many complex threads of this involved and intricate struggle. To dispatch him for service abroad was nothing less than to dispense with the brain and nervous centre of the whole British army. Yet they sympathised with the yearning of a born soldier to taste the stimulating joy of actual warfare, and they realised how the Commander-in-Chief's heart must have been from the first in the midst of the troops he loved so well.

But to gratify this desire was impossible. And yet how could it be refused with tact and kindliness?

There was a breath of relief when Sir William Harcourt jumped into the breach at this critical moment. He appreciated the difficulties of the situation, and his subtle mind, accustomed to delicate positions, rejoiced at this new opportunity for wily statesmanship.

"My lord," he said gravely, "what you have said is doubtless of the utmost gravity, and I am sure that a suggestion half wins our consent if made by you. We are prepared to carry into execution any design which your wisdom and experience clearly tell you to be essential for the success of our cause. You are aware that, so far as practical warfare is concerned, we are entirely in your hands. It is your vastly responsible duty to consider any situation that may arise, and, after coming to a mature conviction, to place us in possession of it. We are dependent upon you. I, for one, will be the first to propose that you are placed in command, if you will, remembering the national trust reposed in us, assure us that, from a military point of view, it is absolutely the best and wisest course."

Lord Wolseley sighed inwardly. He realised he was doomed to remain. The Council had shirked the responsibility. They had asked him, as a soldier, and depending upon his impartiality, to settle his own fate. Under such conditions there was but one course open to him.

"Gentlemen," he said quietly, "since that is the light in in which you regard it, I have no alternative. I can now spare General Sir Redvers Buller—the honour must fall to him."

The Council sought discreetly to conceal its satisfaction; but there was an audible movement of relief. And General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., was duly appointed.

"And yet," grumbled Lord Wolseley to himself afterwards with a quizzical expression of face, as he saw Sir William Harcourt depart, innocence upon his cheeks and a guileless smile upon his lips—"and yet I supported the short service system!"

And he made some trite observations upon the luck of some men as he wrote a brief despatch to Sir Redvers Buller, telling him of his good fortune.

(To be continued.)

Uncomplimentary.—Friend (over the wine after dinner): "Your wife is certainly a brilliantly handsome woman. I shou'd think you would be jealous of her."

Host (confidentially): "To tell you the truth, Robbins, I am. I never invite anybody here that a sane woman could possibly take the least fancy to."

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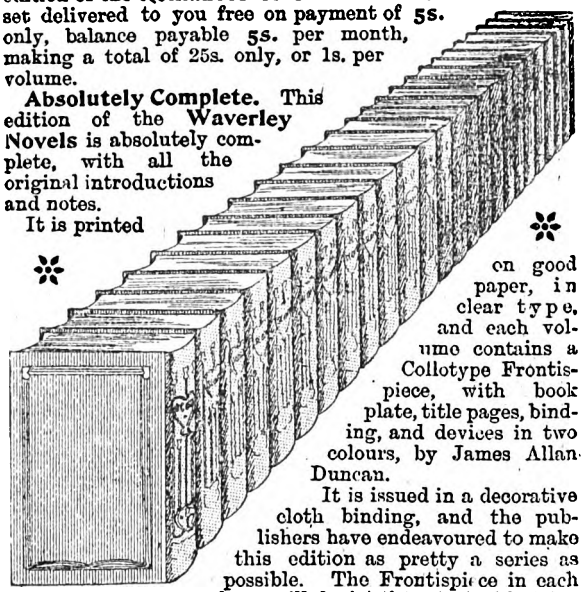

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THE PRINCE'S WOOING.

"But, your Highness," I interposed, raising my hands in consternation, "there will be war if you do not marry the Princess Clothilda. And besides, it was your venerated father's wish that you should wed her."

"Am I heir to all my father's whims and fancies?" exclaimed Prince Amagon, bringing his dainty foot emphatically down on the floor. "Shall I marry a woman whom I have never yet seen, who has never yet seen me, who may be ugly, who——"

"But, your Highness," I again suggested mildly, "the Princess is said to be very beautiful."

"Beautiful indeed!" he cried mockingly. "Why, all princesses are beautiful. There was our sister of Cleves, who of all women was the most ill-favoured. Yet even she was said to be beautiful. Else how would our poor brother of England—poor Henry—ever have been brought to marry her? This Clothilde, likely enough, is just such another ugly, fat person

'With a cast in her eye
And her mouth all awry,'

as the old rhyme goes. But even if she were beautiful as the day and brilliant as the sun, I would not wed her. For when I marry I shall take me a wife of my own choice."

"But what shall I tell the Princess, since she is already in the Palace?" I asked helplessly.

"Oh, tell her anything—anything to get rid of her," he answered carelessly, as if getting rid of the Princess were the simplest matter in the world.

"But wait," he added, as I was about to go; "there is still something else I wish to tell you. Now, I know," he began thoughtfully, flicking the flies with his riding-whip, "it is time for me to get married. I owe it to my people and my realm. But I shall choose a wife who suits me, whom I love and who loves me for myself as well as for my possessions.

"Therefore, I have determined to disguise myself as a common working man and go among my people in search of such a woman. I shall set out to-morrow morning, and you shall accompany me. So, after having performed my commands as regards the Princess, also assume the garb of a labouring man and meet me in the market-place by the fountain. You will know me by a green patch upon my sleeve. That is all. You may now go."

The final words were accompanied by a significant sweep of his arm towards the door.

There was nothing more to be said. Bowing and scraping, I backed out of the audience chamber.

However, I had no intention of letting the Prince have his own foolish, sentimental way. It is true, 'tis said, that a stubborn beast must take his own path. But in this case the mule—may I be pardoned my irreverence!—was dragging along with himself to destruction two kingdoms with their several hundred thousand inhabitants, besides bringing ruin to myself, his humble Prime Minister—which latter fact, you may be sure, was by far the most important to me.

Therefore, as I proceeded to the Princess Clothilde's apartments, I pondered in my mind how I could bring about the marriage of the Prince and Princess, and at last I hit upon a plan by means of which, I congratulated myself, this much-to-be-desired event could be accomplished.

Finally, after hurrying through the winding passages of the Palace, I reached the Princess' antechamber, whence, upon mentioning my business, I was immediately ushered by a rosy-cheeked-laughing little maid of honour into the audience chamber itself.

As I entered, a tall, Venus-like young woman, presumably the Princess, came towards me with an eager, radiant smile.

"You come from the Prince, do you not?" she asked.

I bowed a funeral bow, and said in a most tragic tone:

"I do indeed come from the Prince. But would that I did not, for the message that I bear from him is but a sorry one. Your Highness," I continued, "the Prince has been seized by a sudden madness. In spite of all I can say or do, he insists that he will not marry you. Nay, he will not even see your Highness nor hear your name mentioned."

As I spoke the Princess drew herself up haughtily, and her face lost all its sunshine.

Her mouth, tight shut, looked as if it had been chiselled in marble, and her laughing blue eyes were turned to cold-flashing steel.

I paused.

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"Well," she sneered, tapping the floor impatiently with her foot.

"Well," I answered mournfully, spreading out the palms of my hands, "if you do not marry the Prince your royal father will undoubtedly make war upon Andalusia."

"And do you think that I shall make overtures to the Prince?" she asked scornfully.

"No," I answered rapidly, "I do not. On the contrary, if you follow my advice, you will first avenge yourself upon him and then marry him."

At this point the Princess' face relaxed somewhat and she showed signs of curiosity.

"To-morrow," I continued, "the Prince in his madness is going to disguise himself as a working-man, and go out into the city to find a wife for himself. Now, not many streets distant from the Palace there is a tavern called the 'Black Boar,' the proprieter of which is a very good friend of mine, since in my youthful days I frequented his tavern, and once in later life was of slight service to him when charged with some trifling offence. If your Highness were to disguise yourself as a barmaid and come to this tavern to-morrow morning, I would take the Prince thither, also; and then it would be an easy task for you to bring the Prince, who is young and inexperienced in matters of beauty and love, vanquished to your feet. Thus would you obtain your revenge and at the same time prevent a terrible war."

"But——" faltered the Princess.

"And," I urged, "he said such shameful things about you. He said that you were as ugly and fat as—as—and he sang a ribald rhyme—which I blush to repeat—

'She's a cast in her eye,
And her mouth's all awry,'

about you."

"Well, perhaps——" She hesitated. "But are you sure the tavern is safe?"

"Your Highness," I answered, "the tavern is wholly at your service. You may bring your own retinue."

"And how shall I know the Prince?"

"He will have a green patch on his sleeve."

"Then," she said, resuming all her former haughtiness of demeanour. "I shall consider your proposition. To prevent a war I may do as you desire. You may now go."

But before I reached the door she called me back, and, bending down, anxiously asked:

"Did he really say those horrid things about me?"

I bowed.

"You may go," she said, drawing herself up frigidly.

At about ten o'clock the next morning the Prince was kneeling at the feet of the Princess Clothilde in the little side chamber of the "Black Boar." By what means the Princess had brought him to this position I cannot say, for I had been sitting in the large guest-chamber while she was practising her arts upon the Prince in the room next door.

But just now, tired of awaiting further developments, I had, so to speak, taken matters into my own hands and was peering through the doorway.

That is how I knew the Prince was on his knees.

Evidently, the Princess had not revealed herself, for the Prince with outstretched hands and upturned face, was crying passionately, "Grisette, Grisette, I love you."

The Princess flung back her head and laughed a shrill, mocking laugh.

"Why, who would ever marry such a ragged vagabond? My Karl is a thousand times as pretty a fellow as you."

"And who is this Karl?" eagerly demanded the Prince.

"Oh!" she said, "he is a master carpenter, and only twenty-three years of age. And when he comes of a Sunday to take me to church he wears a fine new silken doublet and a long feather in his cap. You," she said contemptuously, "look like my old grandmother's patch-quilt with that great green patch on your sleeve."

"But," pleaded the Prince ardently, "if it is honour and wealth and fine clothes you desire, I can give you more than anyone else in the country. If you will marry me you will have your own coach and four, and your own maids to wait upon you."

"Oh! indeed," said the Princess, "I'll be glad if you do not run off without paying the reckoning. Why, to hear you, anyone would think you were the Prince himself!"

"And I am the Prince; I tell you I am Prince Amagon himself," said he proudly.

Again the Princess' mocking laughter rang through the room.

"That is a good joke," she cried. "Your Highness indeed!" and she swept him a mocking courtesy. "Why, if you be the Prince Amagon, I am the Princess Clothilde."

"But Stein, my Prime Minister, is here, and he will bear witness that I speak the truth," persisted the Prince.

"And Stein will bear witness that I, too, speak the truth," mocked the Princess.

"Stein!" called the Prince.

Being near the door, I did not take a long time answering his summons.

I was in the room in an instant.

As I entered the Prince caught me by the sleeve.

"Am I not the Prince Amagon?" he demanded. "Do I not speak the truth?"

"Your Highness does, indeed, speak the truth," I answered, bowing gravely.

"And I," the Princess cried, clutching me with mock eagerness by the sleeve "am I not the Princess Clothilde? Do I not speak the truth?"

"Your Royal Highness also speaks the truth," I repeated, with a bow for her.

The Prince stared.

Suddenly the Princess broke out singing shrilly:

"I've a cast in my eye,
And my mouth's all awry."

Then the Prince understood, and he did the wisest thing that could be done under the circumstances. He said nothing; made no excuses or protestations; but silently he drew her, laughing, blushing and half resisting, to his breast.

L. Digby.

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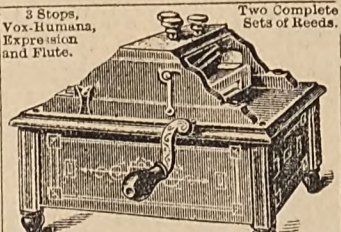

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MANY HAPPY RETURNS OF THIS PAGE.

C. V. thinks that more coffee is drunk in France than in any other country; a friend disputes this, so C. V. comes to me to settle the question.——According to statistics published some time ago, it appears that the people of the United States consume more coffee than all the inhabitants of Europe. The annual consumption is set down at 318,170 tons for the U.S., 136,300 tons for Germany, 77,300 tons for France, and only 12,500 tons for Great Britain, where tea is more in favour.

Old.—It was Dickens who described a bank-note as a curl-paper from the locks of the ever-beautiful old lady of Threadneedle Street. Cobbett dubbed the Directorate of the Bank "the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street" because the Directors were apparently trying to stem the tide of national progress like Mrs. Partington and the Atlantic.

Sword.—A linesman's sword costs five guineas; a cavalry sword costs £7 10s. The latter, which measures thirty-four and a half inches and weighs two pounds nine ounces, is not regarded as a perfect weapon, for the reason that it is intended both for cutting and thrusting, and a weapon suitable for both purposes and yet "perfect" from an expert's point of view, has not been devised yet.

G. M.—Meat "wastes" less in boiling than in roasting and baking. Waste is due to the evaporation of water, the melting and escape of fat, and the exudation of nutritious juice in the form of gravy.

Flora.—The Arctic region is more extensive than you appear to imagine when you say that it is impossible for flowers to grow within it. The border of that frigid zone is not so very far away from us. Flowers are scarce towards the Pole, but within the limits of the Arctic region there are 162 varieties, all of them being white or yellow.

Leo is interested in the lion's mane. "Why does it have such a thick, cumbrous mane?" he asks. "It seems that it would be in the way."——The explanation given by some naturalists is that it is to protect the muscles of the neck and head in a fight. Those muscles are of great strength, and it is important that they should be protected, and that part of the body is always the first to be attacked by a foe of its own kind. Moreover, the mane protects the muscles from changes of temperature, so that they do not stiffen from cold or become relaxed through heat.

L. T. H.—The largest history ever published is "The History of the Rebellion," issued by the United States Government. It consists of 120 large octavo volumes of one thousand pages each.

Broker.—The first establishment of a pawnbroker's was made in Freisingen, Bavaria, just seven hundred years ago. In 1350 one was opened in Salins, France, and another in London eleven years later. None of these was successful. The Paris Mont de Piété was established in the year 1777 in the very street in which the head office now stands.

T. W.—All watches are compasses. Point the hour hand to the sun, and the south is exactly half way between the hour and the figure XII. on the dial. For instance, suppose it is four o'clock. Point the hand indicating four to the sun, and II on the watch is exactly south. Suppose again that it is eight o'clock. Point the hand indicating eight to the sun, and the figure X on the dial is due south.

T. L., who is himself country-bred and has only been in London a few months, says he has been struck by the number of "country-men" in the metropolis, and asks me to tell him what proportion of the inhabitants of London are "from the country."——According to the last census, rather more than one-third.

Needle.—Sewing machines driven by electric motors are used in a large costume establishment in Paris. The current is obtained from the street mains. I know of no such machines in London.

Alfred J. T.—New Zealand has set apart two islands for the preservation of its remarkable wild animals and other animals; thereon all hunting and trapping are forbidden.

M.—The Grand Ducal house of Mecklenburg is the oldest sovereign house in Europe. The princes claim descent from Genseric, the leader of the Vandals, and there is not much doubt about the claim. To this day the princes of the house, in their full style, call themselves "Princes of the Vandals."

Star.—The "Lone Star State" is Texas, its banner bearing one star. It is said to have the following origin. The first Governor of Texas had to send a dispatch to New Orleans; on concluding the dispatch, he found he had no seal, so he cut a five-pointed brass button from his coat and used that for the purpose. The authorities at New Orleans thought that it was intended as a representation of the State; hence the name.

Tippler.—The spoon in your glass filled with hot whisky and water prevents the breaking of the glass, because the metal readily absorbs a large part of the heat of the water.

T. L. S.—The little canals which permeate the dentine of the teeth are only 1-12,000 of an inch in diameter.

Mabel.—(1) The law of Denmark gives to every Danish subject, man or woman, the right to a pension at sixty years of age, except in cases of convicted criminals, of those who have fraudulently made over their property to relatives, of those who have brought themselves to distress by extravagance, or who have during the preceding ten years received relief from the parish, or who have been convicted of mendicity. (2) *Home Cookery* ought to suit you for the purpose you mention. It costs a penny on the first of every month.

Bumptious.—London pays 42 per cent. of the income-tax of England and Wales, and its government and management cost about £11,000,000 a year.

H. T. P.—I should think the Chinese burglar. He takes an ingredient of his own, burns it, and blows the smoke through the keyhole of the bedroom where the master of the house is asleep. The fumes dull the senses of the victim just enough to make him helpless, while at the same time permitting him to see and hear everything that goes on in the room. The only antidote against this charm is pure water, and most of the wealthy Chinese folk sleep with a basin of this near their heads.

Arthur.—In Italy thirty persons out of 10,000 die by the assassin's knife.

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WINNERS in the FIRST 'HOMELAND' COMPETITION.

For full report of this unique contest see the November issue of "Homeland." The following is a selection from the list of winners who each received a cash prize of £5 in our first contest:

Mrs. Beck, Estate Office, Sandringham, Norfolk. William Pedrick, The Deanery, Canterbury. Frederick Hill, 21 Barrington Street, Limerick, Ireland. E. Kaye, 8 Harley Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, Lancashire. W. S. Mitchell, 95 Britannia Terrace, Elland, Yorkshire. Geo. W. Norman, Oak Villa, Huntly Grove, Peterborough. Margaret Hay Bell, The Red Lion Hotel, Horncastle. Mrs. S. Smith, 20 Hornby Terrace, Morecambe. Andrew A. Campbell, 18 Battlefield Avenue, Langside, Glasgow. Mrs. M. E. Light, 6 New Road, Chippenham, Wiltshire. Rachael Alice Gankroger, 338 Rochdale Road, Todmorden. Mrs. S. Woodley, 13 Caledonia Place, Clifton, Bristol. Benjamin Varley, 9 Reginald Street, Derby. William C. Harrison, 5 St. Kilda Street, Kirkdale, Liverpool. Mrs. E. M. Maskelyne, 1 Home Villas, Western Road, Romford. Miss Eliza J. Scurle, 181 Dereham Road, Norwich, Norfolk. S. Shipp, 104 Palmerston Road, Woodstone, Peterborough. Charles Wright, Goulceby, near Lincoln, Lincolnshire. David H. Steele, Huntly Terrace, Kelvinside, Glasgow. J. G. Mascall, Silver Street, Stansted, Essex. William C. King, 12 Grafton Street, Ashton-under-Lyne. C. Hill, 4 North Terrace, Grantham. Mr. W. Roberts, 31 Victoria Street, Clifton, Bristol. Miss May Randall, 6 Westbourne Villas, Faraday Road, Acton, London, W. Mr. R. Fisher, Red House, Waddingworth, Lincoln. Miss M. Stuart, The Grange, Farnborough, Hants. J. Seaman, 54a Downsell Road, New Town, Stratford. Sergeant-Major W. J. Elliott, R.A., Doon Villa, Princes Road, Freshwater, Isle of Wight. Mrs. John Whiteside, 44 Ramilies Road, Smithdown Road, Liverpool, and many others.

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Encouraged by the great interest which has been shown in our first competition, we have decided to hold another one, which we expect will prove even more attractive. During the long evenings of the present season, the attempt to solve the following Magic Square Puzzle will form a pleasant pastime, and we feel sure will be the means of introducing *Homeland* to numerous firesides where at present it is unknown. *For correct solutions we shall give £5 in cash.* Full particulars of the prize awards will be published in *Homeland*.

4	8	2
3	5	7

THE MAGIC SQUARE PUZZLE.

The puzzle is to form a magic square. That is, a different number is to be placed in every one of the nine divisions of the diagram, so that every column, every row, and each of the two diagonals shall add up to 15. This is to be done without removing to other divisions more than is necessary of the six figures already placed. What is the simplest possible solution? You need not cut this paper; simply draw the diagram on your letter.

At first sight it occurred to us that an apology would almost be needed for placing before our readers such a simple little puzzle. But experience has taught us that people are as ready to imagine difficulties where they do not exist as to overlook them when they occur. It is an interesting fact that this little poser was made by a girl of twelve. Her ten-year-old brother produced an answer in two minutes, her mother did the same in a quarter of an hour, her aunt in seven minutes, but her father declared he could not be bothered with such things—which meant he would puzzle it out on the first opportunity when he got alone.

In sending in your solution, mention how you would like the prize-money sent; we will send it on in any way that winners may prefer.

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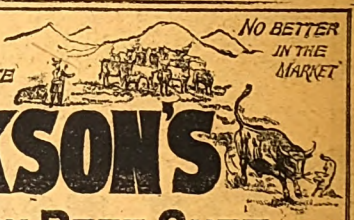

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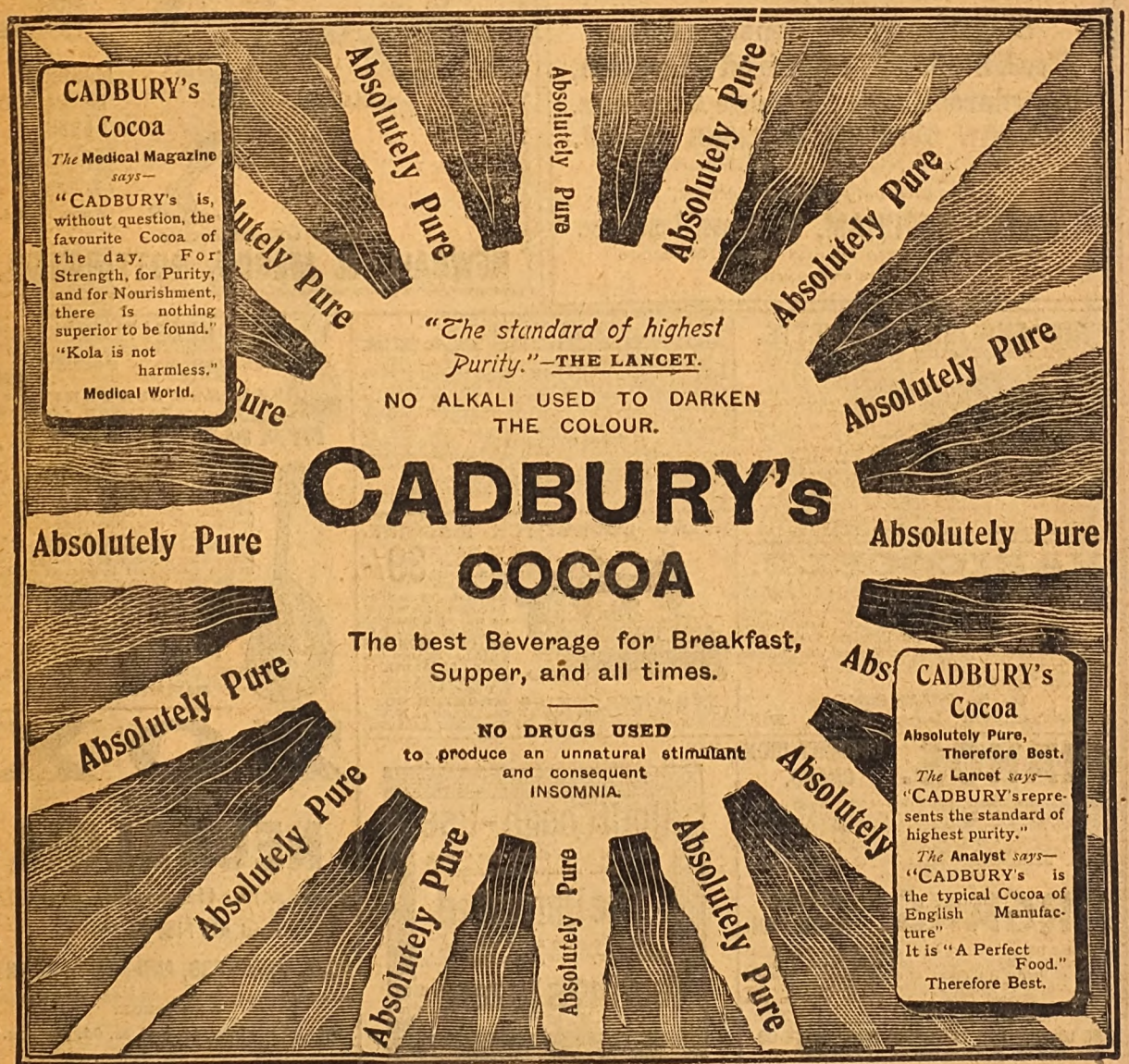

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habitation on the south coast, overlooking the terrible Manacle Rocks of which more anon.

Both gentlemen were in very comfortable circumstances, as their parishioners were well-to-do and treated their spiritual advisers liberally. They had to, or woe betided them. St. Keverne was a director of the Cornubia Phoenicia and Roman Serpentine works (now in the hands of a Receiver) he received good tithes from the farmers in the neighbourhood, for it is a rich pasture country; and the Manacles were a continual source of profit.

Many a stately trireme and proud galley went to pieces on those treacherous rocks, and though the crews were never saved, yet a good deal of the cargoes was brought ashore, and of course St. Keverne expected to be presented with a very fair share. It is said that a fisherman of Pictish origin who had settled in those parts objected strongly to the Saint having so large a proportion of the salvage, and held a meeting to protest against what "in his opeenion was a maist awfu' extortion."

But when St. Keverne heard of this he promptly excommunicated the malcontent, cast spells over all his belongings and generally made his life a misery to him, and threatened to build a lighthouse on Manacle Point if he heard any more grumbling.

These vigorous measures had the desired effect. The parishioners kicked the Pict into Porthoustock Cove, and presented the Saint with a serpentine pulpit for his church as a mark of their reverence and esteem.

St. Just's was a mining district and there were some very rich setts in the neighbourhood; such as Botallack, Levant, Huel Owles and Huel Cock and lots of others. St. Just held shares in nearly all of them and in addition he received dues from the adventurers to pray for success to the bal. The pilchard fishery was good too in the summer, and the Saint had to be propitiated to attract the fish and drive away porpoises. So that, taking all in all, St. Just was quite as well off as St. Keverne.

One day St. Just had an idea that he ought to stroll across and hunt up St. Keverne. He hadn't seen anything of him for a long time, and the thirty miles or so would be a nice little walk; and if he had an early lunch and started directly after he would get there in time for tea.

Then he could stroll back in the cool of the evening. Saints moved more quickly in those days than they do now; there was more competition. So he donned his best seven leagued boots and after a very pleasant walk reached St. Keverne's house.

St Keverne was superintending the whitewashing of his garden wall and inciting his myrmidons to work a little more quickly, in language more forcible that polite.

But he brightened up when he saw his visitor.

"Aw, my tender dear, is that you sure enough? You'm quite a stranger, but I'm main glad to see 'ee. Are 'ee feeling pretty tolerable now, my son?"

"Iss, I'm brave, but fair chacken for a dish o' tay. Have 'ee had your tay yet?"

"No, I'm going in to have it directly most. Come inside, my son, you'm kindly welcome. Jenifer," he called to the servant, "bring in tay as soon as you can," here he dropped his voice to a stage whisper, "and put out the new tay set. Would 'ee like to wash your hands before you sit down, my son," he asked St. Just, who replied in the affirmative, and was conducted to the best bedroom to "clane" himself.

* * * * *

Now it so happened that a galley from the sunny south had, a few weeks previously, come sailing up the Channel, bound for Looe, intending to take back a cargo of copper brought down from Caradon Hill.

One of St. Keverne's parishioners caught sight of it coming up from the West just at dusk, and, of course, he rushed back to the village with the joyful news. The simple-minded fisherman thought that nothing less than a display of lanterns would suffice to celebrate the occasion, and to add more picturesqueness to the fête, fastened the lanterns on donkeys' backs and paraded the beach with them.

What happened on board the galley never transpired, but it was generally supposed the captain mistook his bearings and thinking he was off Falmouth Harbour steered, as he fondly imagined, straight into it.

After the Manacles had done their work satisfactorily, coracles began to put out in large numbers for the ostensible purpose of rescuing the crew of the galley. They did not succeed in a single instance in that laudable desire, but managed to save most of the cargo, after tremendous efforts, judging from the terrific row which went on all night.

Next day a deputation waited on St. Keverne asking him to pray for the souls of the departed sailors, and bringing him a small present saved from the ship. This was a tea-set of the most beautiful china, exquisitely painted and mounted with superbly chased silver. It had been intended as a present to the King of Looe, but how was St. Keverne to know that? So he accepted the offering graciously, thanked the deputation, gave them his blessing and dimissed them.

Up to now he had had no opportunity of showing off his prize, so he rather hailed the advent of St. Just with delight. For saints are very like ordinary folk in that respect; if they have anything new they can't rest till they have flaunted it before the eyes of an admiring friend.

St. Just came in to tea with a glowing face, the result of his ablutions. He glowed a trifle more when he saw the meal provided for his refreshment. They still have teas like that in Cornwall, thank goodness: in out of the way places where fashion has not yet set her ruthless foot.

None of your wafer-like bread and butter and thin strips of tennis cake, which have to be balanced on the edge of a saucer, as there are no plates provided. No, this was a Homeric tea, if there be such a thing. Muggotty pie, cold beef-and-tatie pasty, junket and cream, gooseberry tart, a huge saffron cake and a figgy fuggen; and if you want to know what that is, go down to Cornwall and see. Well might St. Just lick his lips as he gazed on the spread.

"Cluck 'ee down there, my son," said St. Keverne, politely handing St. Just a chair, after saying grace, and St. Just "clucked" accordingly; and started to take in ballast for his homeward journey. In fact he devoted so much attention to his inner man that St. Keverne feared his new tea-set would escape notice altogether.

So after rattling his spoon against a saucer and trying other devices to attract his guest's attention to his china, he plumped the question straight out.

"What do'ee think of this bit of cloam, my son?"

St. Just gazed at the said bit of cloam, struggled manfully with a mouthful of pasty, overcame it, and ejaculated: "Clane-off," and once more loaded himself up with pasty.

"Iss, 'tes so sure enough," replied his host, rather dis-

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appointed that his guest did not show more enthusiasm about it, and gave a long description of the wreck and subsequent rescue, while St. Just munched away and nodded acquiescence.

But though St. Just did not seem to take much interest in the "cloam," he was in reality breaking the Tenth Commandment as hard as he could go.

He had spotted the set directly he sat down at the table, and had been debating in his mind ever since as to how he could manage to get hold of it, by fair means or foul. For he saw that the possession of such a neat bit of china would add greatly to his social position with the *élite* of north Cornwall.

But he knew that St. Keverne would want a very long price for it, even if he would part with it at all, which wasn't likely. So, St. Just inwardly determined to bide his time and see what turned up; and in order not to appear too much interested in the "cloam" he turned the conversation to religious topics, deploring the ritualistic practices of St. Kenwyn, up Truro way, which were creating much commotion in the county.

However, fortune generally comes to him who knows how to wait. Their saintships had finished tea and were having a spirited argument as to the respective merits of bags and plates for collection purposes; St. Just holding that plates were opposed to the principle of not letting your left hand see what your right hand was doing, and also that people would let a plate pass when they would put a penny in a bag. St. Keverne held the opposite view and argued that a person would put sixpence in a plate for appearance sake, while he would put a button into a bag. They were arguing as only Saints can argue when the door opened and Jenifer appeared.

"Please, feyther, Mrs. Chegwidden wants 'ee to come and see her to once."

"Aw, drat the woman," said St. Keverne, rising from his chair. "Why couldn't she wait till morning? Well, I reckon I must go. Will'ee 'scuse me for a bit, brother Just, while I run down and see her?"

"Certainly," replied St. Just. "I'll wait till'ee come back." So away went St. Keverne to see his troublesome parishioner, leaving St. Just alone in the room with the coveted "cloam."

No sooner had St. Keverne's footsteps died away in the distance than St. Just transferred all the tea-set into his somewhat capacious pockets and walked out of the room.

"Jenifer, my dear," he called. "I'm going to walk round the garden a bit till your master returns," and he stepped out into the garden, down the path to the road, and, making sure that no one was watching, made tracks for his home in Penwith as hard as he could go.

St. Keverne's parishioner did not keep him as long as he expected and he was back in twenty minutes. "Where's St. Just to?" he called to Jenifer, who replied that his Reverence was in the garden. But a short search showed that his Reverence was *not* in the garden, and St. Keverne, much perplexed, came back into his dining room. There his eye caught the vacant space on the tea-tray, and a closer examination showed him that his beloved "cloam" was gone.

He was sufficiently acquainted with his brother saints to guess at once what had happened, so with the single ejaculation: "Aw!" he rushed out and started in pursuit of his late guest.

As he crossed Crowza Down it struck him he had no weapon either of offence or defence, so in case St. Just should show fight, he picked up some rocks of ironstone and put them in his pocket. As these rocks weighed several hundred pounds apiece they impeded his progress rather; but he got over the ground pretty quickly.

St. Breaga, who was watering her front garden and saw him go past, said afterwards that he was "Coos'n down the road like as if he were pisky led."

At last as he turned a bend in the road he caught sight of his quarry some little way on ahead. St. Just was afraid to travel too quickly for fear of breaking the teacups, and he also thought he was quite safe by now, so he was marching calmly along, humming the Furry Song, when he was suddenly brought up standing, by hearing someone shouting behind him.

He turned round to see St. Keverne flying after him, very much out of breath but evidently meaning business.

"Here, Just, you gashly thief, what have 'ee done with my cloam?" gasped the outraged Saint. St. Just thought that perhaps a soft answer might turn away wrath, so he tried the experiment.

"Aw, my dear, why, what are 'ee talking about? You'm mazed, I reckon."

The soft answer did not have the desired effect. "I don't want none of your gammut, hand over that cloam or I'll knack 'ee stiff," roared the now thoroughly roused Saint.

"Come over and fetch your dratted cloam," replied St. Just, putting himself in a wrestling attitude, the effect of which was somewhat marred by the bulging outlines of the tea-set in his pockets.

St. Keverne wasted no more words, but pulled out one of his rocks and hurled it at his opponent. It was a splendid shot and took effect just where the fourth button of St. Just's waistcoat would have been had he worn a waistcoat.

Even a Saint could not stand the effect of a heavy rock on top of cold pasty and figgy fuggen. St. Just doubled up in silent agony for a minute. Then, as his breath came slowly back to him, he dragged the source of all his trouble, the famous tea-set, out of his pockets, flung it down in the grass, and bolted off towards Marazion as fast as his damaged diaphragm would allow him. The battle was over, St. Keverne had conquered.

The victorious Saint took his success very calmly. He simply picked up his recaptured "cloam" and trotted home to the peaceful little village that still bears his name. But before leaving the battle-field he emptied his pockets of the rocks he had brought.

"And there they stand until this day to witness if I lie" and anyone who travels from Breage to Marazion may see them on the left hand side of the road.

And as a further proof of the truth of the legend, they are of an entirely different kind of stone to that of the neighbourhood they stand in; you must go to Crowza Down before you find any like it.

Although these rocks have been removed several times for agricultural purposes, yet the next morning always finds them back in their old place. And the name of this place is Tre-men-keverne.

Public opinion was so bitter against St. Just that he decided to leave home for a little while and went on a mission to the Saxons.

The chronicles do not state how many converts he made, but judging from the manners and customs of the modern Saxon, his mission seems to have been remarkably successful.

He returned home to end his days in peace, however, and died very much respected by all who knew him (St. Keverne excepted) in the year of grace 627.

R. H. Watson.

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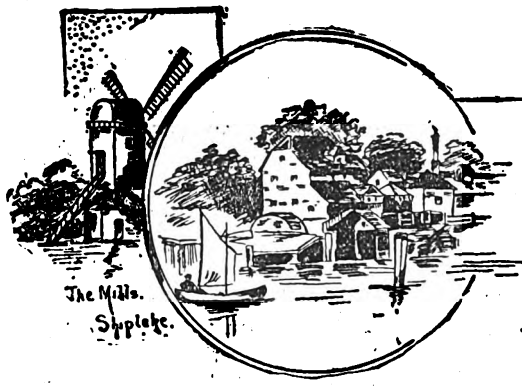

By Right of Conquest.

MISS TERRENCE, going down the road, watched the girl who was coming towards her.

There were three men with the girl, and only Lancaster was with Miss Terrence. However, as he was all the world to her, she was content. They met in front of Captain Lansing's quarters.

Lansing was a cynic who observed his kind and told the result of his observations. Such are deservedly unpopular, but command appreciative audiences that are the envy of the good-hearted. It was to an audience of the sort that he recounted the meeting, the same afternoon, when the band stopped playing and the invading hosts from the town had departed.

"Dorothy Terrence," he began, settling back to temporary repose, "Dorothy Terrence came up the road. She had Lancaster with her, and she was looking happy. Miss Leeds—the banker's daughter, you know—came down the road. She had Kent, and Dartmoor, and Fergusson with her, and she was looking like a celestial being.

"They were both dressed in white—but there was a difference. Mrs. Lansing says it lay in a silk foundation. Be that as it may, there was a wonderfully made hat, all drifts and mists, and sprays of white, on the head of Miss Leeds, and a fluffy-all-round sort of sunshade over that.

"Dorothy saw Miss Leeds from afar, but the latter did not see Dorothy. They came together in front of my quarters—'and I was there.' Dorothy moved to one side. It was her instant attitude, and I fear, prophetic. The woman who steps aside can always stay there. But all might have gone well, and this story might never have been told, if Kent had not indulged his vulgar propensity for introductions.

"Miss Leeds bestowed a sweet and transitory smile upon Miss Terrence; but Lancaster is not the best-looking fellow in the county for nothing. If any of you happen to share my good fortune of knowing her, you will understand what happened when she turned her eyes upon him with a trick she has of seeming to look into one's very soul. She has the most beautiful voice imaginable, and she brought that into play also. Dorothy stood it as long as she could, and then she tried to get him away. He never even heard her. If Miss Leeds had not gazed soul-searchingly at him, and told him that she must be going, but would see him at the ball, he doubtless would be standing there still, with Dorothy anxiously watching him. It will be worth going to the hop to see developments."

* * * * *

Lancaster stood at the door of the dressing-room and watched Miss Leeds, while he waited for Dorothy.

He watched her as the huddling feminine mass made way for her at the mirror and she stood unchallenged, leisurely touching her glimmering brown hair and pinning a great white rose upon her shoulder.

Dorothy waited at his side for fully five minutes before he saw her. Then she laughed mockingly up into his face, and wished that her laughter might have been a blow.

As soon as he could leave her he went running and sliding across the floor where Miss Leeds stood at bay before a besieging group. She was backed against the wall, and a decoration formed of swords was just above her head.

"There are only twenty dances," she kept repeating, "and I never divide."

Lancaster took two of his fellow-officers by the shoulders and put them out of his way. Miss Leeds looked into his eyes and smiled as, it seemed to him, no woman had ever smiled before. She put her card into his hand.

"The two with the crosses are the ones I promised you," she said. And as she had promised and he had asked nothing, his heart beat high with triumph.

Not that it was a case of love at first sight. He was in love with Dorothy. But the most faithful of men may pay the court she expects to a belle, and may allow himself to be flattered by her marked favour.

He could honestly, then, and for several weeks afterwards, give Dorothy the comfort she sorely needed, and say that he did not even think Miss Leeds beautiful. "She has style and charm," he passed judgment, "but not beauty. And she is a flirt." He meant that Miss Terrence should understand how entirely he abhorred that.

"Did she try to flirt when you called upon her?"

He had made a point of confessing the call directly it was made, and he thought it tactless of Dorothy to dwell upon it. He shrugged his shoulders. "She does that with every man."

It was a truth which he fully appreciated, but its feeble light no longer fell upon the path of duty when the time came that the sun of Miss Leeds's countenance shed its glow upon the highway of inclination. And yet she did her best to make it clear to him.

"Now, listen to something I mean to tell you," she said to him. She set down her tea-cup and leant towards him, with her elbows upon her knees and her chin

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between her soft, pink palms. Her eyes were looking straight into his, and they filled his heart with anticipation.

"Do you know that this is a risky game we are playing, and that we have been playing it for all it is worth this last fortnight or so?"

Lancaster knit his brows.

"It is not worth while to pretend you don't understand. We both know exactly what I mean. But I want to be sure we both know that it is only a game. I am not in earnest, and you must not be."

He gazed at her, speechless.

"I suppose you are thinking that the suggestion of serious intentions might come first from you," she said; "that may be your way of looking at it, but it is not mine. I don't care to let you have anything to reproach me with. I have had enough of that in the past. I am a hopeless flirt, you know. I go into the thing for the fun there is in it, and it is only fair to warn you."

She leant back in her chair and fell to watching the passers-by in the street and to biting at a piece of sugar, meditatively.

"If you will accept matters that way, we can have a very good time; if you don't, I have warned you; and the consequences—if there are any—must be on your own head."

Lancaster laughed rather weakly. "I accept the terms," he said. "It is understood that this is only a flirtation."

Which he explained to Dorothy at much length, but which she would not understand, and was so unreasonable about it as to break her engagement. Lancaster was deeply aggrieved and rather more deeply relieved. But it made one fact plain to him; that he was seriously in love with a girl who frankly told him that he was no more to her than a score had been before, than scores might be thereafter. And it was all in vain that he tried to change her.

"I warned you quite fairly," she reminded him. "I warned you," Miss Leeds repeated, "and nobody has suffered but yourself, unless"—she glanced at him with a quizzical little smile—"unless there was another girl?"

"There was another girl," he answered.

She shrugged her shoulders tolerantly. "That was to have been expected. Most problems of the heart are in the rule of three."

He frowned angrily and his lips curved in contempt. "Are you absolutely heartless? Have you no pity for her?"

"Not a great deal. If you were the sort to desert her in a fortnight for a girl who made not the slightest effort to win you, and who told you that she didn't love you, I think, upon the whole, that she is rather well rid of you."

Lancaster was biting his lips, and he was very angry. "She is a better woman than you," he said.

"That may be. But still," she laughed good-naturedly, "do you think I am bad enough for you to be passing judgment upon me?"

"I do; for you are doing the thing in a cold-blooded way, and I—I," he said despondently "have lost my head."

She smiled into his eyes. "You don't want to do that. It is such a handsome head. Lose your heart—it is not worth nearly so much."

He turned and faced her squarely. "I am likely to lose more than that," he burst out suddenly; "I am likely to lose my life."

"Oh! come," she said, "you are not contemplating falling on the point of your sword, or drowning yourself, or superinducing galloping consumption, are you? I have had men do a number of things for me, but never quite that."

"I am not contemplating doing any of those. I may be a good deal of a fool, but not enough of one to put an end to myself for a woman who cares nothing for me."

"Yet that has been done," she suggested.

"What I meant was, and what I intended to tell you when I asked you to come to-day, was that I am going to the Soudan. I have volunteered for service."

"When do you leave?" she asked coolly.

"The day after to-morrow. And now I am going to ask you to promise me something."

"If it is not something I cannot promise."

"Not that. I shall leave that until I come back—if I do come back. If I do not—in short, if I am killed"—she gave a little shudder; he saw that she did, and repeated—"if I am killed, I shall leave orders that my most treasured possession shall be sent to you."

"Do you mean your horse?"

"I mean the horse. It will make me as happy as it would seem I am meant to be, to know that if I die you will have her, and will ride her, and be kind to her. For you are fond of her, too."

Miss Leeds knitted her brows and considered. "And if I should not?" she said.

"She shall not go to any one else. I will have Dartmoor shoot her on the day that he hears my death confirmed."

Miss Leeds switched at the skirt of her habit. "Is there no one else who is fond of her also?"

"No," he answered.

"But that other girl you told me of?"

There flashed back upon Lancaster's memory how Dorothy had been wont to stand with her arms round the arched black neck, and her cheek against the warm, soft nose; how the mare had followed her tamely, as she would follow no other but himself. Then Miss Leeds turned the sun of her questioning eyes upon him. They were serious now, and their gentle light scattered the mists of memories. Dorothy only valued the horse for the master's sake, and the master is no longer anything to her.

"Will you do as I ask?"

A little ironical smile, the smile of an easy-going cynicism, curled her lips. "Unto the victor belong the spoils. Yes, if anything happens to you, I will take the horse. But you must not be rash. I believe I prefer your safety to it."

Three months afterwards, Miss Leeds, bending forward to stroke the glossy neck of the black mare that had belonged to Lieutenant Lancaster, turned and glanced up into the face of the man who was riding beside her.

"Who was that girl you bowed to near the gates—the one with the big sad eyes?"

"It was Dorothy Terrence," he told her. "Lancaster used once to be engaged to her."

"No wonder then she looked at me reproachfully."

She tried to laugh, but the laughter broke and she grew white as she set the mare into a gallop.

"There may, you know—" she called to him, mockingly, above the clatter of the hoofs—"there may lurk the adder of remorse among the victor's spoils."

G. Eaton.

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The Duel in the Salon.

AN INCIDENT IN THE CAREER OF A SOLDIER OF FRANCE.

A.M.

"*Peste!*" exclaimed de Crenan, making a gesture of impatience. "The gossips have had it their own way for twenty years, gentlemen; but if I must blab, I would rather two listeners like yourselves than a score like the cacklers of the Court or the idlers of the guardroom.

"Know then, *mes amis*, that 'twas dealt by a woman, and of all the wounds I bear is the only one which has had to go unavenged."

The blow doubtless had been aimed at the Chevalier's life, since it was between the neck and the shoulder; but the weapon had been held in awkward hands, and while failing to inflict the fatal wound, had deprived the Chevalier of the use of his left arm.

"Yes, gentlemen, it came from the hand of a woman; and, *ma foi*! after twenty years, I will say a dainty hand too, though——"

The sentence was completed by an expressive shrug of the Chevalier's shoulders.

"But fill your glasses, friends, for in the telling I'll warrant the story will prove dryer than it was in the doing; when, *morbleu*! I sweated like a bull and bled like a pig.

"It was nigh upon three weeks after the beating we gave the Spaniards at Rocroi that I arrived in Paris from Italy. I had obtained leave from Turenne.

"The Cardinal delayed to sign the patent confirming the right conceded me by Chavigny, to cut wood in the great forest between Poligny and Dôle.

"One evening towards the end of July, I was passing through the west gallery of the Palais when someone plucked me by the sleeve. Turning, I saw La Porte, first valet to the King.

"He had withdrawn from his doublet a letter, tied about with scarlet thread and secured with a broad seal. Leaning towards me he whispered a few words in my ear.

"When I found myself in the street, it struck me that I had engaged too quickly in an enterprise wherein I was nowise concerned. My consent to become La Porte's messenger had involved me in a plot against the Cardinal.

"So, while the clocks of the Faubourg were yet striking nine, I was ringing at the great gate of the Hôtel de Chevreuse.

"The Duchess received me in her boudoir. Evidently she was expecting a communication. But while she dallied to break the seal, she bestowed on me a glance full of piercing inquiry, and directed her Chamberlain to take charge of me till such time as the answer would be ready.

"Food was set before me, and wine; but my appetite was nigh spoilt by finding myself an object for the curiosity of a posse of ill-looking fellows, who, under pretext of searching for a comrade, entered the apartment, and after staring at me much longer than was agreeable, departed muttering together.

"At the end of an hour Madame sent for me.

"'You will remain in the Hôtel, monsieur, till morning,' said she, addressing me with great suavity. 'The streets are not safe after dark,' and with an imperious gesture of the hand she dismissed me.

"Some weeks after my journey to the Rue Dominique I had returned from the Palais after one of my fruitless interviews with the chief lackey of the minister, and sitting over my supper at Cormier's, I decided that the camp would agree better with my health than the Court.

"Calling for another bottle I began turning over the situation in my mind.

"As I lingered over the flagon, the sound of rough jesting and loud laughter reached me across the room.

"Presently, I could distinguish a voice mildly protesting that he was only a poor cloth merchant from Flanders, who was playing simply for amusement till *monsieur le capitaine* challenged him; and, having lost, doubled the stake and asked for his revenge.

"'Believe me, gentlemen,' the man ran on, '*le capitaine* is mistaken. Firm play, a level head, and a fair knowledge of the game is all the magic I have used. I am just an honest dealer in cloth from the town of Douay in Flanders seeking to sell my wares to the merchants of your good city of Paris.

"'*Parbleu!*' continued the mild voice. 'It is not I you should blame, monsieur; it is Dame Fortune, who, being a woman, has turned her back on the old love to show her face to the new.

"'To-day, monsieur, the game has run for the wand, to-morrow it may run for the sabre.'

"I strode up to the edge of the crowd to get a look at the speaker.

"He caught me peering over the shoulder of a big Burgundian in cross belt and jackboots, who had just entered the tavern and was attracted to the table by the noise.

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"While I was still wondering what it might mean, I heard my name called. Turning about, I saw a man in dark livery holding in his hand a letter.

"The letter was superscribed 'To the Chevalier de Crenan at the hostelry Le Cormier near St. Eustache,' and was sealed with black wax.

"At the same instant there was a movement at the table. The cloth merchant had risen. 'De Crenan?' he was saying, 'The Chevalier de Crenan? Surely it must be the gallant gentleman who rode with me two years ago from Cambray to Rheims, when but for his protection I should have fallen into the hands of the *spadassins* who infest the road.'

"In another moment he had joined me.

"'What is the meaning of the farce?' I whispered.

"'In good time, Chevalier,' he rejoined, 'in good time,' adding in undertones, wi h a glance at the man in livery, 'Does he wait for an answer?'

"Withdrawing to a corner I broke the seal.

"'If monsieur the Chevalier de Crenan' ran the missive 'desires to employ his sword in honourable service—to succour France and win distinction, he will follow the messenger who brings this letter.'

"I raised my eyes. The man was watching the big Burgundian who was showing off some fencing feat. I beckoned my friend the cloth merchant.

"'Lieutenant Clermont,' said I, 'we are old comrades. Doubtless you have some excellent reason for this disguise—'

"'The best in the world, Chevalier—'

"'Well, I will hear the story in a moment, but for the present do me the favour to read this.'

"'Ha—ha! my dear Chevalier,' chuckled the Lieutenant, returning me the letter. 'You want my opinion, eh? Well, there's either woman or war in it *mon ami*,' he continued, with an imperceptible shrug of the shoulders.

"'I had decided to-night,' said I, 'to quit Paris for Amblemont. Certes my sword hangs loose in the scabbard, and is always at the service of France; but I would fain know who purposes to employ it.'

"'Yon fellow is keeping his eye on us, Chevalier,' interposed the Lieutenant. 'I trow he suspects me of knowing better how to handle a long sword than an ellwand.'

"'Seriously, Clermont,' said I, 'can you advise me?'

"'You know my complexion, de Crenan. *Ma foi!* now that I've filled my purse from the pocket of that young sprig of le Ferrand's, my hand itches for the hilt again. I shall only have to provide myself with a horse and boots, *mon ami*; and if you've stomach for the venture we'll take the field in company, *mon camarade*.'

"'Your sword?' I inquired.

"'Is here, monsieur,' and he tapped significantly a roll of cloth, which he carried in his character of merchant of Flanders.

"'Very good then, Lieutenant,' said I, 'it wants still some minutes to ten. At the first stroke of the hour we will bid master "Chien" show the way. Meanwhile, my friend, you shall tell me what brings you in this guise.'

"Calling the messenger, I flung a coin upon the table, bade him order a cup of wine, and be ready to leave when he heard St. Eustache chime for the hour.

"'You must know, Chevalier,' began the Lieutenant, 'that at Tonnerre I fell into bad hands, and, to be brief, I reached Paris minus my horse and riding-boots, and with but two beggarly crowns at the bottom of my pocket. But wit and good judgment coming to my assistance, I converted the crowns into pistoles and myself into an honest Flanders merchant.

"'At Cormier's, I knew the company I should meet. I knew that Lieutenant Clermont of the Grey Musketeers would be less likely to fill his pouch than a booby of a cloth merchant from Douay in Flanders.

"'I began with staking single crowns, which I lost, and ended as you saw, with a hundred pistoles, which I won; and that, Chevalier, is the whole story,' concluded the Lieutenant with a roguish twinkle in his eye, 'and there is St. Eustache preparing to strike, and your man making ready to leave.'

"We rose on the instant and followed the man out.

"Proceeding along the Rue des Prouvaires we took the direction of the Louvre.

"Clermont, elated with his winnings and prompted by the prospect of an adventure in front of him, struck at once into a merry tale.

"We were both laughing at the device by which the Abbess of Chelles outwitted the Cardinal, when suddenly the roll of cloth which ensheathed my companion's blade was struck from beneath his arm, while a blow from the butt of a musket was dealt him between the shoulders. At the same instant I felt myself seized from behind by two powerful arms, which gripped me firmly by the wrists, while I was pushed forwards towards a coach that came out of a side street, and drew up at the junction of the thoroughfares.

"Hearing the clash of steel, I managed by great effort to turn my head. Clermont had recovered his weapon and was engaged with the big Burgundian.

"At that moment I was persuaded that I had seen the fellow exchanging signals with the messenger at Cormier's. I just caught the glint of a whirling sword, before a cowl, pulled roughly over my head, effectually blindfolded me; and, dragged along by half-a-dozen vigorous arms, I was thrust into the coach in which the men must have been concealed.

"As soon as they had me inside, the horses set off at a trot. My wrists were secured with small cords, and the cowl was removed; but the window-lattice being up, I was unable to distinguish the features of my captors.

"In what direction were we going? The Bastille? Vincennes? The grated windows, the enormous walls, the frowning turrets rose before me.

"I wondered what had become of Clermont. I sought for the motive which should explain the action. I could discover nothing. Then again I saw Madame's face peering diligently into mine.

"At last unable to bear it longer, I determined to ask whither they were taking me.

"'Gentlemen,' I said, in as careless a tone as I could muster. 'Be so good at least as to inform me at whose orders I am arrested.'

"A surly voice made answer:

"'Monsieur must remain silent, otherwise monsieur will compel us to use the gag.'

"Having no desire to taste the 'pear,' I obeyed the

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hint, for at the first sound of the fellow's voice a cold sweat broke out upon me.

"Where had I heard that voice before? I had laughed then, I remembered. Open danger had no terror for me.

"Three years before, when serving in the guards of the Prince de Condé, I had received orders to follow and overtake a certain person who had left Paris for Nanci with letters for the Duc de Lorraine. These letters I was to bring back.

"The man was said to be accompanied by only a single comrade; and, as I was instructed to take with me four men, it seemed there would be little difficulty in accomplishing the task.

"I came up with the quarry at a hamlet some few leagues beyond Meaux; but instead of having only two men to deal with, there were four, and as one of my knaves had cast a shoe at Lagny we were equally matched. There was nothing for it but to fall on, and singling out the Duke's courier, which I did from the description furnished me in Paris, I rode straight at him. So sudden was the onset that he was unhorsed in a twinkling; and sword at throat I demanded the letters he was carrying to the Duc de Lorraine. With an oath he denied that he bore any letter or that he served the Duke.

"I proceeded to search him; he sneering the while and telling some tale of the Duke's messenger having passed through Meaux three hours before.

"Calling to one of my men who was searching the fellow's saddle-bags, I bade him rip up the saddle. But the rascal at that instant reaching for his cap which had fallen from him as he came to the ground, I made a snatch at it. The change in the rogue's countenance told me I had secured the prize. The letters were concealed in the lining.

"Unfortunately, as it fell out, the man carried other letters than the *billet doux* of Madame Vernet, and these also came into the hands of the Prince de Condé.

"But leaving almost immediately to join the King's forces in Italy, matters of greater moment thrust the Prince's affairs out of mind.

"All that it has taken so long to tell flashed through my brain in a single instant. The man I had pulled from his horse beyond Meaux, was the man whose voice had replied to me out of the depths of the carriage.

"Whilst I was still trying to digest the discovery, the coach stopped. Three raps given upon the panel were replied to, the cowl was hastily thrust over my head, and the coach went rumbling on through another street. Presently it stopped a second time, the door was flung open and I was bidden to alight.

"Passing through a wicket in dead silence, we traversed a large courtyard, eventually reaching the foot of a flight of stairs which I was bidden to mount. At the top we seemed to come out on a sort of gallery.

"Suddenly a bell sounded close at hand. The cords which bound my wrists were removed. I was hurried along. The hood was pulled from my head, and I found myself in a small ante-chamber lighted by a solitary candle. With me were four men at arms, whose faces for all they told might have been cast in metal. At the same moment a slip door opening noiselessly in the wall disclosed a vast *salon* beyond.

"My guards motioned me forward, the door closed silently behind us; two of the men posting themselves in front of it, while their comrades escorted me to a long narrow table on which six candles of perfumed wax were burning in silver candlesticks. Across the further end of the chamber was stretched a heavy curtain of purple damask. I had just reached the table, when, the curtain parting in the middle, two cavaliers in masks advanced into the room.

"'Chevalier,' said the taller of the two, addressing me without preface or apology. 'I have questions to ask. Be careful how you answer. Do you remember a journey which a certain gentleman in the guards of the Prince de Condé undertook on a night in the year 1640?'

"'Pardon, monsieur,' I replied. 'Is it forbidden to know in whose presence I have the honour of standing?'

"Now I was satisfied that the man who had spoken was not the Duc de Lorraine; moreover, from the elegance of the hands as well as by the diminutiveness of the daintily shod feet, I was convinced that his companion was a woman.

"'It matters nothing. Answer the question.'

"'I remember,' I answered shortly.

"'At Meaux you robbed a courier of his letters?'

"'As a soldier, monsieur, I obeyed——'

"'You trifle with the question,' he broke out fiercely. 'When you performed that service for your employer, Chevalier, you condemned an unfortunate son of *la belle France* to a dungeon in Angoulême'—I knew then that he was de Châteauneuf—'and imperilled the life of a woman powerful enough to be feared by the great Cardinal.'

"'The correspondence of Madame Vernet with the Duc de Lorraine might possess some interest for the Prince de Condé; but the letters of Marie Michou were not exactly *billets-doux*, Chevalier.'

"'Marie Michou?' said I. 'You mean the Duchess de Chevreuse, Marquis?'

A slight movement came from the slim, silent form at the table.

"'Monsieur,' I said, impressed that the silent mask was no other than Madame de Chevreuse herself. 'I had lately the honour to be the bearer of a message to the Duchess——'

"'And Madame failed not to afford you the protection of her roof.'

"'My comprehension must be at fault, Marquis.'

"'I will assist it. Grosjean, Lorraine's courier was in the courtyard. Is that enough, monsieur?'

"'Madame may very well have had her reasons,' I answered sulkily. 'I came from La Porte.'

"'*Diable!* Does the Duchess then owe *you* protection?—a cut-throat in the pay of Condé. *Pasque-dieu!*' he thundered, 'the Duchess owes you nothing—nothing monsieur, but a short shrift and a——' he stopped abruptly, and glared at me through the eye-holes in his mask. 'Listen, monsieur' he began again, 'the overtures between the Palais and the Hôtel de Chevreuse are broken off, and Madame finds herself to-day in gravest peril. The letters of Marie Michou, which the Chevalier de Crenan handed to his master the Prince de Condé, are in the private cabinet of Cardinal Mazarin. They must be recovered.'

"'Pardon me, monsieur, if I fail to comprehend.'

"'*Ganache!*' he cried, stamping his foot. I remained silent.

"'Monsieur,' continued the Marquis, speaking thickly. 'The Hôtel has failed. The Palais has triumphed. At any moment Madame may receive a *lettre de cachet*.'

"'Monsieur, you misapprehend——'

"'Not at all—not at all!' he interrupted. 'The letters must be recovered.'

"'*Nom de Dieu!*' I exclaimed. 'How——?'

"'Will you swear, on the breviary?' he shouted.

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'Will you swear, monsieur, to obey faithfully the instructions Madame will——'

"'No, monsieur,' I said stoutly, wishing to end the business. 'I obey none but the King. I have no reason to love his eminence; but I refuse to soil my hands for an enemy of the Prince.'

"'Varlet!' he roared. 'Will not the mischief you have done content you, but you must add insult to injury? Madame——'

"'I spoke of the Marquis de Châteauneuf, monsieur,' answered I coldly.

"'—Ssh! The Duchess, madman! The Duchess! The Marquis asks nothing from you. Does the Chevalier de Crenan refuse reparation to a lady?'

"'Duchess or Marquis, methinks 'tis the same thing, monsieur.'

"The silent figure clutched him by the arm.

"'*Un outrage*' he exclaimed hotly. 'You must fight, Chevalier. *Nom d'un chien!* You shall beg your life of Madame upon your knees.'

"'At your service, Monsieur le Marquis,' said I, bowing. 'but your people having deprived me of my sword, and favoured me with these marks of attention'—I showed my wrists still red and swollen from the pressure of the cords—'I am sorry I cannot oblige you at the moment. To-morrow, monsieur, I shall be pleased to give you a meeting.'

"'To-morrow!' he sneered. 'You make very free with to-morrow. Here—and now, if you please, monsieur.'

"'Men do not fight duels in a salon, and by candle-light,' I answered with a touch of scorn.

"'We will set the fashion, Chevalier.'

"'Or without seconds and in the presence of a woman, Marquis.'

"'*Morts diables!*' he roared, and unlocking a cabinet flung upon the table three rapiers.

"'Choose, monsieur, choose!'

"'And if I refuse?'

"'I will have you beaten by the lackeys and dragged through the kennels.'

"'Pardon, monsieur!' I said tartly, picking up a weapon at hazard.

"Across the table the Marquis eyed me keenly.

"'We are not here to amuse ourselves, Chevalier.'

"'You keep the business waiting, Marquis,' said I, bringing my sword to the guard.

"'You are in a great hurry to be killed,' he rejoined in his gibing fashion.

"'It is for that purpose I have been brought here,' I retorted. 'You are well served, Marquis, by your cowardly gang of hired assassins. But I am a soldier, monsieur; and a soldier does not betray the man whose bread he has eaten and whose badge he has worn. You have the advantage of me, Marquis.'

"'*Mon Dieu!*' cried a shrill voice in anger. 'But I will stop the mouth of this *polisson*,' and snatching up the weapon which lay in waiting on the table, the silent mask rushed in upon me with avid impetuosity.

"But in a twinkling the Marquis had planted himself in front of me; while I, mistrusting the intentions of the lady, retreated till I had the protection of the wall at my back.

"We lunged and parried and returned upon each other.

"The sweat stood in great drops upon my brow. My wrist, stiff and weak from the bonds which had bound it, burnt as if clasped by a bracelet of fire.

"The Duchess followed each pass with glittering eyes.

"Once, I slit his doublet, and I saw the rapier tremble in Madame's hand.

"Once, I pricked his forearm, and Madame made to run in on me; but the Marquis waved her aside.

"My wrist, which had lost its suppleness, was fast losing its power. I was no longer able to force down my opponent's blade far enough to give me a chance for his breast.

"I fought on doggedly, never taking my eyes off the other's point; but never doubting how the affair would end. I was not to escape.

"Within the apartment, all was silent, save for the clash of steel upon steel.

"My head, however, was full of strange noises—a confused medley of sounds. Whether penetrating from without or merely springing from the tension within, I was ignorant. The business in hand required all my attention.

"The next pass however brought the explanation.

"The Marquis, making a determined effort to run me through, suddenly staggered and fell, his weapon dropping from his grasp as he came to the floor—at the same instant the reflection of flames was seen through the curtained windows of the apartment, the crash of a thunderbolt broke over the hotel, and I was aware of a stinging sensation in my left shoulder. It was Madame's rapier.

"Doubtless, the Duchess supposed the Marquis to have fallen to my weapon; whereas, he had received a shock from the lightning which had fired the building.

"In a moment the chamber seemed to grow crowded. There was a sound of many voices. The north wing was in flames.

"I have a remembrance of hearing someone say, 'Throw this *canaille* in the gutter.' Then I must have lost consciousness.

"When I came to myself I was in my old quarters at Cormier's. Clermont, who had beaten off the Burgundian, had found me, bleeding and senseless, on the causey of the Rue Dominique.

"I was nigh done for, but Youth—divine Youth, messieurs, denied the fall; and, on the last day of October we set out to join the King's army at Colmar.

"Gentlemen!—the flagon's empty."

H. Hunter.

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Was He a Hero?

I knew Louis Mayne very well in the old student days when we used to take our meals together.

Louis had the deep eyes, the pale complexion, and the long and dishevelled hair of all those young men who came to town from the country to conquer glory.

He was a writer. I soon found his name in weekly journals and reviews, and then he began to write those short and exquisite sketches which have made his reputation. Thus five years passed, when I met him one day in the editor's office of a journal for which I worked.

Each of us was as much pleased as the other at thus meeting again; and after the first, "What! is that you? Is that you?" we stood facing each other, shaking hands and exposing, in a laugh of cordial delight, our teeth, which in old times we used to exercise on the same crust of poverty. He had not changed. He had not even sacrificed his long hair, which he threw back with the graceful movement of a horse who tosses his mane.

Only he had the clear complexion and calm eye of a contented man, and his slim figure was clad in most fashionable costume.

"We won't drift apart again, will we?" said he affectionately, taking me by the arm; and he led me to the Embankment gardens, where the April sun gilded the young leaves of the trees.

Ah, happy day! How we exhausted the "Don't you remember?" "Don't you remember the fried eggs which tasted of straw, and the dreadful rice milk, the melancholy air of your landlady, and the German who used to pawn his watch every three months?"

Those days of hardship for Louis were finished. He had from afar applauded my success, as I had watched his. But one thing I did not know, and that was that he had married a woman whom he adored, and that he had a charming little girl.

"Come and see them; you shall dine with me."

I let myself be persuaded, and he took me off to a pretty suburb, where he lived in a cottage among the trees. There everything made you welcome. No sooner had we opened the door of the garden than a young dog frisked about our feet.

"Down, Dick! He will soil your clothes."

But at the sound of the bell Mrs. Mayne appeared at the steps with her little daughter in her arms. An imposing and beautiful blonde, her well-moulded figure wrapped in a blue gown.

"Put on a plate more. I've an old friend with me."

And the happy father, caressing his little girl, showed me all over his establishment—the dining room, prettily decorated with freshly-cut flowers; the study abounding in books, with its window opening out on the green turf, so that a puff of wind had strewn with rose leaves the printers' proofs which were scattered on the table.

"This is only a beginning, you know. It wasn't so long ago that we were working for three halfpence a line."

And while I luxuriated under a blossoming Judas tree which I saw in the garden, Mayne, at ease in his home, had slipped into his working coat, put on his slippers, and, lying on his sofa, caught little Helen up in his arms to toss her in the air—"Houp la! Houp la!"

I do not remember ever to have had a more perfect impression of contentment. We dined pleasantly—two good courses, that was all; a dinner without pretence.

The charming wife presided with a bright smile, having her child by her side in a high chair. She spoke but little, but her sweet and intelligent attention followed our light and paradoxical chat, the good-humoured fooling of men of letters, and at the dessert she took a rose from the bouquet which ornamented the table, and placed it in her hair near her ear with supreme grace. She was indeed that lovely and silent friend whom a dreamer requires.

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We took our coffee in the study—they intended to furnish the drawing-room very soon with the price of a story to be published by Levy; then, as the evening was cool, a fire of sticks and twigs was built; and while we smoked Mayne and I, recalling old memories, the mistress of the house, holding on her knees little Helen now ready for bed, made her repeat her evening prayers, which the little one lisped, rubbing her little feet together before the warm flame.

Little Helen.

We saw each other again, often at first, then less frequently, the difficult and complicated life of literary labour taking us each his own way. So the years passed. We met, shook hands. "Everything going well?" "Splend dly." And that was all. Then, later, I found the name of Louis Mayne but rarely in the journals and periodicals. "Happy man; he is resting," I said to myself, remembering that he was spoken of as having made a small fortune. Finally, last autumn, I learnt that he was seriously ill.

I hurried to see him. He still lived at the pretty suburb; but on this sombre day of the last of November the little house seemed cold, and looked naked among the leafless trees. It seemed to me shrunken and diminished, like everything that we have not seen for a long time.

The dog was probably dead, for his bark no longer answered the sound of the bell when I passed the little gate and entered the garden, all strewn with dead leaves where the night's frost had withered the last chrysanthemums.

It was not his wife—she was absent—it was Helen who received me—Helen who had grown to be a big girl of fourteen, with an awkward manner. She opened for me the door of her father's study, and brusquely lifting her great black lashes turned on me a timid and distressed glance.

I found Mayne huddled in an easy chair in the corner of the fireplace, wrapped in a sort of dressing-gown, with grey locks streaking his long hair, and by the cold, clammy hand which he reached towards me, by the pallid face which he turned upon me, I knew that he was lost.

Horrible. I found in my unhappy friend that worn and ruined look which used to strike us formerly among the poor Poles we used to see.

"Ah, well, old man, things are not going well?"

"Deucedly bad, my boy," he answered.

Mayne, looking at me, seemed to pity my efforts.

I was silent.

"Look," said he, pointing to his table; "see my desk. For six months I have not been able to write."

I made a new attempt to revive him. Die, at his age. Nonsense. He wasn't taking care of himself. He must pass the winter in the south; drink a good draught of sunlight. He could. He was easy in his money matters.

But he stopped me, putting his hand on my arm.

"Listen," he said gravely. "We have seen each other seldom, but you are my oldest, perhaps my best friend. You have proved me pen in hand. Well, I am going to tell you something in confidence for you to keep to yourself unless it may serve on some occasion to discourage the young literary aspirants who bring their manuscripts to you—always a praiseworthy action.

"Yes, I have been successful. Yes, I have been paid a shilling a line. Yes I have made money, and there in that drawer are a certain number of yellow, green, and orange papers from which a coupon is clipped every six months, and which represent £200 of income. It is rare in our profession, and to gain that poor hoard I have been obliged to imitate the unsociable virtues of a miser, know how to deny a jewel to my wife, a dress to my daughter. But at last I have that money. And often said to myself, if I should die their bread is assured, and here is a little marriage portion for Helen! And I was content—I was proud.

"But for all that, my boy, it is necessary that I should not linger. Sickness is expensive, and already it has been necessary to sell one or two bonds from that drawer. To seek the sunlight as you suggest, to bask like a lizard in the tropics, one more bond must go, and there would not be enough to last to the end if I should wait for seven or eight years more, now that I can no longer write. Happily there is nothing to fear. But what I have suffered since I have been incapable of writing, and have felt my hoard of gold shrink and diminish in my hand like the 'Magic Skin' of Balzac, is frightful. Now you understand me, do you not? and you will no longer bid me take care of myself."

Fifteen days later some thirty of us followed the hearse which carried Louis Mayne to the cemetery. It had snowed the day before, and Dr. Arnold, the old frequenter of painter's studios, the friend and physician of the dead man, walking beside me, called in his brusque voice—

"Very commonplace, but always terrible, the contrast; a burial in the snow—black on white. The funeral of the poor. Brr!"

At last we came to the edge of the grave. The place and the time were sad. Under a cloudy sky the yew trees, swayed by the wind, threw down their burdens of melted snow. The bystanders had formed a circle, and were watching the grave diggers, who were lowering the coffin by cords.

Suddenly, as the burial service began, Dr. Arnold seized me by the arm and whispered in my ear:

"You know that he killed himself?"

I looked at him with astonishment. But he pointed to the group in black, composed of a pretty widow and her daughter, who were sobbing under their long veils and clasping each other in a tragic embrace, and he added:

"For them. Yes, for six months he threw all his medicine in the fire, and designedly committed all sorts of imprudences. He confessed it to me before his death. I had not understood it at all—I, who had expected to prolong his life at least three years. The other night, when it was freezing cold, he left his window open, as if by forgetfulness, and was taken with bleeding at the lungs. Yes, that he might leave bread for those two women. The clergyman does not dream that he is blessing a suicide.

"But what of it, my good fellow? Mayne is in the paradise of the brave."

B. Lovell.

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The Mysterious Letters.

HAVE you ever, on making a call, thought you had hung your hat up on the hall rack, and when leaving sought there vainly for the very hat which, perhaps, you were holding in your hand? If you have, you know how unpleasant this little trick of your brain jarred your reason, in spite of your voluntary apology that "it was only a mistake, a trifling, absent-minded mistake, after all."

It was all because of just such a little mistake on the part of Mrs. Starr, that foolish persons who postulate "marriage is a failure" used to point triumphantly at Starr and his wife.

Still, when they were joined together for better or for worse, no couple could have been more devotedly in love with one another than they were. This forms a rather sad, but, I think, profitable little story.

Now that the principals concerned are dead and gone, the physician who attended Mrs. Starr says I am at liberty to tell the tale. He laughs, as he is entitled to, at the construction I put upon the facts, but inconsistently evades sitting in judgment on the case.

Men remember Mrs. Starr as the beautiful Miss Snell, for her face in those days was a face that no man could quite forget. She was the most utterly ruthless coquette of her day. The family means, in her generation, had fallen far below what was necessary to keep up the prestige of the family name.

Her father and mother never ceased to lament that fact, and Miss Snell was dutifully impressed in her early girlhood with the fact that her beauty must win back the departed family glories by social achievements. How well it did everybody knows.

By a mere coincidence, among the persons chained by her smiles was a boy who did not have much of anything but a naval commission, some brass buttons, and a sword.

This business with the boy was quite unnecessary. Miss Snell had nothing to gain by winning the boy's love; still, she even went out of her way to do it. The boy avoided her because he knew she was unobtainable for him, and because the first time he looked into her eyes he knew, with but half a chance, he would love her very badly. Miss Snell knew it, too, but if the boy had not avoided her, she would not have done what she did.

She was engaged to another man at the time—it was her third—and she deliberately broke that engagement that she might be free to deal with the boy. This was most effectually accomplished.

He was a queer mixture of poet and sailor, the boy was, and Miss Snell was a little shocked at the tempest she invoked within him. There was something in his glorious avowal of love that made former protestations pale into insignificance. It carried her away for the moment, and she gave him her lips and she gave him her promise, knowing very well in her heart of hearts it was the old story of love on one side and submission on the other. But marriage on his pay was impossible, so the boy went off to his ship, and Miss Snell back to her triumphs in the social whirl of the city.

The letters that came to her from every port the boy's ship made, were rather remarkable. They were of a new species. The writer seemed to have an uncanny divination of everything the woman he loved did or thought. In spite of that, an immeasurable love breathed forth from every line. No man should write the things he wrote to any living woman.

At last a letter came from Honolulu that was so touching in its pathos, so abject in its devotion, and still so marvellously prophetic in its conception of Miss Snell's life, that she felt called upon to write him some truths. This was just about the time she met Starr, and fell a victim herself to the passion she had trifled with so often.

When the boy received her letter he went down to his quarters, and blew his brains out. For decency's sake the surgeon called it a pistol-cleaning accident, but he was brutal enough to send back a blood-splashed letter that he found all twisted up in the boy's hand to the woman who wrote it far away at home.

The night before the Starr-Snell nuptials Miss Snell did what all other girls would have done—religiously burnt all those fantastic, extravagant letters the boy had written her. It was rather peculiar that she found the red-stained letter which had been the boy's death warrant, and his last letter to her from Honolulu, lying together in her drawer apart from all the others, heaped carelessly in a compartment of her escritoire.

She did not remember putting them away among her laces and her bonbonnières, but there they were, so she took them over to the fire a little gingerly, and tossed them after their fellows into the dancing flames.

Then she sat down and watched them curl and crinkle in the eager, lapping flame, till the draught caught the feathery black ashes and carried them up the sooty chimney. Speculation on Miss Snell's thoughts at this time is, I think, entirely problematical.

Popular fancy has it that just before death, and just before marriage, one's thoughts grow rapt—abstracted, and that the faces of old loves, and the faces of old friends come to look in on one as they knew one in bygone days. So it is reasonable to suppose that, as Miss Snell languidly reposed in the glow of her bedroom hearth, among the faces that chased one another across her mental vision was the haggard, appealing face of the boy; this, however, it is not given to us to know.

The wedding on the following day was an event of social importance, and it came off with great *éclat*. But the crowds, and the music, and the flowers, and even the six charming Watteau shepherdesses with ribboned crooks, who were the bridesmaids, do not concern us here. Let us pass on.

Hardly had the couple returned from their wedding journey, when Starr called on the doctor, and told him he was worried about the health of his wife.

"Mrs. Starr," he said, "was in an unaccountably nervous and hysterical condition, and was growing more wan and hollow-eyed as each day went by."

The man of medicine went and looked at her, found

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that this was true, prescribed the usual remedies, and continued to visit her occasionally; but he did not learn the cause of her trouble till some time had expired, and, when he did learn, it was from Mrs. Starr's own lips that part of it came, Starr himself not only corroborating in general all she said, but adding a great deal more.

The first evening of their honeymoon, when unpacking her things, Mrs. Starr was rather unnerved to find all covered up among the dainty feminine belongings in the tray of her trunk the two identical love letters that she had watched burn and fly up the black chimney flue. Unexplainable as their presence was, she could only put it down to a mistaken impression on her part, and she made certain to destroy them this time beyond question or doubt.

Into a gas jet she hastily thrust them, and a second time she watched the flame creep over the unwelcome letters, turning them into two charred black curls which fell in broken flakes on the floor, and there were ground into impalpable dust by two angry little heels. That this was not witnessed by her husband is almost unnecessary to add.

When Mrs. Starr found the very same letters in the very same place a day or so after, a thrill of alarm chilled her through and through. With sickening dread she tore them into a hundred fragments and threw them fearfully out of her window into the hurly-burly of a winter storm.

Although she became positively ill from her scare at the supernatural reappearance of the letters, she did not tell her husband about the matter, but, woman-like, tried to pray herself into the belief that it was only a mistake after all—a mere common, ordinary, everyday mistake. And this was wrong.

In a short time the couple returned, and Mrs. Starr's condition so alarmed her husband that he called on her physician. She kept the cause of her trouble entirely secret, but how often she found and destroyed those two mysterious letters during this time is not known.

Physically she rapidly grew worse, though her husband showered on her a wealth of loving care and affection. Her peace of mind and her happiness were fast becoming utterly destroyed.

One night Starr awoke, and in the half light he saw the white-robed figure of his wife on her knees before an open drawer. She seemed to be holding something in her hands, which she was regarding with a look of terror.

"What is wrong, sweetheart? Does anything trouble you?" asked Starr soothingly.

At the sound of her husband's voice the woman carried her hands to her face and rose. Then she tottered over towards him, repeating mechanically, in a low whisper of despair:

"Oh, Heaven! Oh, Heaven!"

When she reached her couch she sank back on her pillows, choking with dry, tearless sobs.

Starr rose and turned on the light, and looked to see what had alarmed his wife; in vain, for there was nothing there. All that a loving man could do to compose and quiet her, he did.

In the lull that followed she told him something—not all—of the strange reappearances of those letters, just enough to startle him and arouse his curiosity; but he was wise enough at the time not to ask to see them or ask anything else about them. Nevertheless, he determined to watch very carefully for their next manifestation and use drastic means for their disposal.

Mrs. Starr had found that attempts to destroy those letters were utterly useless, for they always came back, and besides, hating and loathing them as she did, they began to exert over her mind a marvellous fascination. Though she quivered when she saw the muddy red blots on her letter, she craved to look into it, and she was no more content with a mere glance at its Honolulu post mark than at the neat letter-head of the other. So she commenced to read them—lingeringly, feeling all the while that at every word she read she was driving another nail into the coffin of her happiness.

This harrowing desire to contemplate those letters came to her most often at night, and then she would rise from her husband's side, steal over to her drawer, and mumble away in the dim yellow light the things the Boy wrote to her before she killed him.

Of course, her husband saw her doing this one night, and he went over to her with loving caresses, which, strange to say, she recoiled from as if they had been blows.

Perhaps that was why Starr foolishly asked her why she was standing there muttering those nonsensical things. In answer she held her hands in front of his face—just exactly as you would hold a letter for a person to read—and Starr saw there was absolutely nothing in her hands; but he did not say so to her.

He asked her quietly to read the letter to him, and thereby wrought his own and her undoing.

Mrs. Starr read the letters to him—both of them—from date to superscription, in a low metallic monotone, for all the world as if the real writing were in her hands.

The letter from the boy came first, and before two lines were read Starr knew—what only a few people did know—that his wife had given her pledge and her kisses to the boy long before she gave them to himself.

The boy said: "he went down on his knees in his cabin at night and prayed that he might die, if that would only make the happiness of the woman he loved." Oh, that was not all he said. He wrote things that it is better not to mention or print. And he told of long, clinging kisses given and taken, "kisses that had taught him why it is the world is sometimes bartered for a woman's kiss."

It was too much for poor Starr—too much for any husband to hear from any wife's lips—and because it was only a phantom, a memory, that could not be explained, it seemed ever so much the worse.

When Mrs. Starr finished reading her reply to the boy's letter, her husband had collapsed, and was only semi-conscious. Then she bent down and electrified him by pointing with her finger to certain round brown splashes, unseen by him, which she whispered were "Blood! blood!"

Starr gave a great cry and rushed out of the bedroom. Half-an-hour later, white and shaking, he told the doctor his wife was mad, and added, rather brokenly, that he felt he "could never bear to see her again."

Up to the very last Mrs. Starr continued to find those letters every day. She found them hidden under dainty, fragrant *lingerie* in her drawer, under her pillow at night, and sometimes even in the very bosom of the dress she wore. In agony she was doomed to read them over and over again, till she could read no more.

There are people who do not know why Starr and his wife drifted away from one another, and who are inclined to call Starr a brute.

But the saddest part of it all is this: for Starr's sake the woman would have gone on her hands and knees through all the world—so much I know.

E. Biggs.

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A LIVING TOMB.

FOUR years ago I spent the summer in France. July found me in the Department of Calvados, Normandy, at a village near Caen, a mine of antiquities. The curé, Father Aloysius, showed me everything which he thought would interest a stranger. As some slight return for his kindness I asked him to lunch with me. We went to the hotel.

Very old, with snowy hair, and face as ruddy as a pippin of his province, my companion carried sunshine wherever he went. He had a cheery greeting for all, and it was easy to see that all venerated him.

"Yes, monsieur, my people know me," he said in answer to some remark. "Forty-seven years I have laboured among them. It is almost a lifetime. The church has called me often; my friends say I might have been a bishop, but I could not leave."

A group of men, excitedly gesticulating, stood round the hotel door. They came to meet us hurriedly.

"Have you heard, Father—have you heard?" they cried.

"No, my friends," he answered; "what is the news?"

Several spoke at once, but this is the gist of what they said:

"You know the old castle is sold? To a rich bourgeois—yes? The place is tumbling down—he will have it repaired. Pierre Valois and Jean Prudhomme went with their tools this morning—to take down some masonry. M. Grousset—the purchaser—he was there, too. They found a skeleton—in the wall!"

"Sacred Name!" cried the priest, white as a corpse. "At Vallon? No! Not a mile away? Impossible!"

"It is true."

Father Aloysius turned to me. He shook like a man with the ague.

"You will pardon me, monsieur? I must go at once. This is a great discovery. I will verify it and return."

He hastened away; I lunched alone.

It was four o'clock when he came back, still pale and very subdued.

"I have been rude," he said. "I crave again a thousand pardons. I could not tear myself away. Forty-seven years I have sought what chance has brought to light to-day. You shall hear.

"Forty-seven years ago I came to this village. I had been asked to take charge of it in the absence of the curé. It was my second night here—so dark one could not see one's hand. I was tired, I had been visiting the sick. I lay down in my soutane and slept. A loud knocking awoke me.

"'Who is there?' I cried.

"'Friends of the Church,' a voice answered.

"I opened the door; two men entered, tall and well-dressed. I could not see their faces, they wore masks.

"'Are you the curé?' said the man who had answered me—a foreigner by his accent.

"I explained.

"'No matter,' he said, 'one priest is as good as another. A man is dying; he wishes to receive absolution; will you go?'

"I hesitated. 'Will you explain why you wear those masks?' I said.

"He laughed. 'It is the simplest thing in the world—we do not wish to be recognised. Now will you go? Your poor will benefit.'

"'I am ready,' I replied.

"A carriage stood outside the door; my poor lamp revealed it. I entered it with the spokesman. The other mounted the box. Many times the carriage turned completely round.

"'Does your companion not know the way?' I asked.

"'It is very dark,' was the reply.

"I have been reminded of the circumstance, apparently trivial, to-day. At the time I expected nothing. I know now that the carriage was turned to confuse me. My companion was taciturn. He answered me 'no'; 'yes.'

"Many miles we travelled—twenty or more. Two hours we had journeyed when the carriage stopped in a paved yard.

"'We alight here,' said my companion.

"I followed him; the coachman descended. I could not see him, I could not distinguish the carriage.

"'Is it necessary to blindfold the priest?' he asked.

"'No,' was the reply.

"I was disquieted, but not afraid. A poor monk need not fear robbers.

"'Give me your hand,' said my fellow traveller.

"I obeyed. He led me along a passage between high walls; the sounds told me. We crossed another paved yard, and climbed a stone staircase. The apartment we entered was flagged. My guide halted.

"'The priest is here,' he said in a loud voice. I saw nothing. His voice echoed as if in an empty room of vast size.

"'Where is the dying man?' I asked.

"Stand close to the wall.'

"He placed me in position. Cold air struck my face—a draught. There was a cavity.

"'The priest is here,' my guide repeated.

"Then I heard another voice, very faint, as of a man near death. 'Is he alone?' it said.

"'No,' I answered. 'One of the men who brought me here stands before me.'

"The poor wretch sighed.

"'I will retire,' said my companion. His footsteps sounded like those of one walking in a vault. The dying man heard.

"'You are alone now,' he said.

"'Yes,' I answered; 'speak on.'

"He did so. 'Ah! monsieur. I thought I was dreaming.

"'I am near death. I need the last rites of the Church,' he said.

"'Confess your sins,' I answered.

"'My sins are trivial,' he returned. 'I would speak of a great crime. I occupy a cell twice the width of my body—I know not where. I am condemned to die of starvation—I know not why. I have never injured a fellow creature.'

"My blood boiled.

"'Speak on,' I repeated.

"'My name is Jules Davoust,' he resumed. 'I am of Caen, and well known. I was a happy man until I met Sophia Polinski, ay, afterwards I was happy. She is Polish, of noble family; so she told me. Ah! father, she is beautiful. I loved her—I love her still. She returned my passion. I am only a tradesman, but we

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were married; two months of bliss were mine. One day she came to me trembling. "Fly," she said, "fly at once!" She would not explain. I had my business, my little shop; I had done no wrong; I refused. That night she disappeared. Next day I received a note, written by her hand. She bade me meet her in the wood, at a secluded place known to us both. I went. She was not there. It was dark. I called her by name. Two men came up, seized and gagged me, forced me into a carriage, and brought me here. I am condemned without trial. My gaolers tell me that I must die, or a noble name will be dishonoured. There is nothing more. I was permitted to choose the manner of death. Aid me, if you can; but give me absolution now.'

"I absolved him. I bade him have courage. I assured him that he would be free in a few hours. My guide returned.

"'I have heard your words,' he said. 'You cannot aid him. If I thought you could, you would share his fate.'

"He took my hand, and led me to the carriage, entering with me. The coachman whipped his horses; they galloped. I pleaded for the poor man. My companion was dumb. I threatened him with the law. He answered not a word. I pictured the vengeance of an offended Providence; he was stone. I vowed to devote my life to the discovery and punishment of his crime; still not a word. But I have kept and will keep my vow. A faint grey light was growing in the east when we reached the curé's door. I alighted. A purse was thrust into my hand. The carriage disappeared.

"Two hours later the gendarmes were scouring the country. They discovered nothing. Seven days I passed visiting châteaux and houses to no purpose. Then I went to Caen. I found the home of Jules Davoust. Both he and his wife were missing. The neighbours described him, a very handsome man, incapable of committing a crime. His wife, they told me, was a beautiful woman with the air of a princess. She spoke French with a foreign accent, dressed in silk and satin and wore valuable jewels.

"The gendarmes wearied of the fruitless search, but I did not. I made my home here. I succeeded the curé. I mapped out the country and visited every château, save one, within a wide radius, every large house. Forty-seven years I have sought a clue. Come to the window."

I rose. Father Aloysius pointed to the old castle of Vallon, crowning a hill scarcely a mile distant.

"That is the château which I did not visit," he said. "It is so near, and I travelled many miles that night. There the tomb of Jules Davoust was discovered this morning. I have stood within it; it is a hole in the wall six feet high, by four wide. The stones behind which the poor wretch spoke to me bulged with the weight above, and the workmen pulled them down. The skeleton fell out. In my presence they replaced them. One stone, just the height of my head, was without mortar; it could have been removed easily. The two paved yards are there, the passage between the walls, the stone staircase, the big flagged room. I have no doubt at all. If the criminals are living they shall be brought to justice."

Twelve months afterwards I met Father Aloysius in Paris. He had just returned from Poland. An examination of the papers of the late owner of the château had resulted in the discovery that his grandfather had rented the place to a Polish gentleman who gave the name of Lubenski. The latter took it for a year, but at the end of six months apprised the proprietor that he no longer needed it.

"That is all we know," said the curé. "In Poland I learned nothing. Nor have the police been more successful."

"And the mystery is as far from being solved as ever?"

"Yes; I fear the truth will not be known until the day of judgment. I have imagined many things. The forty-eight years which have passed have been fruitful in curious reflections. I would dismiss the matter from my mind now if I could. But I fear that is impossible."

J. HARLAND.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS
GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☞ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 10 distribution must reach us by December 12th, addressed to The 10th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Seventh Distribution appears on page 760.

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A Fight with Fever.

A STORY OF FLORIDA.

"MILLY, can't you make that child leave off crying? I must finish ironing, 'cos Miss Mary told me to be sure and have 'em done by four o'clock, and I know by the way the sun is shining in that door it ain't far from that now. Take him down under the oak tree by the road to quiet him." Sarah hardly looked up from her ironing board, where lay the daintiest and snowiest of white wrappers, receiving the finishing touches from her skilful iron.

The kitchen was at torrid heat. In the great chimney glowed the wood fire, with the smoothing irons heating in front. Overhead was the burning afternoon heat of that August sun. Sarah stopped her ironing just a moment and wiped the perspiration from her brow. "You ain't a bit like your mother, my girl, you're too slow."

Milly, the girl thus spoken to, a child about eleven years old, reluctantly rose and picked up the crying child. She went down the path to a large spreading oak tree, which cast its cool, refreshing shade over the dusty road. She deposited the baby on the parched grass and proceeded to gather up leaves and twigs for his amusement. His cries were soon turned into joyful chatter, thanks to the change from the hot kitchen to the shade and open air.

Soon Milly's attention was attracted by the approaching rumble of what she thought was a carriage, with tall black plumes all over it. It was a hearse. With open mouth and wide-stretched eyes, she gazed curiously on.

The driver came up under the mighty oak and checked the heated horses to a halt. He inquired of the child how far it was to Rugton.

"I say, my girl, run and bring me a drink of water from the house yonder. I am nearly perished."

Milly's astonishment lent wings to her usually dilatory feet.

She ran back to the house for the water, and while there saw that Sarah had finished ironing and was gone with the clothes.

The driver drank long and often from Milly's jug until his thirst was fully appeased. Again taking his seat, the panting horses were given a crack of the whip and the hearse soon passed out of sight, leaving Milly standing by the roadside enveloped in a cloud of dust.

In the meantime Sarah, with her basket of clothes, delivered the result of her labours to Mrs. Fort, or "Miss Mary," as she was lovingly called.

"I'll put away the clothes this evening, and you can come for your basket and money in the morning, Sarah."

"Yes, ma'am, that's all right."

After a long conversation Sarah started to go, but stopped at the door to say:

"Miss Mary, ain't you got none of them good preserve figs? I've been feeling uncommonly poorly to-day and want something to put a good taste in my mouth."

Mrs. Fort knew what that meant and gave to her bountifully from the delicacies of the larder. The woman had practically been reared in Mrs. Fort's family and was a privileged servant.

Since Mrs. Fort had been widowed she looked upon Sarah as more than a servant.

She had also become her trusted nurse.

Promptly the next morning Sarah went for her basket and money.

"Milly was telling me about a curious carriage stopping down by the big oak tree for the hosses to rest yistiddy. The man asked her for a drink of water."

"Why that must have been the hearse taking old Mrs. Tapley to her home to be buried."

Just then a tall, manly boy came running in and heartily gave Mrs. Fort a loving kiss.

It was Dan, her fifteen-year-old son.

"Mr. Meade says old Mrs. Tapley died of yellow fever. He just received a telegram from the place where she died. It has recently been pronounced epidemic there."

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"Why, Sarah, if that is so, Milly and your baby will take it," said Mrs. Fort, who unselfishly always thought first of others.

Those who have never experienced yellow fever epidemic abroad can hardly realise the wild panic. All who can,

Young Dan Fort and Mr. Meade stood guard together one day.

flee as from certain death. Sorrow and fear overwhelm the land.

But yellow fever moves majestically on, conquering and slaying thousands. Short quarantines are instituted on the public roads. All the men have to serve in turn at the picket.

It so happened that young Dan Fort and Mr. Meade stood guard together one day. Mr. Meade was known everywhere as a man fond of his drams.

"Dan, if you will drink plenty of whisky, you won't have yellow fever," said Meade passing his flask over to Dan.

Dan refused.

"Why, you're a fool, boy. Right here in the face of yellow jack, to refuse to drink! when some of your best medical authorities say it is a safeguard against yellow fever!"

Still Dan rejected the whisky. Meade was chagrined after many fruitless attempts.

In the course of a few days little Milly took yellow fever. Mrs. Fort was in the cabin with food and medicine daily until herself stricken. She had been in poor health for years. Her case had puzzled many doctors until she had left them. At times she would faint away and the pale, cold form would seem almost lifeless. Hours would pass away before Sarah could restore her. The faithful woman had served her thus as companion, nurse and doctor.

On the fifth day after her attack the yellow fever expert pronounced Mrs. Fort dead. Orders were given for her to be buried at once. Such was the alarm and confusion that none were present but the immediate family. Disease germs liberate rapidly from a corpse, increasing the danger, so that the dead are required to be buried immediately.

Sarah was indignant that her beloved "Miss Mary" should be buried without religious ceremony. Mrs. Fort lay there still and cold. For the first time in her life Sarah felt the weight of responsibility. If she could just ask Miss Mary what to do—but the overwhelming grief that she would have that dear counsellor no more, completely engulfed her. Then a sudden thought leapt through her brain. Suppose Mrs. Fort was not dead! Hadn't she often fainted and been cold and unconscious for hours! Oh, Heavens! If they were to bury her alive!

Her brain was maddened between sorrow and this apprehension. Dan came to her relief.

"We cannot bury mother to-day. The coffin has been sent. But, Sarah, my mother shall not be buried until you are satisfied that she is dead," declared Dan.

His grief was momentarily cast aside at the possibility of his mother being buried while in what might be a death-like swoon. But no one would believe it and the orders were positive. So they, Sarah and her husband, the servants, and Dan, the son, agreed they would have a sham burial. Jack and Dan buried the coffin.

But Sarah took the body into one of the back rooms. She opened up the room where Mrs. Fort had been ill to make it appear that she was there no more. They intended, if she were really dead, to bury her at night and no one need ever be any the wiser.

Dan did not know much more. He was the next victim of yellow fever. Sarah had double work, as she dared not call in the yellow fever doctor now. But with her old-fashioned warm blankets and herbal concoctions she brought Dan through. Imagine his joy when he regained consciousness, and Sarah whispered:

"Don't let Miss Mary know. She is much better, but very weak."

Mrs. Fort never knew for months afterwards what a narrow escape she had had from being buried alive.

Meade was also stricken by "yellow jack." His body had been so long bound by drink that all earthly help could not avail.

He died at two o'clock one night.

When the frost came in the autumn, Dan Fort left for college. When he said good-bye to Sarah he placed a paper in her hand.

It was a deed to the cottage and land where she lived—a gift from his mother, presented in "consideration of faithfulness and love."

Arthur Stewart.

A NEW SERIAL

ENTITLED

SANDY CARMICHAEL

Will begin in the Christmas Number of

. . Short Stories. . .

It is by C. J. CUTCLIFFE HYNE,

Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle" in

PEARSON'S MAGAZINE.

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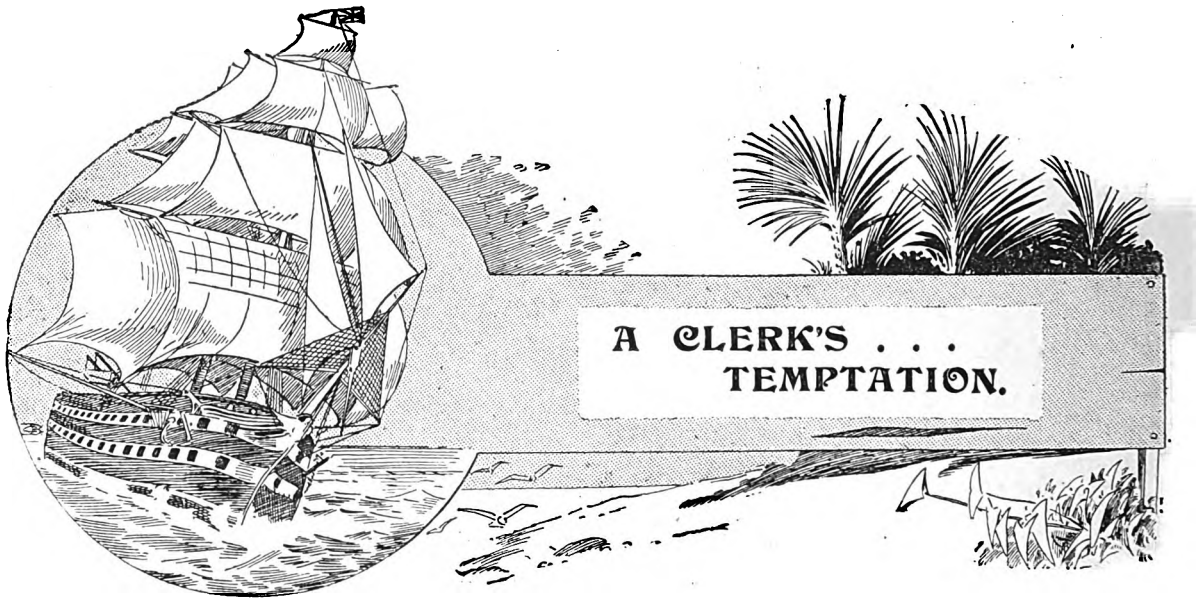

It was after ten o'clock in the evening, but up in the fifth story of one of the modern office buildings, Prebbles still sat on his high stool, stooped over his books.

Prebbles was assistant book-keeper for the Jones and Marriott Company, Ltd. The Jones and Marriott Company was a corporation, and corporations, it is commonly supposed, are soulless. This could not have been the case with the Jones and Marriott concern, for it had ground the soul out of Prebbles; and if it had not absorbed that soul into its ledgers, day-books and journals, where then was it?

Prebbles had been so long beneath the upper and the nether millstones that he had become a part of the machine, and if he spoke of *our* foundry, *our* output, or *our* business, it was not because he felt a pride in them, particularly, but because he considered himself a part of the foundry, the output and the business.

Prebbles was tall and meagre. Thirty shillings a week is no temptation to high living, and after one reduces this stipend by paying fares and laundry bills, and purchasing a decent suit of clothes, spring and autumn, not a great amount is left for maintaining the body. But thirty shillings was all the Jones and Marriott Company could pay, so Prebbles toiled meekly on, and soothed his feelings with the reflections that *our* business would not totter and go to the wall simply because he demanded a "rise" and stuck to it.

Prebbles' face was painfully thin and pale; his eyes abnormally large and unusually dull for so bright a clerk, while his tawny hair was scanty and tinged with grey. Yet he was only thirty-five. Was it possible that ten years before, when he had entered the service of his employers, his face had been round and flushed with health, his blue eyes gleaming with hope and ambition, and his locks soft and abundant and without a silver line? It had become a tradition with Prebbles that this was so; but the health, the hope and ambition, and all the rest, had been absorbed in half-yearly dividends of five per cent. An acute mind was required to argue this question back from result to cause, and Prebbles' mind had long since ceased to be acute in dealing with anything outside of debits and credits.

With a patient sigh, Prebbles closed the ledger over which he had been poring, and picked up from the desk a hastily scrawled note, which read:

> The Jones and Marriot Company, Ltd.
>
> Gentlemen,—Four pounds a week was not enough for one holding the responsible position with you that I held. I could not live on it. If you had recognised merit, and had rendered me a just equivalent, I should not have been compelled to steal from you in order to eke out a livelihood. One thousand pounds, I think, will cover the amount I embezzled. Had it not been for Prebbles this would never have been discovered. Thanks to your stupidity, you did not believe him when he hinted that something was wrong. This delay affords me an opportunity to make off with the contents of the cash-box, which I do at once. You may follow, but you cannot find me.
>
> John Mortimer.

Prebbles had found this note tucked under the door when he had returned to the office after eating his late tea.

He had read it over at least a dozen times. His first impulse was to carry it straightway to Mr. Jones, but Mr. Jones had told him to work that night and seek to verify his first suspicions concerning Mortimer.

In Prebble's eyes, Jones was the personification of business acumen, and it might be wrong to allow the note to sway him from an assigned task.

If Prebbles reasoned wrongly, it was not his fault. Ten years of grind had rendered it impossible for him to reason very clearly on anything not appertaining to his particular line of work. So he had delved into the books, settled all doubts, and now, for the last time, he was reading Mortimer's note.

Nothing was now in the way of his taking the note to

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Mr. Jones' house. Folding up the bit of paper, he placed it carefully in his waistcoat pocket, then he removed his cuff protectors and laid them in one corner of a certain drawer; after that, he washed his hands, brushed his tawny hair, put on his coat and hat, put the books in the safe, turned off the electric light and started for the door.

Prebbles, however, had a sudden thought as his hand touched the knob of the office door. Why not examine the cash-box and see if the money were gone from it? Possibly one of the first questions Mr. Jones would ask would be whether he had done this. If he could say he had, a word of commendation might be dropped for his benefit, and commendation, however slight, was dear to poor Prebbles' faithful heart.

Groping his way back, he turned on the light, opened the safe and the private drawer. It was not locked, and he lifted the cash-box. That was not locked either. He threw back the lid and looked within. Yes, the money was gone.

All that the box contained was some valuable papers inclosed in long envelopes.

From some unaccountable cause, this further proof of Mortimer's guilt launched Prebbles into a reminiscent mood. Prebbles rarely allowed himself to become reminiscent. It was always harrowing. Now, however, with Mortimer's ruin staring him in the face, he unconsciously climbed upon his stool and looked back over the past, while his thin, bony fingers crept absently among the papers in the cash-box.

Nine years before—nine ages it seemed to Prebbles—before hope had faded and ambition had quite taken wings, he had forgotten himself so far as to fall in love.

His soul was his own. He had loved humbly, but he had loved devotedly. How devotedly, sleepless nights, if they might speak, and falling tears, if the world might see them, would bear witness.

But Prebbles had a rival and the girl, who had not the tact to read a human heart as plain as Prebbles', chose the rival. She did it calmly and deliberately; and still, for Prebbles, night succeeded day, and winter followed summer as they had done in the past, when he had foolishly allowed himself to hope.

Time will soften grief, if it may not kill, and when one has a soul willing to sacrifice itself to the interests of others, treasured wrongs are apt to die with treasured memories, so that life becomes an entire blank.

Mortimer was Prebbles' old-time rival and, while Prebbles pitied Mortimer, his heart grew sick when he thought of Mortimer's deserted wife and children.

Strange how that thought touched a vital nerve in Prebbles' being! His ability to think, outside the well-worn groove, astonished him. How could he help Mortimer's wife?

With a pang he recalled that he was the indirect cause of Mortimer's disgrace. It was his work that had laid bare the embezzlement which, otherwise, might have remained undiscovered to the end of time. Ah! if he could help that deserted wife and her children! But thirty shillings a week——!

Prebbles put his elbow on the desk and rested his head on his hand. There was no unworthy thought in his heart; no wish that Mortimer might come to some bad end and his widow reconsider her unwise decision of nine years before. No! Something worldly had been aroused in Prebbles, but of such worldliness as seeking to profit by another's misfortune, he was as innocent as a babe.

Yet, if he were rich, if he could help Mortimer's wife anonymously——

He broke off his meditation with a shiver. He could scarcely believe his eyes. The hand that had been absently fumbling the papers in the cash-box was now clutching a packet of bank-notes. Prebbles rubbed his hand across his brow in a bewildered way and then examined the packet of notes.

One hundred pounds, just as it had come from the bank! Mortimer had not taken all the money in the cash-box, then.

This packet of notes was among the papers and had been overlooked. Prebbles was gratified. The company was one hundred pounds richer by Mortimer's oversight. This would prove a drop of comfort for Mr. Jones.

Delighted with the discovery, Prebbles dropped the notes into the box and closed the lid.

As he was about to replace the box in the safe, the devil entered his heart. He shut his eyes, and his hands suddenly began shaking as with a palsy. An instant later, he crouched over the box and glared about him.

Only the dark, shivering shadows were to be seen clinging to the corners of the room, crawling about the desks and chairs. He was alone! For the first time in ten long years his opportunity had come.

With a hoarse laugh that sounded like a wail from the depths of a tomb he threw open the lid of the box, clutched the notes and transferred them to his pocket.

"I have Mortimer's confession," muttered Prebbles, hoarsely; "he admits rifling the cash-box. He does not know that he overlooked this money, the company will not know! Mortimer took the contents of the cash-box and Mortimer has disappeared."

With sudden animation, he replaced the box in the safe, and closed the door.

There was a jaunty swing in his thin limbs as he started for the office door, his face was brighter, his eyes gleamed—ten years seemed to have fallen from his life. Opening the office door, he passed out, closing and locking it behind him. He rubbed his hands as he walked to the stairs to go away—away—where?

He was going into another world, into a world where every eye that looked at him would hold suspicion; into a world where he would shrink from the grasp of an honest hand; into a world whose confidence he had betrayed; into a world where life itself would be death and where death might be prayed for as a relief from his conscience, and prayed for in vain.

He halted; then he took a step forward and halted again.

Suddenly he turned and hurried back to the office at a run.

He tore open the office door like a madman; rushed in like a whirlwind; turned on the light after several bungling attempts and groaned again and again as in his excitement, he could not get the safe open.

But at last it was done. The money was returned to the cash-box and Prebbles, faint and trembling in every limb, leant his back against the closed door of the safe. He was almost overcome; his face was ashen and his lips pallid.

He took a step forward, tottered, fell. He strove to rise, but fell again, this time upon his knees. And as he knelt there, beside his old office stool, he clasped his hands and raised them aloft, with a quivering sob.

Just then a loud bell clanged the hour of midnight, and Time, the relentless, had ushered in a new day.

JOHN MACDONALD.

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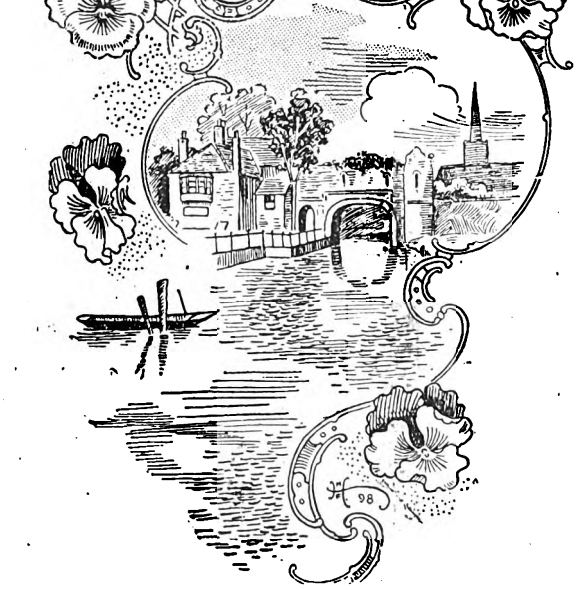
THE TWO CAPTAINS.



IMAGINE a diffident, silent, spare, but well-built and erect little white-haired, white-bearded man of, say, sixty—a man with those easily interested and trustful eyes you sometimes meet in a child's gaze (his were blue), imagine these qualities combined in a little elderly man, who had captained various vessels for nearly two score of years, and had never lost a ship; then you may form a picture, in your mind's eye, of Captain John Collings, of Liverpool.

Now imagine the captain's exact physical opposite. Then you may easily see Captain Lester—roughly, but firmly knit, lantern-jawed and cold-eyed. If Captain Lester had anything to say, he never hesitated to say it, and to say it in such words as allowed of no misunderstanding. He was as sure of himself as he was of the polar needle. Yet for years he had been sailing under Captain Collings as first mate, though he had previously sailed as captain and was entitled to the prefix.

The two were the closest of friends. I, as a boy, knew them both, for they were old friends of my father's while he was alive. He, too, was a seafaring man.

To me, as a boy, Captain Collings, small as he was, was an object of reverence and awe. Nobody could make such neat, fascinating, perfectly delightful things with tools; nobody had such wonderful deftness in the use of the jack-knife as Captain Collings had; and part and parcel of the sea though he was, he knew more about making and setting traps than anybody who spent his life ashore.

I liked the woods more than I did the sea. Many a time did the captain, while on shore, wander inland with me, and show me what he called his "idea of rigging a trap."

I shall never forget the dexterity, the neatness, and the sureness with which he made me the best "figure 4 trap" I have ever seen; and the delight of the day when he took me up to his own little private den where he slept, in his neat house, will remain with me as long as I live.

He was a widower, with one child, a girl about my own age, cared for and brought up, during his voyages at sea, by his unmarried sister, who kept house for him. But the charm of that room of his! On the neat shelves and quaint brackets of his own making arranged about the walls were models of boats of all conceivable rigs, complete to the smallest detail, and each so beautiful in its completeness that I looked and looked in speechless wonder.

Then he showed me, on the wall near the head of his bed, a miniature arrow; and while I was looking, it veered slightly, as it pointed midway between the S. and W. of the dial behind it.

"It's rigged on to the vane on the roof," he said. "It's a lot of foolishness," he added, with a chuckle, as I stood wrapt in admiration. Then my keen boy's eyes caught sight of a puzzling contrivance directly over a bracket lamp not far from the arrow.

"What's that for, Captain?" I asked.

"Well, George," he answered, "sometimes I read in bed, and that there's a rig I've fixed so's to put out the lamp without tumbling out of my berth. They tell me it's bad to read in bed, but I dunno. Here, I'll show you."

He lighted the paraffin lamp, reached behind the head of his small wooden bedstead, and pulled a string that was, unseen by me, hanging there. It was all done quickly and quietly. As he pulled the string a small, fan-shaped piece of leather attached to the end of a slender wooden arm descended exactly, and with just the right amount of force, upon the open top of the lamp chimney, then sprang back into its former position. The flame of the lamp went out.

"Captain, that's grand!" I exclaimed.

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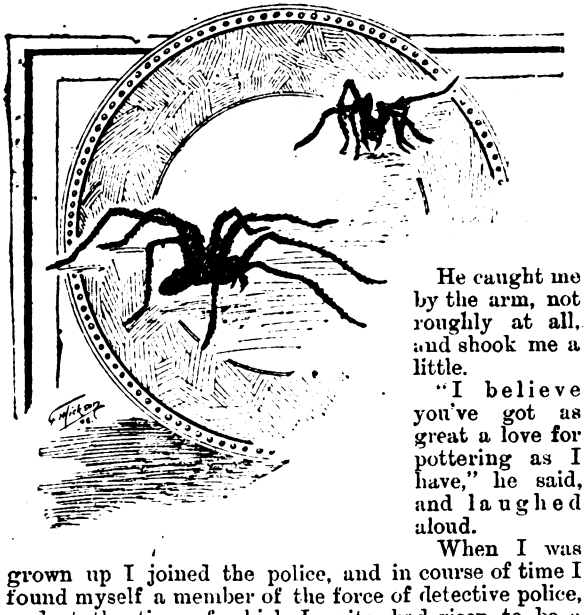

He caught me by the arm, not roughly at all, and shook me a little.

"I believe you've got as great a love for pottering as I have," he said, and laughed aloud.

When I was grown up I joined the police, and in course of time I found myself a member of the force of detective police, and at the time of which I write, had risen to be a sergeant.

One day when, to kill time, I was reading every word of a morning newspaper, I came across, in the shipping news, a line or so stating that the three-master, *Sarah*, of Liverpool, Captain Collings, had earned quite a sum as salvage for towing a big Australian cargoship disabled by bad weather into port.

At this moment our messenger entered my room.

"There are two men outside who want to see you, sir."

"Who are they?" I asked.

"They didn't give their names; said you'd know them, sir."

"What do they look like?"

"Well, sir," the messenger answered, with the beginning of a smile in the corners of his mouth, "they look like the long and short of it, just ashore from a voyage."

"Show them in," I said, and was quite prepared to see, as I did, my father's old friends a minute later.

"How d'you do?" said Captain Collings shyly.

"Well, my son, how are you?" said Captain Lester in his inflexible, resonant voice. He had always addressed me as "my son," as he invariably did any younger man whom he liked. If he didn't like him, he used no form of address whatever; but simply looked him in the eye and spoke. He rarely called anybody by name.

We shook hands. As often happens in the case of a big man, Captain Lester gave no responsive grip whatever. His hand in mine felt like a big leather glove that had dried hard after a thorough wetting and had been stuffed with sand. Captain Collings, on the contrary, gave me a quick, warm, firm pressure of the hand. The upshot of it all was that they took supper with me that evening at a cosy restaurant I used to frequent: and, over a bottle or two, told me all about themselves and their plans.

"So, my son," said Captain Lester finally, slowly sipping his drink; "you see how it is. It's a matter of a thousand apiece for Collings and me—and what's more, we've got the money, the notes, all safe and tight," and here he let his big, hard hand fall upon my knee, and gripped and shook it gently. "Ain't that so, Collings?"

"Ee-us," said the latter for a reply, quietly, with a slow, acquiescing nod of the head.

"Well, what are you going to do now?" I asked.

"That's just it. You listen," said Captain Lester.

I listened.

"He's"—with a jerk of his big thumb towards Captain Collings—"goin' to write out to Susan in Ireland, and if everything's fit, he's going over there for a time to stay 'long of her and her husband and the children."

I must mention here that, much to Captain Collings' delight, his daughter Susan had, some years before, married a young Irishman.

Arthur Carey his name was, and the good little captain had always cherished a certain amount of pride because Susan was married to a "financial" man; for Carey was cashier of a bank.

"Children?" I asked. "I thought there was only one."

Captain Collings held up two fingers, and smiled and nodded. Something about him—I can't tell you what—conveyed the idea, too, that the children would have money in the bank some day.

"Yes, sir," continued Captain Lester, "he's going over to see 'em,"—with another jerk of his thumb towards his friend, accomplished this time by merely turning over his big hand, which now lay, gnarled and brown, before him on the table—"but afore that he wants to have his fling." Here Captain Lester turned and slowly winked at Collings, who smiled as he passed the back of his hand across his shaven upper lip. "Yes, sir, wants to spend two or three weeks here, looking round and eating at hotels. That it?" Captain Collings nodded. "Then go to Belfast; then back to port and take the *Sarah* agin." Captain Lester leant back in his chair and gazed at me sternly, as if I were a questionable sky.

"Who's going to sail the *Sarah* in the meantime?" I asked.

"I am," replied Captain Lester. "Seen the owner this morning; signed, all settled. Month or thereabouts, perhaps. Then *he* takes her agin, same's before. All understood, fair and above board."

"I see," I said.

"Now, my son," said Captain Lester, leaning forward his elbows on the table, "I want you to look after *him*. He wants a snug place to bunk—not meals—he's to get *them* at hotels. He wants a place where the money he has with him won't be in no danger whatsoever."

"The money?" I exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes, my son, the money," Captain Lester repeated. "His'n mine. He's got both stowed away in his clothes."

Captain Lester leant back in his chair and stared at me hard, after having thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. He rocked slowly backwards and forwards on the hind legs of his chair.

"Why don't you deposit it in a bank?" I asked in amazement.

He shook his head. I argued. Captain Lester turned as smoothly from every argument I advanced as the rudder post of the *Sarah* turned in response to the pressure of his big hand upon the wheel; but he was, after all was said, as inflexible in his mental direction as the rudder post was in its mechanical limits.

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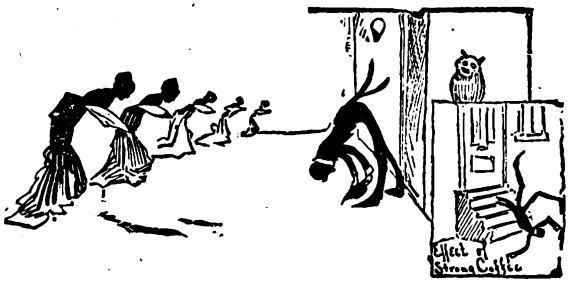

"No, my son," he said at last, "I don't know no bank as well as I do him."

"But what do you intend to do with this money when you come back?" I asked.

"Build a coaster, won't we?" he said, glancing at his friend.

"Of course," said Captain John Collings, with more assurance than I had ever seen in him.

"Call her *Susan*, too," said Lester.

"If you say so," said Collings bashfully.

"Well, I *do* say so," replied Lester, as if he were ready and anxious to do battle for his choice.

Meanwhile, I have been thinking. A friend of mine, Jack Fitzgerald, solicitor's clerk, had a room in one of the houses that used to be the mansions of the merchants years ago. Low studded and wainscotted (simply wainscotted with broad, smooth, painted panels), but sunny, and in a quiet, decent neighbourhood. It was a lovely old house and a loveable old room. Jack was away—was in the South of England for two months on business.

That night the captains slept aboard the *Sarah*, but the next day I received a telegram from Jack, in reply to my letter sent the night before.

Jack's answer was like himself—short, sharp, and satisfactory. All it said was:

"Of course. Jack."

In due time I "stowed away," to use his own expression, Captain Collings, together with his tin cash box, in Jack's room; and Captain Lester sailed away in command of the *Sarah*.

Then I let the little captain alone for a few days—to have his fling.

At length I called upon him to see how he was getting on, and how he stood "eating at hotels." I found him in, but—mercy! what a change! Instead of my clear-eyed, childlike, gentle friend, I found a pale, haggard, bent, and what was far worse, mumbling old man. I threw my arm about him, and begged him to tell me what was the trouble. For a moment he seemed like himself. He patted me on the shoulder, shook me by the hand, laughed—or tried to—and said he was "just as well as ever he was." But the next moment he became again the wreck I found him.

With the utmost gentleness, I tried to question him, but all to no purpose. He always came back to the same reply: "Just as well as ever I was, George; don't you worry." The pitiful attempt at a laugh that always followed my expressions of anxiety brought my heart into my mouth; and the look in his eyes, part terror, part despair, pierced it like a knife.

Instinctively I glanced about the room. It was the same as when Jack left it, except that here and there, in places where it could be done without disturbing Jack's belongings, the Captain had put things of his own—sea things, curiosities, queer relics of voyages. For instance, on the low, narrow mantelpiece that ran along above the old-fashioned, broad, open fireplace, I noticed, in spaces hitherto unused, a bronze Japanese figure, an East Indian idol in miniature, and so on, in various spots about the room, though not in many.

I noticed, too, his tin cash box under the head of his bed. It occurred to me that here might lie the trouble; but, no—he assured me, with the first semblance of real alertness he had shown, that it was safe and sound. Indeed, he now became, for him, positive and insistent, even more so than was necessary, that the cash box and its contents were all right. Finally, I gave it up, decided to come over the next day, and took my leave.

The next day I called. He was out. I called again and again. He was always out, and the door of his room was always locked. Then I questioned the landlady, whom I knew to be a reliable woman. But really, he was such a quiet little man, and gave so little trouble, she hadn't noticed; except that once he had asked her if there were a hardware shop near, and that when he came back, after having gone out for an hour or so, he was carrying a bundle.

At last I found him in once more. It was several days later, and again I was surprised at the change in his appearance. He was not *my* Captain Collings, to be sure; but he was nearer to it. He seemed more alive, less dejected, and, what I, by force of habit, I suppose, especially noted, less haunted by fear. But there was an eagerness, an alertness, a restlessness about him I did not like.

This time I took a new tack. I asked him what he had heard from his daughter. To this he replied, with even added eagerness, that she was "first rate." I asked him when he expected to go to her. He looked anywhere but at me—so unlike him—and went back to the mumbling. At length the mumbling resolved itself into coherence, and I distinguished words.

"Long journey; thought I'd wait till Lester reached port. Stay ashore a little longer, p'r'aps." All of which ended in a laugh, intended to convey the impression of nonchalance, and failing utterly to do so.

But now his manner changed with marked suddenness; he became almost keen.

"You're a detective?" he asked.

"Of course," I replied, for I knew he knew it.

"Well, you read that," he said, and thrust a letter at me. It was written with pen and ink, on ordinary stationery, such as you might buy at a general shop. I read these words:

"Captain.—We know you have the money—yours and his. Meet us in Portland Street at nine p.m. on the fifteenth, and give it up, or you will be a dead man next day."

There was no signature. At last I knew. My poor old friend was being slowly but surely frightened to death. I laughed aloud in my joy, for I knew that if any man could comfort and protect him, I could. I soothed and reassured him.

I asked for the envelope, but unfortunately he had destroyed it. We sat late into the night discussing a plan of my suggestion.

The fifteenth was two days off, and Captain Collings finally agreed, in response to my request, to walk the length of Portland Street at ten p.m. on that night. Of course, I meant to have my men carefully stationed.

Throughout our talk he was much more like himself, and, with a weight off my mind, I left him. I was sure of my ground now.

I called again the next day to again reassure him.

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He had received another letter, written like the first, and on the same kind of paper. It said only this:

"Remember. If you don't, you're a dead man on the sixteenth."

Again there was no signature, but this time he had preserved the envelope, so I knew where the letter had been posted. But the time was too short to do anything, so this information, was, to a degree, immaterial.

Once more I sat with Captain Collings and talked over the plan. Everything was arranged, and he agreed to every arrangement. He was like, yet strangely unlike, himself.

"I see by this morning's paper," he said abruptly, "that the *Sarah* is near home. Lester'll be here on the sixteenth."

I was glad of that, and told him so. When I left him, he was almost like himself in every way.

The night of the fifteenth was warm and clear, with a full moon shining. "Hard on our friends, the murderers," I thought to myself, as the Captain and I walked to his rendezvous. We carried out our programme to the letter. Captain Collings walked Portland Street from end to end, apparently alone, but always guarded, and not a soul did he meet.

Evidently our quarry had smelt a rat and had taken flight. As I walked back to the room with the Captain, we talked the matter over, and decided to await developments. He agreed that it would be best to stay in his room the next day, the sixteenth, and I assured him the house would be carefully guarded.

As I left him at the door, I laughed off the whole affair. When I bade him "good night," he held out his hand and said, in the same old quiet, bashful way I had always (until recently) known:

"Well, good-night, George. I know you'll take care o' me, you and Lester. Somehow I feel as if it might happen, though, to-morrow."

I again reassured him, and, after seeing him safely indoors, went home. He didn't know it, but two of my men were at that moment on the watch, and remained so all that night.

The next morning I was on the ground again. Nothing whatever had happened, my men told me. As I was walking with them I felt a weight on my shoulder. I turned and found the explanation.

The weight was Captain Lester's hand, and I heard his level voice saying, "Well, my son, how are you?" He had arrived at Tilbury early that morning, and had come direct to his old friend.

We entered the house together, and went to Captain Collings' door. I knocked. No answer.

"Ah! that hotel-eating makes him sleepy," said Captain Lester. "Give me a turn," and he knocked three times with his great, brine-hardened knuckles. It was enough to wake the dead, and, Heaven help us! that's what was needed.

Then we found that the door was not locked. We went in. The bright, warm sunlight was streaming into the room, and little Captain Collings was sitting peacefully in the armchair near the corner of the fireplace. I saw at a glance the small, round, dark blue spot in the centre of his forehead.

Captain Lester reached the chair first. Then I heard what I pray I may never hear again—the sounds of a great, big, simple heart in abject grief. He knelt by his friend, and fondled the hand resting on the arm of the chair. The other was hanging limp.

"Jack! Son! 'Tain't true! Say it ain't true!" and he bowed his head and sobbed aloud.

I waited. Then I touched him on the shoulder.

"Captain," I said, "this is murder!"

He was on his feet in an instant.

"Murder!" he whispered, looking at me. "Murder!" His voice was now like low, distant thunder. He turned, and for the first time saw the bullet hole in Captain Collings' forehead. "By Heaven! Who done it?"

These words came from him as if they were the last gasp from some overtaxed, exhausted, mighty engine. He looked a giant as he stood there, his arms at his side, but each bent inward, and his great fists clenched.

"Who done it, I say?" he repeated, but this time with a snarl like a tortured lion's.

"That we must find out," I said as gently as I could. "We must be calm, first of all, and see what we can find."

"Right, my son," he groaned. "I'm calm now," and he was; but his face! It was scarred by awful grief already.

"The cash box! See!" I exclaimed. We hurried to the bed together. Near it lay the box, open and empty, save for one single paper, a letter. I started to take it from the box, but Lester was quicker than I. In an instant he had it, and read the address. I had read it, too. It was addressed to him.

He turned to me, and said three words:

"You sit down."

I sat down. Standing where he was, he opened the letter and read. There was an inclosure. He read that, too. As he read, he breathed hard through his teeth, and sobbed.

While he was reading I had time to collect my thoughts, and started to my feet to call my men from the window Again came the three words, and—I sat down.

At last he raised his gaunt head from the papers. He walked to the armchair, and passed round it to the side next the fireplace looking at the floor. He stooped and pointed at what I had not, in my distress, noticed before.

Beneath the limp arm that hung down lay a piece of white twine on the floor, in many S's, L's, and O's, as if it had been jerked there. Then he stared at me, a long, agonised, hopeless stare. At last he spoke, and all he said was:

"You keep sitting down."

He looked closely at the old-fashioned carving that formed the outer edge of the mantelpiece itself. Next he looked at his dead friend, and sighed.

Then he went to the further side of the fireplace, and felt carefully along the moulding bordering a large panel that evidently to me, knowing as I did these old houses, covered some unused space beside the chimney breast.

His examination was short. He gave me a look as he finished, and his look plainly repeated his last four words. He went quickly to the cupboard near the bed, returning immediately carrying a few simple tools. I saw they were new. Quickly and neatly his bulky hands did his bidding; mouldings, boards, finally the panel itself came off, and all almost without a sound. He was between me and what he was doing. He spoke over his shoulder.

"Lock that door."

I did it.

"Look here."

I came to his side and looked in the opening.

"See?" he said.

His voice was deep and quiet. I saw it all at a glance.

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In the pattern of the carving were recurrent, deep circular depressions; one of these had been bored through, forming a hole which led into the space behind the panel piece. Pointing through this hole, with fatal accuracy, was a revolver, lashed in place with infinite neatness. For the rest, I saw nothing but a heavy iron weight, a few slender notched sticks, a trap, and a piece of string—all lying together on the floor at the bottom of the space behind the panel. This was all I saw, but I *knew*.

"Sit down," said Captain Lester.

As I did so he drew towards him a chair and sat down himself, exactly facing me.

"Now you listen."

He took from his pocket, where he had carefully placed them, the papers we found in the box.

"This is from *him*," he said, "to me. But I'll read it to *you*."

Then he read as follows:—

LESTER,

I ain't been murdered. I done it myself I've stole your money, and don't dare to face you. Before reading further please read the letter from Susan, inclosed.

Here he opened and read the inclosure:

DEAR FATHER,

We are in fearful trouble, and I write to you for help. Don't blame Arthur. He has always been a good husband to me, and I love him dearly. He has taken money from the bank to speculate with, and oh, father, I know it will kill you with grief! we've got to have £2,000 at once, or Arthur will have to go to prison. Think of me and the children, father dear, and help us if you can.

SUSAN.

Without comment, Captain Lester returned to the letter from his friend:

Now, Lester, you know why I done it. My last wish is that she should always think I have been murdered. If she should find out I had done just what her husband did, it would break her heart. She's all right now. I sent her your money and mine. If you can find it in your heart to do what I ask you will much oblige

JOHN COLLINGS.

When Captain Lester had finished reading, he carefully refolded the papers and put them back in his pocket. Then he turned to me.

"You stand up," he said, as he arose himself. I stood. He placed a hand on each of my shoulders. I felt his grip *then*. I can feel it still.

"My son," he said, looking down into my eyes, "there's just two men who knows about this. Just as soon as any more knows it, one o' them two has got to die, if I have to kill him. What do you say?"

For answer I held out my hand. Wouldn't you have? He threw his arms about me, and we cried like children.

Then we quietly destroyed all evidence of suicide, and replaced the panel and moulding. This finished, I glanced hurriedly through the writing desk. I didn't find much, merely a piece of blotting paper, upon which some letters, reversed, were visible. I could easily read. In a drawer, I found, also, a few sheets of paper like that used in the threatening letters. Then I went out and gave my men instructions in regard to Captain John Collings' murder.

* * * * *

Captain Lester went down with the *Sarah*, in the great gale of '93. Both Susan and her husband are dead. Otherwise I should not have told this tale.

M. HIGGINS.

LANDLADY: "Well, I must do something to keep the wolf from the door."

Boarder: "I don't know that it is altogether necessary. Let him come in and partake of one of your breakfasts, and I don't think he'll trouble you again."

AL WRIGHT: "My wife and I used to quarrel nearly all the time, but now we have the most peaceful home you ever saw."

Henry Peck: "Indeed! How did you manage it?"

Al Wright: "I simply make my wife so cross she refused to speak to me."

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 7.

FOUR of the people whose names were selected to receive a sovereign each on application have applied for their money. They are:

WILLIAM ARMSTRONG, Croft Cottage, Ross-on-Wye.

CORPORAL THOS. GOLDING, H Company, 2nd Devon Regt., Aldershot.

F. ASHLEE, 47 Gillett Road, Thornton Heath.

H. B. APPLEYARD, 72 Winkingham Road, Grimsby.

Below are the names of those who failed to apply for the money awaiting them:

R. S. Muir, 43 Arlingford Road, Brixton, S.W.; Thos. Wood, 27 Moss Lane, Swinton, Manchester; W. Chas. Griffiths, 85 Elliott Street, Tyldesley; J. Murphy, 36, Clorliffe Road, Dublin; G. H. Perceval, 17 Warminster Road, South Norwood; P. Geraght, 13 Hauteville, Guernsey; W. E. James, "Rosedale," Leighton-on-Sea, Essex; J. R. Smyth, 19 Garlic Hill, E.C.; G. Cooper, 75 Maryville Street, Donegall Pass, Belfast; F. M. Whittingham, 5 Alvington Terrace, Cattedown Road, Plymouth; J. B. Pinker, Effingham House, Arundel Street, Strand, W.C.; Miss V. E. Carter, The High School, Lichfield; Miss H. Stille, 25 Snowdon Road, Eccles, Manchester; P. G. How, 38 West Street, Leytonstone; J. H. Kendle, 55 High Street, Bognor; Jos. Bell, 83 Albert Edward Road, Liverpool; S. B. Perrett, Market, Bristol; Staff-Sergt. Alfred Jenkins, Army Pay Corps, The Barracks, Cardiff; W. Wilson, 72 Millgate, Selby; C. Leitherbarrows, Warkworth, Northants; A. Fuller, High Street, Ramsey, Hunts; John Kirk, 28 Burton Road, Brixton, S.W.; Mrs. Mure, 35 Underwood Road, Paisley; R. Maclean Scott, 124 W. Graham Street, Glasgow; J. Ure, 18 Kellie Place, Alloa, N.B.; Mrs. Adey, 14 Sotheby Road, Highbury, N.; David Davies, J.P., 22 Canon Street, Aberdare; J. J. Taylor, Angel Hotel, Godalming; W. Rowlands, 1 Rock Villas, Mountain Ash; W. Evans, Church Road, Caerphilly; H. Mells, Oakleigh, West Liss, Hants; Mrs. Palmer, New Road, Solihull, Birmingham; P. P. Down, St. Vincent, Torrs Park, Ilfracombe; G. Webb, Castle Hall, Winchester; Mrs. Nichols, Trevellick, Cornwall; W. Footitt, 2 Claremont Villas, Gloucester Road, Ross; Mrs. Beech, Stafford Road, Oakengates; Levi Massey, Church Street, Church Gresley; E. Brown, 36 Potter Street, Worksop; J. B. Johnson, 30 Hollybank Road, Birkenhead; W. Abbot, Church Street, Lutterworth, Leicestershire; J. A. Bagshaw, High Street, Uppingham, Rutland; John Foster, 47 Cardigan Street, Oxford; Mrs. Dell, Bell Street, Princes Risborough; John Sears, 11 Park Street, Windsor; H. White, Linden House, Dunstable.

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THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Blow at Southern France.

A few weeks only had elapsed since the enemies of England had burst upon her in all their fury of fierce and sudden attack, and yet never was her command of the sea, her overwhelming supremacy above and beyond all other nations, more unquestionable or complete.

Her armies, it is true, were still in three foreign countries, struggling inch by inch against amazing odds, and by sheer courage and audacity forcing themselves towards the capitals of three great kingdoms. But upon the ocean highway there was but one flag, the Union Jack. The British Navy had asserted itself once more, and vindicated the boast which jealous rivals deem so arrogant. It swept the seas with unchallenged dominion.

"It was at the Nile and not at Waterloo that Europe found salvation," Admiral Mahan had once declared. "England may smite her enemies with her armies; she crushes them with her fleet."

The gallant sailor may have given a flourish of enthusiasm to his opinion from his deep love of blue water, and of those who navigate it. But there was profound truth in his remark. When the British navy threw an impenetrable wall, as it were, around the dominions of the three allied kingdoms, chased and caught their ships, closed their ports, barred their supplies, threatened their towns, and menaced their coasts, their fortunes were already tottering. And this had been done swiftly, completely, and with marvellous ease.

During the first stage of the war the Mediterranean was reduced to the condition of a lake. The French and German vessels could get neither out nor in. They were imprisoned in an inactivity which was the more ludicrous because there was no British possession to spoil. A few shells had been hurled upon Malta, which smiled cheerfully at the foe, secure in her impregnability. It was mere waste of time and shot to pound away at this inaccessible sea-girt rock.

A sanguine French captain suggested Cyprus.

The Admiral glared at him:

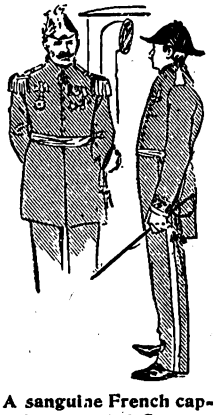
"And what will you capture there? Only a few figs and a bundle of the Sultan's unpaid bills!"

"But," stammered the luckless officer, "it will be something wrested from the British Empire."

"Yes," retorted the Admiral angrily, "you might as well think of robbing a man of his wart."

So Cyprus was left unscathed; partly, it must be confessed, because the German Admiral avowed he had not made his will, and whilst quite ready to take the risks of a mere naval engagement, he did not think he was called upon to encounter the climatic danger of a landing upon Cyprus at that time of year.

The position was indeed a helpless one. For a whole month these great vessels had steamed about in a weak and aimless fashion, which evoked the bitter irony of the Petit Journal. That popular little paper demanded that the Government should order the German and French fleets to act as excursion steamers between Marseilles and Naples, at popular rates, as some contribution toward the expenses of the war. And the Hamburg Zeitung was roused from its ponderous solemnity to defy a prosecution for *lèse-majesté*, and print the following stanza after Goethe:



A sanguine French captain suggested Cyprus.

Know'st thou the seas where our battleships fare?
Where the water is blue, and the heavens are bright;
Where there's nothing to battle, and no one to fight—
They are there, my child, they are *there!*

But the English fleet had no intention of giving the excellent commanders of the hostile battleships a holiday.

As reinforcements came after the victory in the Atlantic, and from Havre, several swift and decisive movements were made from Gibraltar which followed in one division after another being caught, and captured or sunk. It was not a difficult task, for by this time the combined fleets were far outnumbered, and fell an easy prey.

It thus happened that in a short space of time the Mediterranean was once more ridden by the invincible navy of England. And it followed from this that the Indian mails were scarcely interfered with, and went to and fro with the usual regularity and dispatch. The only difference was

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that they were carried from Suez to Port Said by train, the ocean stages being performed by gunboats.

But this serenity was not confined to the Mediterranean. The destruction of the Russian fleet swept the last enemy's ship from the open. The navies of France and Germany were sunk or shattered. Never before was the sea so safe, commerce less suspended, or order so prevalent.

Whilst the three most powerful countries of the Continent were in the throes of a grim death struggle, the frail brigantine of some small shipowner might sail boldly forth through foreign waters, bearing her burthen of grain or coal without a moment's perturbation. The trade of England continued brisk as ever. Her manufactures passed quickly to a thousand markets, rendered clamorous by the failure of French and German exporters, and prepared to pay high prices. For similar reasons there flowed into her ports an uninterrupted stream of corn and meat, and all the other necessaries of life, at rates which were incredibly small.

It was this that led to a remark of M. Zola's which brought him much ill-will—a fact he cared the less for because he had by this time been grudgingly elected a member of the French Academy.

"The greatness of England," he said in a pamphlet, "is that she can go quietly on with her business undisturbed, whilst her neighbours are quivering beneath the shock of cannon. She is a huge commercial house whose principal says on a Monday morning to one of his clerks: 'I want you to fight someone over the way. Go and pummel his head and then come back. But I can't have fisticuffs in *this* office and shall expect you on your stool to-morrow at ten.' And whilst his clerk puts on his coat and steps across to do what he is told, his master quietly turns over his ledger and looks the next order. The result is, his clerk *is* there next morning, with only one black eye. Depend upon it, when the cataclysm comes and the waters overwhelm the earth once more, England will be found floating on top, serene and unruffled, and gazing with undisguised greed on the rapid growth of her oceanic empire!"

M. Zola's windows were broken, but he only smiled. The pamphlet was in its tenth edition.

The remaining countries of Europe had been staggered at the distinctive character of the events that were taking place. Their position was an anxious one. But each, from policy or pusillanimity, soon found excellent reasons for becoming neutral.

Austria did not love Germany. It was a quarrel of brothers—a quarrel the more bitter because the one had done the other an irreparable injury. When the Emperor William asked co-operation from Vienna, or at least a friendly attitude, a dexterous answer was given. "Austria," wrote the Chancellor. "did not desire to impede the plans of Germany by premature action."

But her mind was fully made up. Either Germany and her allies would destroy England or it would in turn be destroyed. In either case Austria gained by waiting. If the allies fared ill she would have an immediate advantage in any share of the spoil that might follow. She had even tender hopes of regaining her lost provinces. But if Germany were victorious, and were inclined to show arrogance in settling up the question of the British possessions, Austria obviously had a far better chance of claiming her fair share if, with her powerful army, she might menace a weakened and palsied neighbour. For it was clear that the victors in the war would only be less crippled than the vanquished, and so Austria took care to offend neither combatant by overt act.

Italy, with chivalry of a brave if not over-vigorous friend, hastened to offer England the assistance of her diminished navy. But Great Britain delicately refused. She felt that Italy could not stand the burden of so costly an alliance. Already on the verge of bankruptcy, this new responsibility would prove her ruin. The kindliest messages were interchanged, and the Italian government were gratified by the high expressions of goodwill used in the despatches from Whitehall.

"Our navy is, we deem, sufficient for the task before it—enormous though it be," wrote Lord Salisbury, "we will, therefore, only avail ourselves of your generous proposal if necessity compels. In any case, you may rest assured that we feel the liveliest sense of gratitude, a feeling we trust that Providence will enable us to demonstrate practically if the infamous struggle which we are maintaining turns in our favour."

The policy of Spain was delightful. She had been asleep for two centuries, a sleep scarcely disturbed by the shock of the Cuban war. But she was nothing if not grandiose, and to her ministers it appeared that her attitude was one of profound anxiety and supreme importance to both belligerents.

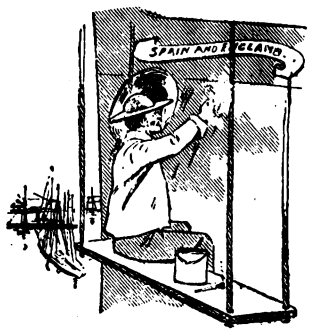
There were in her dockyards at the time six battleships. The history of these was painful in the extreme. It had taken twenty years to conceive them. When the order was reluctantly given, they rose slowly and with difficulty from theory into fact. Changes of ministry had delayed them. The death of naval constructors altered them. Sudden fits of economy had pruned them. Financial crisis had left them lingering half-way towards their birth, sighing in vain on their mouldering staithes for safe delivery to post-humous completion.

And when the consummation was reached it unhappily turned out that so many years had elapsed during the course of construction that they were lamentably out of date, and so patched and altered and old-fashioned that, as one British tar asserted valiantly, a plucky tug might almost have taken them in turn and "stove 'em in!"

It was these deadly engines of war that Spain, at the first opening of hostilities, had offered as a free gift to France. The rest of her fleet—which, it might be mentioned, was mainly built in Lord Armstrong's yards—she declared she would keep for purposes of defence. The offer was made with such high-flown eloquence that M. Hanotaux swore the phrases might have been copied from Don Quixote.

But the reverses of France and Germany followed quickly, and Spain trembled at the thought that she had perhaps been guilty of an indiscretion. Her ministers assembled in council and deliberated.

The result was that one fine morning the loungers around the Barcelona dockyards were surprised to find painters busy at the prow of the largest battleship. The name she bore was the *Spain and France*. With dexterous brush the latter part of this title was expunged and in a brief space of time the vessel nobly rode upon her bed of wood under the name of the *Spain and England*.



Painters busy at the prow of the largest battleship.

Accustomed to sudden changes of this sort, the Barcelona loungers only whistled a few bars from the *Barber of Seville*, and went their way.

Turkey shivered within her boundaries. Whatever the result of the war might be, it was clear that the Ottoman Empire was doomed. There could no longer be a "balance of power" to uphold. The victors would remain supreme, and one of their first acts would be to split up the historic kingdom and drive from Europe the last element of barbarism that disgraced her.

It was a pitiful position for any country to occupy. Turkey had thriven by the mutual jealousies of her neighbours. Her security lay in the permanence of their hatred

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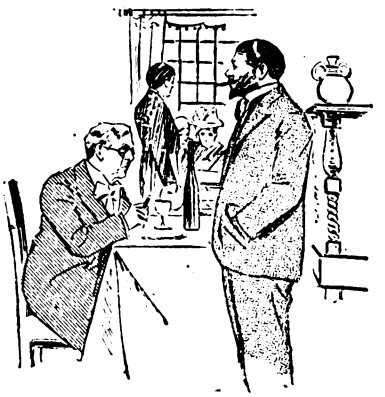
of each other. But even to the Ottoman mind it was patent that there could be only a single issue to this gigantic conflict. No longer would equality exist amongst the great powers. One of these must attain an overwhelming ascendency, and that one, whether Russia, Germany, or England, would insist on carrying out Mr. Gladstone's bag and baggage policy.



"What idiots we are to quarrel with such people."

Turkey now formed the wisest conclusion she had come to for generations. She decided that if the end had to come, it was better for her that her fate should be determined by Great Britain. She was assured she would obtain more justice and consideration from her one avowed enemy than from any of her pretended friends. And she thus decided on an act of policy which proved of the greatest value to England. She closed the Bosphorus to the fleets of Russia and blocked up the Black Sea.

This unexpected danger was not the only one that Russia had to encounter. There lay at her gates three small, new-created, struggling, but brave States who had suffered much from her overbearing interference, and yet, with splendid heroism, had kept at bay the encroaching power of the insolent Slav. These were Servia, Bulgaria, and Roumania.

No sooner had Russia thrown in her power with the enemies of England, and distracted by the perils that beset her on either hand, lay an easier prey to her tiny neighbours, than the three States formed a hasty alliance, and resolved once and for all to throw off the galling yoke they had borne so long. It was a gallant and a dangerous enterprise, for Russia was as yet untouched, and it was not clear that she might not emerge from the contest victorious. But, knit to England by many ties of gratitude, and spurred by national spirit and patriotic ardour, they defied the event, mobilised their forces, and inaugurated a troublesome and untiring guerilla warfare against the southern provinces of Russia. Their action was destined to bear splendid fruit. It formed part of the chain of destiny that was to throttle the strength of Slavonic despotism.

Such was the condition of the countries of Europe when Sir Redvers Buller, in the middle of June, landed near Marseilles his Mediterranean Army Corps. It consisted of 200,000 men, of whom 120,000 were colonists. This new bolt was launched at France when she was already staggering from the effects of her terrible disasters on the banks of the Seine.

Sir Redvers Buller practically repeated the tactics adopted by Lord Roberts in effecting the capture of Havre. Six hours after the landing was effected a large number of the British contingent was encamped on La Cannebière, the famous boulevard of which the Provençals say:

"Si Paris avait La Cannebière, Paris serait un petite Marseille!"

Even the Colonial and Australian troops, fresh as they were to the actualities of warfare, were impressed by the half-heartedness of the resistance offered by their opponents. What was even more noticeable was the attitude of the people.

No man in France is more thoroughly patriotic than the Southerner, if his national pride be aroused and his sense of duty stirred.

But in the large towns of France, Paris excepted, there was a growing feeling of dismay at the progress of the war, and this was engrafted upon the earlier expression of public amazement when the wholly unexpected campaign burst upon them. Marseilles was a busy port, and had consequently suffered much as the direct outcome of the irrational undertaking of the Parisian politicians.

Hence the army of occupation found a remarkable readiness on the part of the shopkeepers to once more handle the British sovereign, that *passe-partout* which speaks all tongues with equal facility.

The Colonial troops astounded the Marseillais with their seeming prodigality, for the contrast between their habits and those of the penurious French soldier was striking indeed.

"What idiots we are to quarrel with such people," remarked a hotel proprietor to his confidant, the notary. "It is miraculous, but a common soldier, look you, orders a dinner that one of our generals would be glad to eat; and he pays for it, too!"

General Buller himself did not fail to note the passivity of the non-combatants. He commented strongly on the fact in his dispatches, and drew from it the conclusion that when negotiations for peace became practicable, there would be a large body of public opinion in favour of a rapid settlement.

This was the first rift in the dark cloud of murderous menace that threatened England. It was made much of in the Press at home, and its significance did not escape the authorities in Paris.

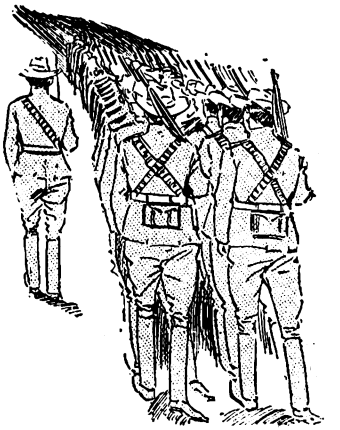
Hence there came imperative orders to the general commanding at Lyons to force an immediate engagement, whilst the Chalons Army Corps was hurried southwards to complete the discomfiture of the invaders.

Lord Wolseley's judgment was thus fully borne out by the progress of events.

In the neighbourhood of Miramas took place the first pitched battle between Buller's force and the Lyons troops. In his haste to obey orders the French commander blundered on to the British position at the close of a long day's march. The fight commenced almost in the dark, and the English general felt intuitively that accident and not design was the genesis of the attack.

He resolved, therefore, not to delay matters. Leaving the centre to continue a desultory struggle, he hurled two well constituted columns at the French left and right simultaneously, with instructions to follow parallel roads until they converged at a point some seven miles from Arles.

These human wedges split up the French into fragments. The Canadians especially proved to be experts in night marching, and the enemy speedily became convinced that owing to the incapacity of their leaders they were offered up as a holocaust.



The Canadians especially proved to be experts in night marching.

Even the brave troops of France grew tired of being butchered to make a political holiday. They melted into the gloom as effectually as possible, and when morning dawned the mournful tokens of war alone showed that resistance had been offered to the British advance. The Lyons army corps was non-existent, and the General sent his wife a message that she had better take the youngsters to the Swiss lakes

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CHAPTER XL.

Russia's Rude Awakening.

Captain Applin amused himself at the submarine telegraph office in Uzun Ada for some days before the Grand Duke Paul, generalissimo of the Czar's Caucasian army, became aware that things had gone wrong, somehow.

"Has this demand been complied with?"

Many strange messages had been sent to Baku across the Caspian.

For instance, an imperative request came, purporting to be from the Chief Transport Officer on the Asian side, that a steam launch should be forthwith loaded with cigars and wine, and, if possible, some Scotch whiskey, and dispatched at once.

This order was actually carried out before his highness the Grand Duke received a telegram from Moscow which blanched his swarthy cheeks and caused him to use forms of the Russian language which are not to be found in grammars or "Conversation Manuals for Travellers."

He furiously summoned the chief members of his staff, and when they had assembled he read to them the message which had so perturbed him.

It ran:

"Officer commanding at Orenburg reports that the whole of the Transcaspian Railway between Uzun Ada and the Oxus, with accumulated stores for use of Alikhanoff and for your expedition, has been seized by English force. Intelligence so astounding that it was wholly disbelieved, until the same officer, confirmed by Colonel and Major of the 7th Siberian Regiment, stationed at Orenburg, emphatically reiterated it. How is it that this terrible catastrophe seems to be unknown to you? And what has become of Alikhanoff?"

The telegram was dated June 24th, and was signed by the Chief of the Imperial Staff in the name of the Tsar Nicholas II.

"Surely, sir," cried a grizzled veteran of the Russo-Turkish campaign, "there is some ghastly hoax about this business?"

"Ghastly indeed," growled the Grand Duke, "but I fear it is we who have been hoaxed. Bring me the file of recent cablegrams from Uzun Ada," he roared to an aide-de-camp, who soon reappeared with the carefully preserved sheets of tissue.

The uppermost one had reference to the Scotch whiskey.

"A strange request," was the Duke Paul's comment.

The next peremptorily forbade the proposed dispatch from Baku of two Crimean regiments. "The hungry crew would eat us up in a few hours," was Applin's facetious comment, made in the name of the Russian Commandant General Konsky.

"Curious language for Konsky to address to you, sir,' observed a staff officer.

"I thought so at the time," murmured the Grand Duke, as though speaking to himself. "Now I understand it more fully."

The third message suggested that it would be convenient if a vessel were loaded up with four million rounds of cartridges for the Berdan rifle, together with any guns and cases of shells that might be awaiting transport. "We shall find them extremely useful at an early date," explained Applin, vice Gronovitch, head of the Ordnance Department for Transcaspia.

"Has this demand been complied with?" said the Russian chief, turning with icy calmness to the officer whose duty it was to attend to such matters.

"I regret to say, your Highness, that the vessel left yesterday. We forwarded six batteries with 800 rounds per gun. I am sorry. I could not know——"

"Enough. I alone am to blame. Fool that I am not to have realised there was something wrong. When did the last steamer leave Uzun Ada that arrived here?"

The man addressed consulted some memoranda before he answered:

"On June 12th."

"Then, gentlemen, it is very clear that shortly after that date the English by some means occupied Transcaspia, and it follows as an inevitable corollary that Alikhanoff has been defeated, nay, annihilated, else news of the disaster must have reached us from Penjdeh or Khushk."

If Applin had heard this conversation he would have cabled the remark that Russia must now see the grave error she committed in being habitually twelve days behind the time.

But he had other diversions at that particular moment.

The departure of the steamship and the launch having been duly reported to him, he prepared for their arrival three days later. This was a simple matter. When a vessel arrived at Uzun Ada from any destination, she was at once boarded by a number of officials, apparently Russians by their uniform, but really consisting of Applin himself and Shah Nawas Khan, with a squad of Turkomans, who vastly enjoyed the masquerading.

The Captain and crew were promptly seized and the vessel safely tied up in the harbour, with a strong guard on board.

The total cessation of cablegrams from Baku now however, warned Colonel Peyton of the near approach of a crisis.

He had to depend entirely upon his native levies, strengthened by a couple of squadrons of dragoons from Colonel Doyne's brigade. Guns in plenty were available, and, by dint of constant effort, he had managed to make some of the Turkomans efficient gunners. They were desperately afraid of the weapons, but the presence of a British trooper with each gun detachment made things work more easily.

Several batteries were mounted on the sand spits commanding the entrance channel, the only point from which danger was dreaded.

Peyton need not have feared attack from the sea. Nearly every available vessel afloat on the Caspian in the Russian service was now safely in his hands, save one—a large transport at Baku.

This the Grand Duke filled with Cossacks, and their destination was Michaelovsk, a port on the east coast of the Caspian, but higher up than Uzun Ada.

They landed quietly enough, and advanced with the utmost rapidity towards Uzun Ada. Were it not for the excessive caution displayed by their commander they might have surprised the unconscious occupants of the latter place.

Had they done so and overcome Peyton and his few British officers and men, the nomads would have fled in terror back to their hills.

As it was, their scouts were discovered in time, and after a sharp affair they were beaten off, to return to Michaelovsk and go on board the steamer again.

They reported Uzun Ada to be crammed with English troops, and the Grand Duke Paul became nearly crazy with impotent rage. To add fuel to the fire, his sense of utter helplessness was increased by his complete inability to comprehend either the means whereby his opponents had so confounded his projects or the scope of their future intentions

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In St. Petersburg consternation in Imperial circles was equally great.

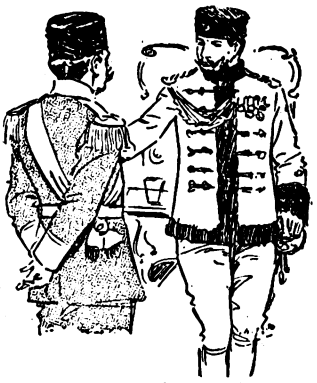
A rigorous press censorship kept definite information from reaching the public, but bad news percolates through unseen chinks, and it would have been far better for the Tsar if he had taken his people into his confidence and made the quarrel a national one.

As it was, the army, not less than the navy, felt itself to be ill led, and liable to be sacrificed piecemeal to the diplomatic requirements of the government, and from this source disaffection spread electrically through the provinces.

The Nihilist organisation fanned the smouldering embers of discontent, and the energy thus displayed paralysed the efforts of the secret police to cope with it.

The Tsar's throne, in no extravagant imagery, was built on the cone of a volcano.

Shortly after his unpleasant experience of Parisian fickleness, General Gourko was recalled to St. Petersburg. Russia was better served by her foreign correspondents than either France or Germany, and, in addition to the wholly unexpected development of affairs in Central Asia, she had reason to suspect that Br tish activity would not end there. At this period of the year she was vulnerable in the White and Black Seas. In the Far East, too, at Vladivostock and Port Arthur, she was exposed to loss and humiliation, and the return of Admiral Fremantle to those waters, after landing the Australian levies at Karachi, did not augur well for the happiness and prosperity of Russian enterprises thereabouts.



"I deem it a disgrace to our arms, sir!"

Altogether, things had not gone as they promised at the outset of the war, and the Tsar had sent for his most trusted emissary to confer with him upon the situation.

Notwithstanding the trying heat of the summer months, Nicholas II. stuck to his political capital, but he had left the pretentious palace for a bijou residence on the banks of the Neva.

Here, on the evening of June 26th, he received Gourko, with whom he had already discussed the position on the Caspian.

The Tsar was sterner even than his wont, and his cold, merciless eyes glittered with a dangerous light. Face to face with sudden and unexpected disaster, the iron nerve and inexorable will of the man gave him an aspect that seemed tragically heroic.

"Someone has blundered," he said to Gourko. "The enemy has provided us with a phrase. I seem to have intrusted my army to the direction of madmen."

"As an old soldier, your Majesty," replied the General calmly. "I know something of the vicissitudes of war. It is fatal to form a hasty judgment. Let me be frank. I fear that I—the War Office, all of us—have deceived ourselves. It is clear to me that the British have devined our intentions. They were prepared beforehand; their plans were long formed; and our attack on the Bristol Channel alone was needed to set them in motion. They have acted with extraordinary dispatch, and I imagine they have been aided by miraculous good luck. It is the fortune of war, and blame is surely mere waste of time. Our error was in deeming our enemies less wary and less ready."

"I deem it a disgrace to our arms, sir," exclaimed the Tsar impetuously. "We have lost half a century in a single week. What do you make of Alikhanoff?"

"Of him I say nothing, sire," was Gourko's reply. "His forces are exterminated, himself dead or a fugitive. That is how I read it. The British must have met him in Afghanistan and disastrously defeated him. Else the Central Asia Railway could not be in their hands. Nor is its capture explicable even on that understanding, unless there has also been a countermove, the nature of which I do not profess to understand. This, at least, is certain, that the British must have stirred the border tribes, who are ever unsettled and unsteady, to assist them. By their aid, some small detachment must have penetrated to the Caspian, and the whole of that region is in their hands."

"And within sight of Russia!" ejaculated the Tsar.

"We must not be unduly alarmed," said Gourko. "The British army itself must be at least three weeks distant from the Caspian—even if they possess the railway. There is ample time for retaliation. But it is clear we must face the situation with promptness and energy."

"I shall leave the supreme direction in your hands, General," said the Tsar gravely. "I am prepared to listen to any proposal you may have to make."

"Sire," replied Gourko earnestly. "Let me speak plainly. Much may be lost if we are not frank at a crisis like this. No stone will be left unturned by the British. They are full of resource, their pride is roused, they are stimulated by success. They may attack us at several points, and we must rouse ourselves to a supreme effort. It will be dangerous to neglect any element that may be of service to us. Our strongest card now is to appeal to the democratic instinct. Let this be a national war. If Russia herself is in arms, resolute and united, I myself laugh at invasion. But the people must not deem it a soldier's war. They must be taken into our confidence and bidden to our cause."

The Tsar's brow darkened at these words, and his thin lips became pressed for a moment in cruel obstinacy.

"Let me not hear words such as these from you again," he said after a pause. "I will sacrifice much, but I cannot be so cowardly as to yield the pious cause of my race, and bend the sovereignty of the Romanoffs to the degradation of abject concession."

"No," he continued sternly, as he saw that Gourko was about to interrupt, "I have received my crown as a sacred trust from my forefathers. I have sworn to keep its dignity unsullied, and its right undiminished. I will perish rather than be a traitor to my kin. The destiny of the Romanoffs is determined by Heaven itself. We have all of us risked death with equanimity—some of us have fallen in the fulfilment of our duty. It is a religious charge that I hold in my hands, and Russia shall exist beneath the supremacy of our family, or it shall disappear from the face of the earth. Let us say no more. I am wrong even in thus discussing it with you. If you have a proposal of practical value, I am ready to hear."

Gourko had listened with a sinking heart, but he knew that no appeal of his could be of any avail. He merely bowed in acquiescence, and proceeded to unfold his plan of campaign.

Whilst the Tsar and he were in earnest discussion on the counter-movements to be made in Central Asia, M. de Witte, the Foreign Minister, was announced.

"I come with grave news," he said, after respectfully saluting his sovereign. "Intelligence has reached the Foreign Office that Servia, Bulgaria, and Roumania have formed a confederacy and declared active war against us. A more serious thing still is that the British fleet has passed through the Dardanelles."

"Bound w ither?" demanded the Tsar, startled visibly by this terrible news.

"That is a matter for surmise, sire," replied M. de Witte. "It is possible that the fleet is destined for Batoum."

"Batoum!" cried Gourko with animation. "Never! They will never land behind the barrier of the Caucasus."

"Then where else?" asked the Tsar with impatience.

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"They will deal a severer blow at us," said Gourko. "They will either land upon the Crimea, or, most possible of all, Odessa!"

General Gourko was a singularly well-informed man. Under other circumstances his intelligence and foresight would have been of the utmost value to his country.

The Mediterranean Fleet, commanded by Sir Michael Culme Seymour, having swept through the inland sea from Gibraltar, was at that moment approaching the Bosphorus without a whimper of discontent from Constantinople.

Indeed the forts on the Dardanelles had fired salutes in honour of the British flag. Fortunately the British Admiral expected something of the sort, so no misunderstanding occurred, which was as well for the forts.

Once out of sight of land in the Black Sea a halt was called for a final council on board the *Ramillies*, between the naval and military chiefs.

The result was quickly seen when the warships and the transports got under weigh again. Rear-Admiral Compton E. Domville, on the *Trafalgar*, led about one third of the fighting vessels, with two-thirds of the troops—some 80,000 men all told, Lord Methuen being in command—due north for Odessa, whilst the major portion of the armour-clads followed Sir Michael Seymour's flagship towards Sevastopol. The remainder of the troops, a fine army corps of 40,000 men, commanded by Sir Charles Warren, accompanied the Admiral, and excitement ran high on board when the cliffs of the Crimean Peninsular rose in view.

Soon it was possible to distinguish objects and places on shore. Men's hearts leapt tumultuously as they heard the familiar names of Alma, Inkerman, and Balaclava, and among the rank and file there was not the slightest doubt that the ground so hallowed with memories of the British army was again to witness the devotion and heroism of another generation.

But they were mistaken. After a splendid engagement between the Russian Black Sea Fleet, the Sevastopol forts, and the immensely stronger British force, Russia's Naval power in the near East ceased to exist. Even the fortifications received such a drubbing that the Governor of Sevastopol telegraphed for reinforcements to enable him to resist the expected landing.

England, however, had once too often made the mistake of expending her blood and treasure upon this isolated province of her huge enemy.

When the great naval force of Russia in the South had been reduced to impotence the fleet steamed off again, and this time made for Kertch.

A brief but effectual argument with the defenders of this port made it a simple matter for the ships to enter the Sea of Azov, and before the Britons, Australians, and Americans under Sir Charles Warren were quite sure of their geographical location they were actively engaged in capturing Taganrog and as much of the railway lines to Kharkov and Rostow as they could reasonably expect to hold as a preliminary.

The reason for this bold stroke became clear at St. Petersburg when news came simultaneously of the occupation of Odessa by Lord Methuen, who had been released from his divisional command in France to fill his present responsible position.

Odessa was not seized without some hard fighting.

It was strongly held by a Russian army corps, ever there in readiness to pounce upon the Turk. They had been warned to expect attack, and although no effective defence could be made against the fleet, it was a different matter when the British had landed and endeavoured to make even slight headway into the interior.

But troops like these, cheered by the knowledge of the deeds of their brethren in France and Germany, and inspired by the thought that they were fighting the first pitched battle against an hereditary enemy, are ill to stand against.

The famous Russian General, Kouropatkin, commanded the Odessa division, having been stationed there in order to lead the projected advance upon the Danube and the Bosphorus.

Had he withdrawn to Tiraspol he could have seriously hampered Lord Methuen's future operations. By furiously attacking the British at the earliest opportunity, he greatly helped them, for when he was routed with great loss, he opened up the whole province to them as far as Balta.

The transports, after performing their part of the programme, returned to Varna and Galatz, where they took on board vast numbers of the volunteers from the buffer state, who reinforced the British at Odessa and Taganrog, and also occupied Nikolaiev and Rostow.

By the third week in July, when the first detachment of the Indian Army had reached Uzun Ada, Lord Methuen and Sir Charles Warren were ready to strike into the interior on receipt of telegraphic instructions.

(To be continued.)

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LAST WRITTEN, FIRST READ.

P. R. T. writes to ask if we can tell him the origin of the expression "tip."———In an old English tavern a receptacle for small coin was placed in a conspicuous place, over which appeared in writing: "To insure promptness." Whatever was placed in the box was divided amongst the servants. Other taverns followed the example, and soon the words were abbreviated to T. I. P.; everybody knew what they indicated. Finally, the punctuation marks were dropped out, and the word "tip" became popular.

V. B.—So far as I know, no official record of any kind is kept of any meetings of the Cabinet.

N. C.—The reason given for the fact that the royal princes, when boys, are so commonly seen in Highland costume is, that it is the Queen's wish. Her Majesty's predilection for things Scottish is well known.

Geraldine asks: "Is it unhealthy to carry a muff?"———Unmistakably. Swinging the arms while walking is the best sort of exercise a girl can take, and this is an impossibility when clasped in a muff. Then, again, the muscles of the upper part of the body are spread out in all directions like a fan. If the shoulders are held together, the chest shrinks; the muff, in fact, develops a stoop and utterly ruins the symmetry of the whole figure.

W. Y.—No living representative of the animal kingdom has more than five toes, digits, or claws to each foot, hand, or limb, with the exception, of course, of monstrosities.

N. M.—The only venomous bird known is the Rpir N'Doch, or "Bird of Death," a native of New Guinea. It is the size of a pigeon, can only fly a few feet, and is easily caught. Its bite causes excruciating pains, loss of sight, and sometimes lockjaw. No person bitten by it has recovered, and death comes within a few hours.

D. W.—The coinage of new words in the English language continues at the rate of 100 annually.

B. C.—The wooden shoe industry still gives employment to a large number of people in France and in her lost province of Alsace. They are usually made by machinery, but in the Lozere district they are still made by hand. 1,700 persons are engaged in the industry in the last-named province, and their output is half a million yearly. The total number of wooden shoes made annually in the places mentioned is four millions.

S. P.—The restaurants of London provide about 1,000,000 lunches a day.

Jennie writes: "Is it true that the use of perfumes is dangerous?"———Yes, in a way, for by their use the secretory glands are weakened and overtaxed, and the hearing, the throat, and the lungs, and the sense of smell become affected.

D. W.—A carpet was not always a covering for the floor, but what we now term a table-cloth. A topic was always on the carpet when lying on the table for discussion, or when gossiped about by people sitting at a table. Hence the expression: "*Sur le tapis.*"

"Whilst reading the other day," writes H. G., "of the great precautions that are taken to guard the life of the Tsar from the designs of the Nihilists, it occurred to me that if a Nihilist ever got a chance at him with a razor, in the guise of a barber, he would not stand much chance."———There is not likelihood of such a catastrophe as that. In the first place, the Tsar never uses a razor, his beard being carefully trimmed with scissors. Even this is treated as a responsible and important function, and one of the Grand Masters of the Court always attends His Majesty when he is under the care of the barber, who himself is a tried and trusted individual.

D. T. has been terribly shocked by reading a report to the effect that settlers in the West are in the habit of burning corn as fuel. To him it seems "perfectly sinful that grain, which might feed thousands of hungry people, should be destroyed in that way."———In this case, however, the apparent waste is justifiable. In the first place, corn in the ear can be burnt in stoves made for either soft or hard coal, and is especially good fuel for cooking stoves. Moreover, in the district referred to it can be raised in one-tenth of the time and at less expense than timber can be raised for the same purpose. Two bushels of corn will make a fire which will keep a family warm all day, even in very cold weather. Some recommend raising sunflowers for firewood, but they are not as good as corn.

H. M.—The average duration of life in European countries is greatest in Norway and Sweden and lowest in Italy and Austria. Consumption carries off a large number of people in Vienna, owing, it appears, to the quantity of fine dust particles in the air.

T.—There are at least forty varieties of tobacco plant.

R. H. T. asks: "Is it possible for hydrophobia to result from the bite of a dog that is not mad?"———No, hydrophobia is not a spontaneous disease, and cannot be given to a person by a dog unless the animal was mad when it caused the wound.

R. D. M.—Roumania is the highest taxed country in the world. Every bottle of foreign whisky has to pay a shilling duty; there is a tax on your door-plate, a tax on female servants, and doctors have to pay yearly for the privilege of exercising their profession.

Curate would like to know what the Pope's stipend amounts to.———His Holiness is not in receipt of any fixed annual income; the principal source of his revenue is the Peter's Pence, a collection taken up each year in every Roman Catholic church. The total usually reaches on an average about £300,000. Of this the Pope usually retains £20,000, and the remainder is divided amongst the cardinals, poor bishoprics, the administration of the Church, diplomatic expenses, schools, the maintenance of the Vatican and its dependencies.

M. S. would like to know if there is any country in which civilians are compelled to go about armed?———There is such a country, and that is Montenegro. Not only is every man compelled to carry about arms, but he is not even allowed to select his own weapon. Whether he wishes it or not, he is obliged to purchase from the Government a huge revolver eighteen inches long and weighing several pounds, which must be carried in front of his belt in a red Morocco case provided for that purpose, and woe betide the man who appears in the streets who is not thus armed.

SHORT STORIES' ADVERTISEMENT RATES.

Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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Full page inside, facing page of matter, either white paper or 2nd or 3rd page of cover, or back page, per insertion	10	0	0
Half-page ,, ,, ,, ...	5	0	0
Quarter-page ,, ,, ,, ...	2	10	0
Eighth-page ,, ,, ,, ...	1	5	0
Front page, whole ,, ,, ...	12	10	0
,, half	6	5	0

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Black blocks are charged 25 per cent. extra. All advertisements are subject to approval. All copy must be sent in by Noon on Tuesday, Dec. **13th**, if intended for the Issue on sale Dec. **27th**, and dated Dec. **31st**. The Proprietors reserve the right to hold over or suspend the insertion of any advertisement without prejudice to other insertions on order. All communications should be addressed to the Advertisement Manager, "Pearson's Weekly" Offices, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Printed and Published by C. Arthur Pearson Ltd., at Pearson's Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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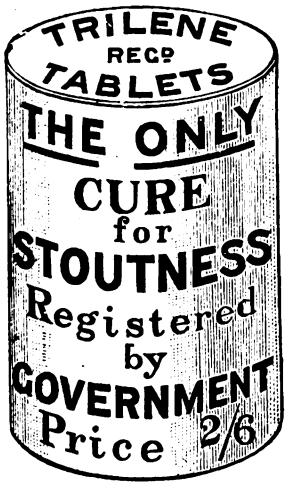
ALL FAT PEOPLE

Can be **CURED** by taking

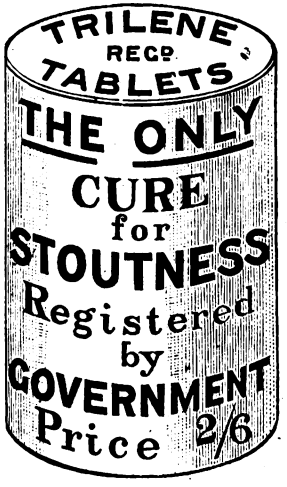
TRILENE TABLETS Regd



For a few weeks. They will safely REDUCE WEIGHT and CURE CORPULENCY PERMANENTLY, whether Abdominal or General. They are small, agreeable, harmless, sent privately, and never fail to Improve both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of Diet.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

Send **2s. 6d.** to **THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66, Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.**



SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"67 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

Jhansi, India, Sept. 14th, 1897.

SERGEON-COLONEL E. S. BRANDER, M.D., writes: "As far as my experience goes, your Tablets form an excellent preparation for reducing weight."

Mrs. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

Mrs. F. HARPER, 61 Portland Crescent, Leeds, writes: "My doctor persuaded me to try a box, and I find they have done my breathing a lot of good and I can get about much better. My doctor did not wish his name mentioned, but they have done him good personally."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

Miss CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silverleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Riseholme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity.

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb.

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

Mrs. JAMES SMITH, of Cowell Terrace, Soham, says: "Your 2s. 6d. box of Tablets reduced my weight 12lb."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

Miss B. MCKENZIE, of Greenhall, High Blantyre, N.B., says: "Completely cured, being reduced 2st."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr, Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with youTablets."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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GIGANTIC AUTUMN SALE, 1898.

ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc., POST FREE, if mentioning *Short Stories* 10/12/98 when writing.

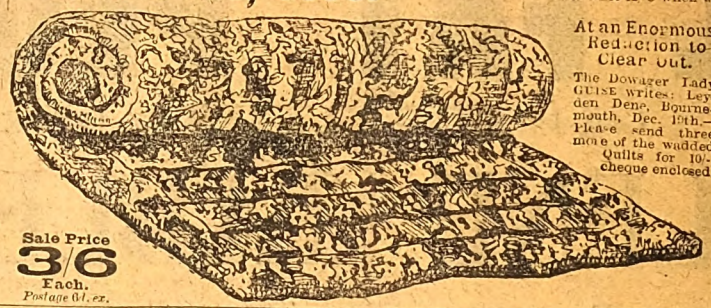
A Stock of 10,000 PATENT WADDED QUILTS, TORALIUMS, OR BED COVERS

(as Illustration).

Covered with Oriental Reversible Soft Sateen with double border. Size 54in. by 60in. These Quilts are offered below anything in the Wholesale Trade, and cause the greatest consternation to the buyer, wondering how they can be produced for the money.

SPECIAL OFFER.

Three Quilts for 10/-, or Six for 19/6, or Twelve for 38/-



Sale Price **3/6** Each. *Postage 6d. ex.*

At an Enormous Reduction to Clear Out.

The Dowager Lady GUISE writes: Leyden Dene, Bournemouth, Dec. 19th.—Please send three more of the wadded Quilts for 10/-, cheque enclosed.

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are extolled by all the Nations of the Earth.

Gigantic Sale of the "QUEEN'S ROYAL" Household

Sale Price.

2/- HEARTHRUGS Regd.

In REVERSIBLE RICH TURKEY PATTERNS, measuring 6ft. long, and 3ft. wide. These HEARTHRUGS have gained a world-wide reputation for MAGNIFICENCE, CHEAPNESS, and UTILITY, having no equal. Registered New Designs, and considered Works of Art. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. **SPECIAL OFFER.—Three for 5/9; Six for 11/3; Twelve for 22/-**

The "Queen's Royal" Household Carpets and Hearthrugs are patronised by Royalty, Nobility, and Clergy from all parts of the Empire.

Gigantic Sale of the "Queen's Royal" Household Reversible Rich Turkey Pattern

CARPETS (Regd.)

Trade Mark on all Goods. Beware of Imitations.

Admittedly the Cheapest in the World. *Woven without seam Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel for excellence and beauty. Thousands of Repeat Orders and Testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.*

6ft. by 9ft. ...	7/6		10½ft. by 12ft. ...	18/0
8ft. by 9ft. ...	9/0		12ft. by 12ft. ...	21/0
6ft. by 12ft. ...	10/6	REDUCED	9ft. by 15ft. ...	19/6
9ft. by 9ft. ...	11/0	SALE	12ft. by 13½ft. ...	22/0
9ft. by 10½ft. ...	13/6	PRICE.	12ft. by 15ft. ...	25/6
9ft. by 12ft. ...	15/0		12ft. by 18ft. ...	30/0
9ft. by 13½ft. ...	16/6		12ft. by 21ft. ...	35/6

Octagon Villa, The Lizard, R.S.O., 15/8/93.—J. CARWARDINE, Esq., writes: "I am very pleased with the Carpet you sent me. I have saved 50 per cent. by giving you the order. I paid half as much again to a local tradesman for Carpets the same quality a year ago. I have never been so pleased of any former purchase."

Colossal Sale of Rich Velvet Pile Real *Sale Price*

BRUSSELS HEARTHRUGS 5/6

In Rich Oriental and Indian Art Designs, measuring 6ft. by 3ft., which for price, real value, width and richness of manufacture will be found unapproachable.

SPECIAL OFFER.—3 Rugs, 16/-; 6 for 31/-

"Melville Castle, Glasswade, Midlothian, June 1st.

The Right Honourable The VISCOUNTESS MELVILLE writes: "I am very pleased with the 'Royal' Velvet Hearthrugs to hand, and would like four more Hearthrugs. Her ladyship would also like two Velvet Carpets at 39/-, one ditto 60/6 to match them. Cheque £8 14s. inclosed."

COLOSSAL SALE OF RICH VELVET PILE

REAL BRUSSELS CARPETS

Extraordinarily Heavy, very Best Quality, Newest and Choicest Designs. In Old Gold, Sultan, Terra Cotta, Crimson, Sky, Navy, and the latest colours. With handsome border to correspond. Guaranteed to wear for years and give every satisfaction. The sizes and prices as follows (all ready for putting down):

REDUCED SALE PRICE LIST.

4½ft. by 7ft.,	11/-		9ft. by 12ft.,	38/-
6ft. by 9ft.,	18/-	VELVET PILE	11ft. by 12ft.,	47/-
7½ft. by 9ft.,	23/-	BRUSSELS	12ft. by 13½ft.,	59/-
9ft. by 9ft.,	28/-	CARPET	12ft. by 15ft.,	69/-
9ft. by 10½ft.,	33/-	SQUARES.	12ft. by 18ft.,	77/-

Altogether superior quality, with handsome border to correspond. A marvel of excellence and beauty. Thousands of repeat orders and testimonials received, giving the highest satisfaction. When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

Ramsden, Chardbury, 4/3/98.—Lady HICKS BEACH writes: "Will Messrs. F. Hodgson and Son send her one of their 'Queen's Royal' Carpets, 9ft. by 9ft., 11/-? Cheque enclosed. The other parcel received safely, and I am pleased with it."

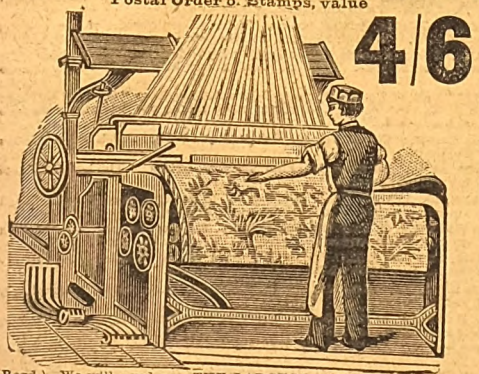
Also RICH VELVET PILE STAIR CARPETS, bordered to match,

18in. wide, 1/3 per yard; 22½in. wide, 2/- per yard; 27in. wide 2/3 per yard.

OUR NEW VENTURE.—Yes. Two different Pattern Hearthrugs or Carpets for the Price of One! *(Copyright.)*

H.R.H. Prince L. of Battenberg. H.R.H. Prince K. Bigit Siam. Marquis of Breadalbane. Sir Henry de Bathe. Sir Henry Bellingham. Sir E. H. Blair, Bart. H.I.H. Eugénie de Christoforo. Princess Palæologos Nicephoros Commence. Duchess of Wellington. Marchioness of Breadalbane. Marchioness of Hastings. Archbishop of York. Princess de Croy.

To Readers of "Short Stories," 10/12/98, on receipt of Postal Order o. Stamps, value



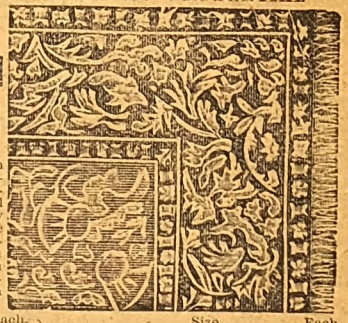
4/6

(Regd.) We will send you THE LARGEST GENUINE REVERSIBLE CARPET in BRUSSELS PATTERN WITH RUG ever sold at the price, direct from the Looms to any address on receipt of amount. Suitable for drawing-room, dining-room, bedroom, etc., bordered and woven in Brussels patterns, as an advertisement for our goods, thus saving any middle profit. Remember these are woven, and are made of a material almost equal to wool. Thousands of these Carpets have been already sold at double these prices.

SPECIAL OFFER—2 CARPETS and 2 RUGS, 8s. [Cut this out.]

PRODIGIOUS SALE of the "PRUDENTIAL"

TURKEY PATTERN CARPETS (Regd).



Reversible, woven throughout, bordered, richly blended in several colours to suit any furniture. These goods cannot be distinguished from real Brussels when laid down, and cannot be excelled in durability.

Size.	Each.		Size.	Each.
6ft. by 9ft.....	4/9		9ft. by 15ft.....	12/6
7½ft. by 9ft.....	5/11	REDUCED	12ft. by 12ft.....	12/9
9ft. by 9ft.....	7/6	SALE	12ft. by 13½ft.....	14/6
9ft. by 10½ft.....	8/6	PRICE.	12ft. by 15ft.....	15/9
9ft. by 12ft.....	9/6		12ft. by 18ft.....	19/6
10½ft. by 12ft.....	11/6		12ft. by 21ft.....	22/6

When ordering, please mention if for Bed, Dining, Drawing, or Sitting Room, and any particular colour preferred.

A Reversible "Prudential" Hearthrug (Reg.), to match above Carpets, sent for 1/6 extra, size 2yd. long and 1yd. wide. Special Offer, Three Hearthrugs for 4/3, or Six for 8/-, or Twelve for 15/6, sterling value.

ILLUSTRATED BARGAIN CATALOGUES OF CARPETS, HEARTHRUGS, TABLE LINEN, CURTAINS, etc., POST FREE, if mentioning *Short Stories* when writing.

We rely upon Spontaneous Repeat Orders from our Clients for the maintenance of our Trade. Established nearly a Quarter of a Century. All orders despatched same day in rotation as they arrive by post. N.B.—Foreign Orders executed and packed free, and shipped at lowest rates. Telegraphic Address: "ECLIPSE, LEEDS." Telephone, No. 948.

Cheques and P.O.'s payable to—

F. HODGSON & SON, Manufacturers, Importers, and Merchants, **WOODSLEY ROAD, LEEDS.**

Short Stories CARPET COUPON. 10/12/98.

On receipt of this Coupon and P.O. or Stamps for amount, we guarantee to send any goods as above to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Cash returned in full if not satisfied.

(Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

SPECIAL 1898.

SPECIALLY REDUCED INTRODUCTION

SALE PARCEL WITH FREE GIFT

enclosed, consisting of

1 Magnificently Rich Cream-Coloured Curly Sheepskin Hearthrug, average size 6 feet by 3 feet, perfection in quality.

1 Beautiful Reversible Art Crimson Plush Bed Rug, Sofa Cover, or Table Cover, double warp, very heavy, size 50 inches by 78 inches.

2 Beautiful Silver Goatskin Door Mats, lined woollen cloth throughout, pinked edges, best finish, ornamental to any room.

1 Elegant Hair Brush, highly finished, with mirror back.

THE LOT

10/6

Postage 9d. extra.

"Given" Away.

Providing *SHORT STORIES* Coupon, 10/12/98, as quoted, a FREE GIFT will be enclosed—a very handsome Electro Silver Plated "OWL" PEPPER STAND with coloured eyes and gilt feet. Cash returned if not satisfied. (Signed) F. HODGSON & SON.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 520. FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 17TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

THE NURSE.

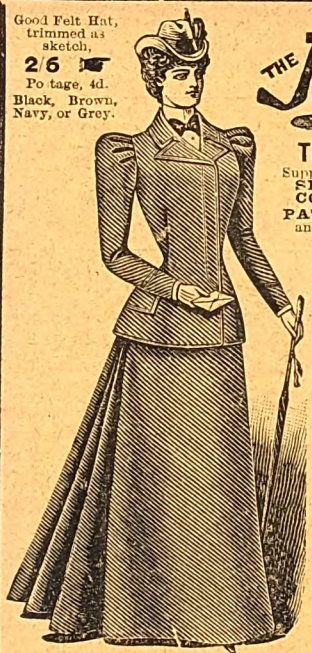
NURSE ROBERTS, 33 Cottage Grove, Bedford Park, Clapham, S.W.: "I cannot speak too highly of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa. My youngest son, who has been feeling very badly, assures me that he feels much better and stronger since he has taken Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and we shall continue to use it. I find it has a pleasant flavour, and it is also the most sustaining and invigorating beverage I have ever met with. I shall have much pleasure in recommending Vi-Cocoa to my friends and patients, and you may use this testimony if you like."

Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa has become a household word, and this wonderful food beverage has come to take an important place in the dietary of the best regulated families. Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa is a natural food, and by its merits alone—having been once fully and fairly placed before the public—it must become a national food, to the general advancement of British health and vigour.

The unique vitalising and restorative powers of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa are being recognised to an extent hitherto unknown in the history of any preparation. Merit, and merit alone, is what is claimed for Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa, and the proprietors are prepared to send to any reader who names *Short Stories* (a post-card will do) a dainty sample tin of Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa free and post paid.

Dr. Tibbles' Vi-Cocoa can be obtained from all Chemists, Grocers, and Stores, or from 60, 61, and 62 Bunhill Row, E.C.

Good Felt Hat, trimmed as sketch, **2/6** Postage, 4d. Black, Brown, Navy, or Grey.



THE John Noble HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES

Promptly sent by Parcel Post direct from

THE LARGEST FIRM OF COSTUMIERS IN THE WORLD.

Supplied in the following two good durable cloths: **I. JOHN NOBLE CHEVIOT SERGE**, weighty, and weather-resisting. **II. JOHN NOBLE COSTUME COATING**, smooth-surfaced, and of lighter weight.

PATTERNS SENT POST FREE, together with a new 84 pp. Illustrated Dress and Drapery List for Ladies and Children.

A FULL DRESS LENGTH of either cloth (6 yards 52 inches wide) for 7/6; carriage, 8d. **7 6**

THESE GARMENTS not only look well, but wear well, & yield loyal service.

3 GOLD MEDALS AWARDED.

Model 984.

A thoroughly well-made and Tailor-finished Chesterfield Coat, and full wide latest style. **10 6** Price 10/6 complete Costume; carriage, 6d. Skirt alone, 5/6; carriage, 5d.

THE JOHN NOBLE KNOCKABOUT FROCKS FOR GIRLS

Made in strong Serge, with saddle-top, full sleeves, and pocket.

21	24	27	30in.
1 6	2/-	2 6	3/-
33	36	39	42in.
3/6	4/-	4/6	5/-

each.

Lengths are from top of neck-band to edge of skirt in front. Carriage, 4d. extra.

WARM WOOL CAPS (as sketch), **1/-**

Bankers:
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Model W 1048.

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SHORT STORIES.

No. 520. ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending December 17th, 1898.

A COMPLICATED BURGLARY.

UNLIKE a good many marriages of convenience, the union between Miss Madge Danvers and George Fenton third Baron Lovell, had proved quite a respectable success. The fair Madge had even owned to a decided weakness for the handsome lad of twenty-three, and though he was not very rich as barons go, there was no denying the solid social advantages of the coronet, or the sweet sound of the pleasant prefix that went with it.

Lord Lovell had £5,000 a year and tastes up to £10,000, and her ladyship had £500 a year under her mother's will, and social ambitions that would have sat easily on the wife of a millionaire.

His lordship's ground rent and royalties were not quite unencumbered when he married, and as he and his wife found all too little difficulty in getting through their joint income and into debt on the other side of it, each year of wedded life saw the family acres dipped a little deeper than the preceding one.

Wherefore it came to pass in the fourth year of their union, what time Junius the favourite ran a bad fourth for the Cesarewitch, that his lordship found himself £500 short of the sum necessary to see him satisfactorily through settling-day. Most unfortunately, too, it happened that her ladyship, just at that very time, wanted a couple of hundred pounds very badly to stave off serious inconveniences arising out of sundry unpaid accounts for the barest necessaries of fashionable life.

This unpleasant combination of circumstances, further

Edited By G. Arthur Pearson

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complicated by a total lack of conjugal confidence, led to the flying of two separate "kites," the strings of which, curiously enough, were both held by the same hand.

It was Thursday afternoon, and Lord Lovell had not got together a single hundred of the £500 that alone could save him from dishonour on the fatal Monday.

He had returned to his club tired and disgusted after a fruitless pilgrimage to the City, and there he chanced upon a friend who showed him a way out of his troubles.

Francis Jameson was a captain of Lancers, retired on half-pay, and the Egyptian medal in consequence of a spear-thrust that had ended his riding days for good. Just after his retirement he had come into a few thousands on the decease of an ancient and admiring maiden aunt, and since then he had lived at the rate of about £2,000 a year without contracting a single debt. What Eldorado he had invested his money in no one knew, and as long as he kept up appearances no one cared.

The ex-captain of Lancers was of course very sorry to hear of his lordship's difficulties, and would have been only too happy to have helped him out of them, if only for the sake of obliging his wife's husband; for Lady Lovell, while she was yet Madge Danvers, had refused him so sweetly and tenderly that he felt sure that he was rejected on purely social and pecuniary grounds.

Unfortunately, however, his money was all locked up; but at the same time he did happen to know of an obliging solicitor on the other side of the water who often had a thousand or two to dispose of on behalf of his clients.

The upshot of this conversation was that shortly before noon on the following day his lordship crossed the water, presented Jameson's card to Mr. Thomas Gaston, solicitor, 29A, High Street, Newington, and after a few minutes' discussion of his case, was informed, somewhat to his surprise, that the money would be at his disposal by twelve o'clock the following day on his personal security. The interest would only be 5 per cent. a month, which was very reasonable, considering all the circumstances.

About two hours after his lordship had left the dingy South-side street, and departed, wondering yet rejoicing, to more congenial latitudes, a lady, attended by a smart French maid, descended from a hansom at Mr. Gaston's hospitable door.

A quarter of an hour later the lady and her maid re-entered their cab. In the lady's little handbag there reposed four £50 notes, and in the drawer of Mr. Gaston's safe lay a slip of blue stamped paper endorsed "Margaret Fenton."

* * * * *

Three months had passed since Lord and Lady Lovell had paid their separate visits to Newington, and the two bills in Mr. Gaston's hands would fall due in three days' time. Disaster after disaster had befallen his lordship since he had borrowed that £500, until now the nominal master of £5,000 a year did not know where to lay his hands upon a paltry hundred for current expenses, to say nothing about meeting the impending bill.

The three months had been a period of increasing difficulty to both Lord and Lady Lovell. They had each applied to Mr. Gaston for a renewal of their respective bills, and each had been politely but firmly informed that unless adequate security were forthcoming, the bills would have to be met in due course.

Now the only security that they possessed between them were the family jewels, worth between three and four thousand pounds, but as neither cared to tell the other how matters stood it was rather difficult to see how they could be made available.

Two days before the bills had to be met his lordship, in a fit of desperation, laid all his troubles bare before his friend Jameson, and incidentally lamented the fact that the family jewels had been settled on Lady Lovell on her marriage, subject to the condition that she should not dispose of them without the consent of two trustees, to whom under the present circumstances an appeal was not to be thought of.

"Then, my dear fellow," said Jameson, after considering the subject for a few moments in silence, "the only course open to you as far as I can see is to do as others have had to do before you, and have the jewels stolen for you by a trustworthy burglar, realise them on the quiet, and retire to the Continent until your troubles have blown over. The game is up for the present as far as I can see, and you must just lie by quietly until your estates have cleared themselves."

This curious method of extrication had not occurred to his lordship; but the moment it was suggested to him the very strangeness of the idea fascinated him, and he made no more objection than to question the feasibility of the plan.

Jameson very soon allayed his feelings on this score by telling him the inner history of a once celebrated jewel robbery, in which neither jewels nor thieves were ever traced, and when Lord Lovell parted an hour later from his friend in need, the details of the sham burglary were all arranged, and the event was fixed to come off the following night, when the Lovells and the gallant Captain would be at a ball until the small hours of the morning. Jameson was to provide the burglar, and all that his lordship would have to do was to hand over his latch-key, himself and his wife keep out of the way until three o'clock in the morning, and meet him the next day to receive the plunder.

Now by one of those strange coincidences which happen rather more frequently in real life than they do in fiction, at the very time that this little plot was being arranged in the smoking room of Lord Lovell's club, an almost identical conspiracy was being hatched in his wife's boudoir between her ladyship and her clever, if somewhat unscrupulous, French maid.

Long before her husband had thought of them, Lady Lovell had looked with longing eyes on her splendid jewels, and most fervently wished that no trustees existed to question her disposal of them according to her own needs and desires.

Two or three times she had bewailed to her *confidante* her inability to dispose of enough of them to help her out of her present scrape without exposure and social disgrace, and now the faithful Josephine rose to the occasion, and, for a consideration, boldly volunteered to steal the jewels on behalf of her almost distracted mistress.

It did not take the clever Frenchwoman many minutes to convince the harassed, ignorant girl of the ease with which the plan could be carried into execution, and so before his lordship returned to dinner she had consented that Josephine should find her jewel-case unlocked, and abstract the precious contents while she was away at Lady Fitz-Alan's ball the following night.

Little conspiracies of this kind would generally go off satisfactorily if the parties to them would only keep faith with each other, but they do not always do so, and in the present case it must be regretfully recorded that twelve hours had not elapsed before Lord Lovell had formed a counterplot on his own account by which he

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hoped to obviate the necessity of trusting to the *bonâ fides* of Captain Jameson's burglar, and to get the jewels for himself without letting them go outside the house.

* * * * *

Joseph Crooks, *alias* "Crooky Joe," whose services had been retained for the removal of the jewels in accordance with Captain Jameson's plan, found no difficulty in the execution of the first and most important part of his delicate enterprise. Watching his opportunity, he let himself in with the latch-key, stole upstairs to her ladyship's boudoir, and was pleased to find that someone's carelessness had saved him the trouble of picking the lock of the jewel-case. In a very few minutes he had slipped the morocco cases into his capacious pockets and was on his way downstairs again, chuckling to himself over the easiest job he had ever had in all his professional experience.

Everything having gone so well thus far, it would be easier to imagine than describe his disgust at finding himself confronted on the first-floor landing by a gentleman in evening dress, holding a cocked revolver, the barrel of which was in a disagreeably straight line with his own person. He halted, and his hand instinctively sought the back pocket of his short tail coat.

"If you take that hand out of your pocket I shall shoot," said the gentleman, in a voice whose low, steady tones told Joseph that the game was practically up so far as his present undertaking was concerned. Under the circumstances he wisely concluded to parley with a view to conditional surrender, so he said as gently as he knew how:—

"Chuck it, guv'nor! I ain't got no pistil, and I'll give up all I've took if yer'll lemme 'ook it quietly."

"I've no doubt you would, and a very good get-out for you too; but that is a matter which wants a little discussion. Turn round and go into that room, the last door on the corridor. Go quietly or you may wake someone."

The speaker was in a position to give orders, and Joseph stood on such delicate ground that there was no course open for him but obedience. He went to the door indicated, opened it, and walked into a snug little sanctum in which a jet of gas was burning.

"Sit down and make yourself comfortable," said his host, pointing to an armchair with the barrel of his revolver, "I want to have a chat with you, and we shall not be disturbed for half-an-hour if we don't talk too loud. Is this little affair your own idea?"

"No, sir, it ain't. I was put up to it by a party I knows, who said as 'ow 'e 'ad got instructions from a gentleman wot said 'e wanted the job done fur a swell friend of 'is as wos compelled to reerlise on 'is joolery on the quiet, like. I wos to sneak the stuff and give it to the chap wot come to me, and 'e wos to give me a tenner fur the job. That's all I knows about it, straight."

"A very fair story, but rather too mixed to be true. If the man wanted his jewellery stolen, why ever shouldn't he take it himself instead of giving you the chance to run off with the lot?"

"I allow it don't look true, mister, but it's as right as gospel for all that, s'elp me!"

"Well, we won't argue the point, we might be interrupted, and if I'm going to let you go it's time you were off"—Joseph assented with some feeling, and his host went on—"Now, what I propose is this. I don't want to get you into trouble, and a prosecution would be a lot of worry to both of us, especially to you. Therefore we'll take your story as true, you will put what you have taken on that table, and I will give you a couple of sovereigns if you will go and tell the people who sent you that the jewels were stolen, or, at any rate, had disappeared, when you got here. Will that suit you?"

"Down to the ground, mister. I don't know wot yer game is, but that's no bizness of mine. You've be'aved honourable to me, and 'ere's the stuff—every bit as I took."

As he spoke, Joseph pulled out a dozen morocco cases of different sizes from his pockets and laid them, with a creditably small show of reluctance, on the table. When he had put the last one down his host handed him two sovereigns, took up one of the cases and opened it.

Instead of the diamond necklace it ought to have held, it contained a cheap, flashy string of crystals not worth five shillings.

With an unprintable exclamation, Lord Lovell threw it on the table and rapidly opened the other cases. Not one of them held the jewels he looked for.

The faces of the nobleman and the burglar as they looked at each other and the sham jewellery by turns, bore a curious likeness in spite of the natural difference of their features. They had both been very badly sold, and they looked it.

The feelings of his lordship as he showed Joseph out of the side door of the house were decidedly mixed and by no means cheerful, still, for the next few hours, there was nothing to be done, so he went upstairs, put the cases with their worthless contents back into the jewel box, and returned a sad and sorely puzzled man to escort his wife home from Lady Fitz-Allan's ball.

When her ladyship reached home and sent for her maid, Josephine entered the room with a curious, wicked-looking glint in her eyes, and in rapid, broken accents told her the story of the vanished jewels and the failure of their scheme. The next day Lady Lovell was confined to her room, and it was not until the evening that her husband was able to condole with her on the subject of their joint loss.

They never saw them again, and their disappearance opened the flood-gates of ruin so wide that there was nothing for it but a speedy retirement to the Continent or the endurance of social ostracism at home.

They agreed in choosing the former, so his lordship gave his good friend Jameson a power of attorney to deal with his estates for the benefit of his creditors, reserving only £500 a year for himself, and departed to the South of France.

Mr. Thomas Gaston, of Newington, was made manager of the estates, which he ruthlessly squeezed very much to the advantage of himself and of his employer, the ex-captain of Lancers, private moneylender, and organiser of complicated burglaries.

But even Mr. Gaston did not know how Lady Lovell's jewels got from her boudoir to the lower drawer of the safe that still held her ladyship's dishonoured acceptance, until one day last winter, nearly seven years after the jewels vanished so mysteriously, Mdlle. Josephine, desiring to retire from business into respectable married life in her own land, turned up at the office in High Street, Newington, and demanded £1,000 down as the price of her silence as to how Captain Jameson employed her to substitute the false for the real gems half an hour before Mr. Joseph Crooks made the greatest blunder of his whole professional career.

The fact that the money was paid within three hours gives a strong colouring of probability to Mdlle. Josephine's explanation of the mystery.

LEVIN CARNAC.

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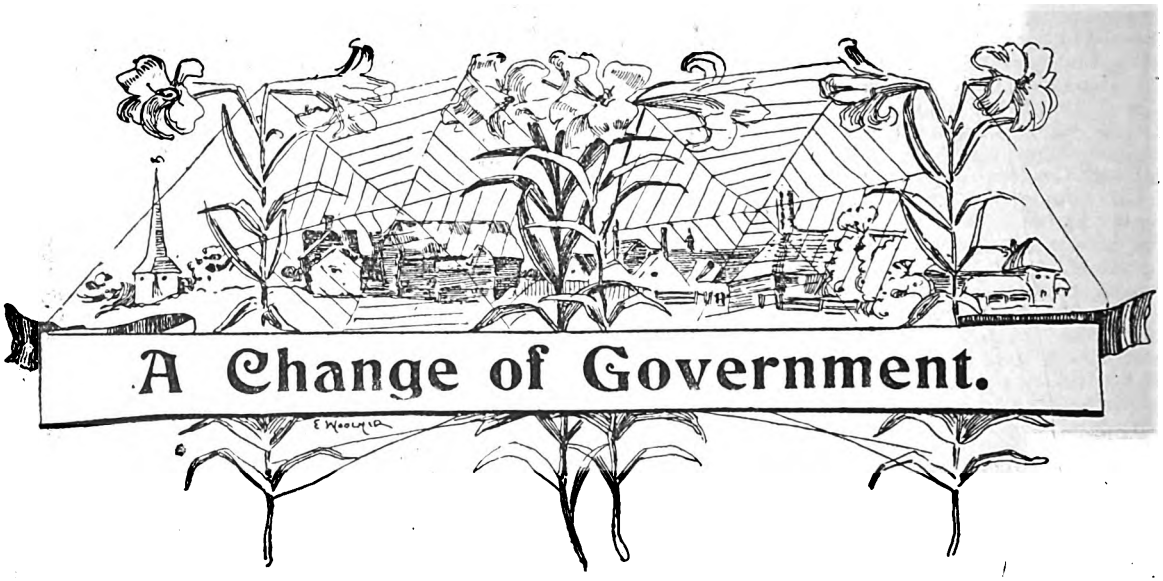

A Change of Government.

"AH, you're just in time for the revolution!"

This was the whispered greeting Don Munios gave me half and hour after my arrival in La Guayro.

"Revolution," said I, "what revolution?"

"Why *yours*, of course," he answered with a chuckle.

"*My* revolution! Look here, Munios, out with your joke."

"But it's no joke. We've got the man, we've got the guns, and the trap is all but ready to be sprung. A week from St. Sebastian's and the business will be on. It won't take long. We bag the Prince, that rascal Castillie, his councillor, and General Sargos at one clip. At the next, we get the Prince's brother and one or two of the smaller fry in the army. Then, *vive la république*!"

"And what is to happen to these people you mention?"

"Oh, just removed—gprrrp, you know," and Don Munios drew his hand across his throat with a suggestive leer. Yet I have seen his eyes fill with tears at the sight of a pin scratch on a child's arm.

In an instant my business instinct was up in arms. "Look here!" I said hotly, "you don't suppose that I take any part in your g-r-r business, do you? Why, that sort of thing would simply kill my enterprise. As a friend, I advise you to drop your revolution at once."

"What!" Don Munios threw his cigarette out of the window and jumped to his feet. "Let Guayro suffer longer under this good-for-nothing Prince? Why, see what he's done for the country during the last five years! Look at the banana plantations—abandoned! Look at the gold mines—idle! Look at the railway—two streaks of rust and a mortgage! The treasury is bankrupt, the government corrupt, and things are gone to the dogs generally, all that our feather-head of a Prince may amuse himself with his boon companions and make a study of new sensations."

Calm or ruffled, these people of Spanish blood are always picturesque. Their fires of passion are ever lightly banked. Just open a damper and the flames leap from coals which a moment before seemed black and dead. And Don Munios was a true Spaniard.

"Your Prince may be all you say," I returned, "and your affairs may have gone to the dogs, but mine are all right, and a revolution would play ducks and drakes with them. Why not use peaceable means—agree to get along without a Prince, and send him back to Spain marked 'unavailable?'"

"Impossible! I'd be as much opposed to bloodshed as you are, but I know the situation. The officers are the Prince's boon companions. As for the soldiers, they idolise their officers—and there you are! No, the people have made up their minds that for the good of La Guayro, the Prince and his soldier friends must die. In confidence I tell you that in ten days the blow will fall. If in that time you can propose any plan for setting up a republic peacefully, I promise to put it fairly before the Revolutionary Council."

This was the situation over which we argued until the stars faded; and it still "hung heavy over my head" when I awoke to find the tropic sun beating straight down upon the adobe walls of my host's home.

I had come to La Guayro as representative of a commercial company, with a concession from the government of La Guayro, given in return for a sum that assured royal reception in the bankrupt kingdom. It was doing well in its mines, and I didn't want my business prospects upset.

To make the company's position doubly secure, I had, in a sort of inspection tour some months previously, engaged Don Munios as local agent with a salary that had secured his protestations of everlasting loyalty. Indeed, even now he tried to make himself believe that the prospective revolution was for the company's good, but to me civil strife meant nothing less than indefinite delay in digging, if indeed the mere rumour of it did not knock the bottom out of our stocks in the London market. At any rate, gunpowder costs money, and whoever won would make us pay their bills in the shape of taxes.

Viewed from any standpoint, the situation accumulated seriousness at such a rate, that before I had been up an hour I had cabled in cypher to the London office that a revolution was imminent, and that unless it could be prevented our interests would be imperilled. With as much urgency as I could put into a cable message, I begged that the manager of the company, who was to be

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somewhere in America about that time, should be instructed to come to my help at once.

For two days I fairly lived at the cable office, waiting feverishly for an answer; but the oracle remained dumb. I was afraid that he could not possibly arrive in time, yet I waited anxiously for some reply.

On the third morning I walked down to the steamship office—to lay my plans in case it seemed necessary to get away before the row began. To my surprise I saw a big white yacht ploughing her way up the bay. She did not deign to poke her aristocratic nose up to the tumble-down quay, but came to a stop off-shore, not even dropping her anchor. I caught sight of a curiously familiar figure, followed by a man carrying a case, saunter out of the cabin, shake hands with half-a-dozen men aboard, wave an airy good-bye, and step into the boat, turning to me a face that—yes, there was no mistaking him—it was the face of Mr. Walter Rayner, the manager of our company, and the one man in the world who, if the means existed for accomplishing a bloodless revolution in La Guayro, would find these means.

When he stepped off the quay I could only babble my delight that he had arrived so soon after receiving my message.

"Message?" repeated Rayner, as I helped his man tumble their belongings into the broken-down vehicle that did duty for a public conveyance. "I got no message. Been cruising for days with Hill and his friends. He came out of his way on purpose to drop me off here, and now he's gone back after other sport. But what about your message? Nothing wrong I hope? For I'm having a rest. Doctor's orders. Told me to hunt up the dullest, sleepiest place I could and go there. Well, what are you smiling about?"

As well as I could, owing to the way in which we were being jolted over vilely-paved streets, and also considering the proximity of Rayner's man on the front seat, I explained the La Guayro tangle, winding up with the point blank question whether he could straighten it out. To which Rayner responded only with the counter question, when could he see Don Munios? When informed that we were to be guests at that worthy's residence, he relapsed into silence.

Rayner did not keep the workings of his mind in a glass case.

The surprise of Don Munios on seeing my companion had a touch of fear in it. The Latin American is only a generation removed from the believer in the black arts.

When I had told him that I had cabled for Rayner to come to stop the row, he had smiled; it wasn't possible. Yet here he was, several days before time—and in advance of the revolution,

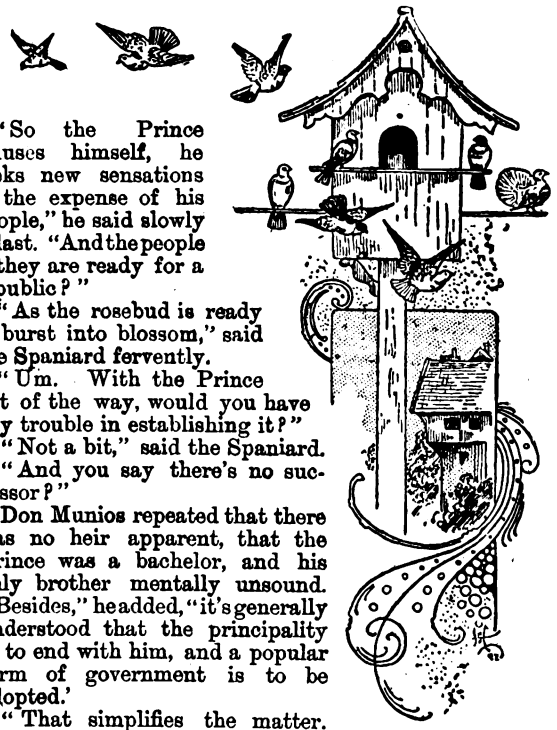
"Your steamships must have the wings of the wind," was all he said, however.

And neither Rayner nor I denied it.

After dinner, seated under the palm trees in the courtyard, Don Munios gave a report of the preparations for the revolution, which he vainly attempted not to make enthusiastic; ending his account, as I had mine, by asking if Rayner had any peaceable plan to suggest.

"Give me time," said my friend slowly. "You don't suppose I have conspiracies on tap, do you? Besides, there are one or two things I want to know."

Then ensued something like a game of twenty questions, in which Rayner in an hour acquired more information concerning La Guayro, its finances, agriculture, banking system, etiquette, leading men, and the character, foibles, and habits of its ruler than I had obtained during the two months of my previous stay.



"So the Prince amuses himself, he seeks new sensations at the expense of his people," he said slowly at last. "And the people—they are ready for a republic?"

"As the rosebud is ready to burst into blossom," said the Spaniard fervently.

"Um. With the Prince out of the way, would you have any trouble in establishing it?"

"Not a bit," said the Spaniard.

"And you say there's no successor?"

Don Munios repeated that there was no heir apparent, that the Prince was a bachelor, and his only brother mentally unsound. "Besides," he added, "it's generally understood that the principality is to end with him, and a popular form of government is to be adopted.'

"That simplifies the matter. Now let me have a chance to think things over."

Rayner's way of thinking things over was characteristic. It seemed to consist in literally seeing the town from its markets and quays, to the cathedral and palaces, and in casually chatting with representatives of every class, from the mule drivers to the chief conspirators, and the Prince himself. It even allowed him to spend an hour or so each evening in Munios' library, never reading, but apparently revelling in the atmosphere of books.

On the evening of the third day Rayner and I sat and smoked silently in this library. Apparently he was idly gazing at the ceiling. Then he walked about the room, glancing at the rows of books that lined the walls. He looked with the critical eye of a book fancier at the backs of one or two, and finally sat down with a volume on his knee.

"I've got it," he said quietly after a time, closing the volume and blowing a ring of smoke towards the ceiling.

"Got it? I knew you would. What is it?"

"That's it—up there," pointing to the thinning of a smoke ring.

"But where did you get it?"

"Out of that book. That's where the best of us go for an idea. Men have been thinking for ages, and writing what they thought for centuries. Don't try to do all your thinking yourself. Use other men's brains when you can. It pays."

"Which book? Let me see." But he had put the volume back, and would only indicate his source of inspiration by an indefinite wave of the hand. He said nothing more until Don Munios returned late that night from a meeting of the conspirators.

"The Prince suspects nothing at all?" asked Rayner of the arch conspirator.

"I shouldn't be at liberty if he did."

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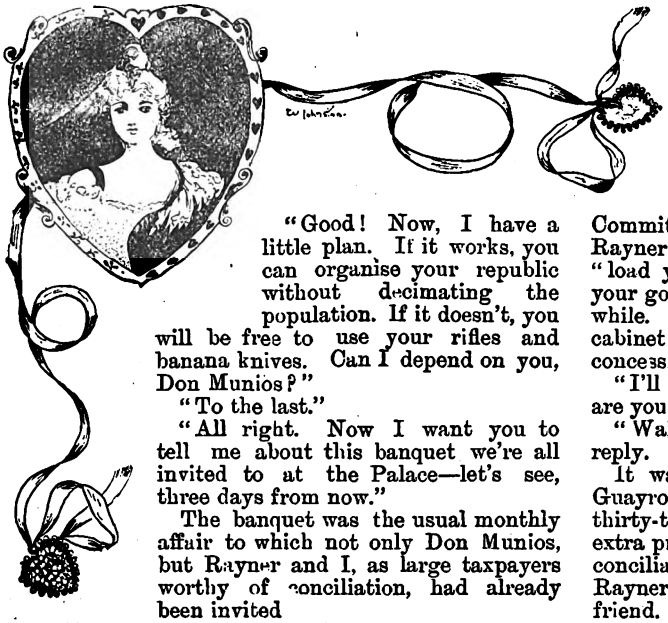

"Good! Now, I have a little plan. If it works, you can organise your republic without decimating the population. If it doesn't, you will be free to use your rifles and banana knives. Can I depend on you, Don Munios?"

"To the last."

"All right. Now I want you to tell me about this banquet we're all invited to at the Palace—let's see, three days from now."

The banquet was the usual monthly affair to which not only Don Munios, but Rayner and I, as large taxpayers worthy of conciliation, had already been invited

Don Munios repeated this information, with appropriate phrases concerning wines and sweets wrung from the starving people.

"Yes, I know," said Rayner, "but I want details. Where is it to be held?"

"In the big banqueting hall of the Palace."

"Oh, yes! It was being redecorated when I went over it, so I didn't see it. Quite a fine place, isn't it? Is it lighted by electricity?"

"Yes"—more phrases concerning the Prince's criminal extravagance.

"One thing more. Who is the Prince's royal sky-pilot, chief priest, or that sort of thing?"

The Spaniard's eyes expressed mental dizziness at this irreverence.

"The Archbishop of La Guayro. But why—"

"All right, I'd like to meet him to-morrow. Can you arrange it?"

"Certainly; only—"

"One thing more. You say the Prince likes to be amused. Do you suppose that you could arrange to have him ask my man Drake to be present as entertainer? Oh, Drake's no clothesbrusher," to a look in the Spaniard's eyes. "He's a gentleman, Drake is, a college graduate, and all that; but something went wrong with him in early life—crossed in love, perhaps, and he's never got on in life. Among other things he has been a magician on the variety stage. My friends and I found him very entertaining on the yacht, I assure you, and he'll give the Prince a new sensation or two. Now, why not introduce him as the distinguished French prestidigitateur, Monsieur Brion? Will that go?"

"Certainly," said Don Munios, catching some of his infectious enthusiasm. "The Prince will insist on summoning him if he numbers the black art among his accomplishments. Our sovereign dotes on that sort of thing. Only I don't understand."

"Oh, I thought we might give him one night's fun before he leaves the Prince business," said Rayner yawning. "Suppose we get some sleep, gentlemen? I'm tired."

And neither that night nor in the three days following would Rayner utter a word to either of us concerning his plans. In fact he seemed to have forgotten it himself.

Drake, meantime, had received his invitation, and was making such preparations as were possible without apparatus.

When Don Munios, becoming uneasy as the next day of grace approached, remonstrated and reminded him that the Revolutionary Committee was going on ahead with its preparations, Rayner nodded his acquiescence. "All right," he said; "load your guns, sharpen your swords and organise your government. I suppose you'll have a dictator for a while. All I want is the assurance that your first cabinet will sign an iron-bound contract to respect our concession, and let us dig twelve months in the year."

"I'll answer for that," said Don Munios. "But when are you going to get the Prince out of the way?"

"Wait till after the banquet," was the enigmatic reply.

It was a superb affair, even for the Prince of La Guayro—that banquet—for the fact that it marked the thirty-third birthday of the sovereign gave an excuse for extra preparation. As large taxpayers and persons to be conciliated, Rayner and I were given seats of honour, Rayner on the Prince's right hand, and I next to my friend. On either side of the long tables gleaming with the royal palace plate and glass and flowers, extended a line of dark, heavily-moustached men, many handsome, most of them young, and looking very brave and gay in their broadcloth, brass buttons, and gold lace. The viands were of distinguished excellence, and the wine of a flavour that belongs only to the output of certain world-renowned vineyards. At the same time there was no vulgar excess. It was not for nothing that the Prince had made the pursuit of pleasure the chief business of his life.

By the time the last course was reached, all things had worked together to bring the company into just the humour for greeting with enthusiasm the gentleman introduced as "M. Brion, the far-famed magician, and friend of Mr. Rayner, of the English company."

And M. Brion, otherwise Drake, proved himself worthy of Rayner's praise. Without any outfit but playing cards, rings, coins, handkerchiefs, and other small objects borrowed on the spot, he kept the entire assembly mystified and entranced. The Prince he captured at the start, by making a strawberry grow out of that gentleman's salt-cellar. Don Munios for the moment forgot the revolution in wonder of beholding a mango seed, hidden in his table napkin, sprout, and finally shoot up into a perfect plant.

Finally, after a number of tricks involving the disappearance of coins, interchange of rings, and the like, Drake took up a pack of playing cards, and proceeded to such card throwing as I have never seen.

Standing at the foot of the long table, he dealt a card to each of the thirty guests without moving from his position, landing the pasteboard deftly in the finger glass before each man. Then he threw one which sailed gracefully to a point just above the Prince's head, and then returned to the hand of the magician.

The native boomerang thrower of Australia would have been moved to envy to see the Queen of Hearts float back with such precision to the hand that sent her. Besides, he read cards through the back, made a rainbow of them about his head, and performed half-a-dozen

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clever tricks that took by storm the La Guayreans. Suddenly, as if by way of climax, he turned, gave a long, shrill whistle, and, with a graceful gesture, sent the entire pack fluttering like a flock of birds straight at the walls of the banquet hall. Before the first one fell to the floor the lights went out with a snap, and the company was left in total darkness.

For a moment there was absolute silence, then the faint click of metal betrayed the fact that there was a furtive reaching for swords. The Spaniard trusts no man in the dark.

The next minute, however, all were reassured, and ardent Spanish interjections broke from the lips of the Prince and his delighted guests. Where had been the solid wall of the Palace now appeared a fairy-like landscape. Trees, mountains, a lake, a river and waterfall gleamed out of the darkness as by enchantment, then faded as quickly as they had appeared. But with only an instant's interval the scene appeared again, this time faintly, as a landscape seen in the gray early morning. Then one of the upper clouds was streaked with pink; then another. The light grew stronger, the whole sky and scene were gradually lighted up, until we saw it once more as if in the glare of the noonday sun.

Darkness again, illuminated this time by the crimson glow of a sunset. Then another interval of blackness and the electric globes in the crystal chandelier above us blazed out again, and instead of gazing at the magic landscape, our eyes detected what had seemed a section of the solid wall of the Palace was a sort of drop curtain painted to match the other decorations. These waterfalls, dawns, and noons, and sunsets had not been the product of black art, but merely the work of a clever scene painter and skilful electrician.

As the storm of applause following M. Brion's withdrawal died away, the Prince rose, glass held high.

"A health to M. Brion and Mr. Rayner," he cried, his handsome face flushed.

With a bell-like tinkling of glasses the toast was drunk, and we had pushed back our chairs and begun to move about and break up into groups, when the voice of Castillio, the chief councillor of the Prince, drew all our eyes to our end of the table.

"The Prince! Look!"

Without a sound His Highness had sunk in his chair, his arms limp, his head hanging on one side, his face, lately gay and glowing, now turned an ashy grey.

The next moment he fell into the arms of General Sarjos who sat at the Prince's left.

In an instant a contagion of excitement spread to the entire Palace. While attendants removed the Prince to his apartments, a messenger was despatched for the Royal Physician and the Archbishop, and the banqueters, now thoroughly sobered, withdrew to the reception-room to await developments.

"A slight heart seizure or a mild stroke of apoplexy," was the news with which we were finally dismissed. And it was added that the Royal Physician expected that the Prince would soon revive. But those acquainted with the ways of Palaces wagged their heads knowingly over the non-committal nature of the report.

By nine o'clock next morning the seriousness of the Prince's condition could no longer be concealed, but was proclaimed in bulletins to the excited crowd who had been waiting at the Palace gates since dawn. At noon the Prince was still unconscious, and the bulletins indicated grave doubts of his recovery. At 2 p.m. the situation was the same. His respiration was faint and the heart's action almost imperceptible.

At three o'clock it was rumoured that the Archbishop had proposed that as a last expedient he should resort to an old custom still prevalent among the Spanish-speaking people. In accordance with this usage, when a man of prominence is supposed to be dying, has apparently but one chance in a hundred of living, and wants to make the most of it, he has his head shaved, is dressed in monk's robes, and takes a solemn vow, if his life is spared, to enter a monastery.

There's no renouncing his vows if he lives.

If he is unconscious—and herein lay the special application of the custom—his friends may take the necessary steps without his sanction.

In short, the priests asked that in order to save the Prince's life for this world, or his soul for the next, they should make a monk of him; and though Castillio and the army officers protested vigorously, many prominent citizens, some of whom Don Munios had been accustomed to meet with in secret, enthusiastically seconded the appeal of the priests. As for the ignorant and superstitious common people, who believed fervently in the potency of the old custom, they thronged about the cathedral and raised their voices in a fervour of entreaty.

At 4 p.m. it was officially announced that the Archbishop would wait until six, and that if by that time the Prince was still unconscious and alive, he would perform the ceremony.

When that hour had arrived and the Prince's condition was unchanged, word swept through the dense crowd that filled the *plaza* and, overflowing, pressed against the very gates of the palace, that the operation of transforming the Prince into a monk had begun.

But about seven o'clock the Prince showed signs of returning vitality. In another hour he opened his eyes, and by nine o'clock he was sitting up, rubbing his hands over his head in bewilderment, and weakly gasping a "health to M. Brion and Mr. Rayner."

Meantime Don Munios and his followers, realising the drift of affairs, had quietly gathered their forces, seized the Arsenal, and before Castillio and the Prince's military friends understood what was happening, occupied the royal council chamber—all without a struggle.

Just at midnight, as the Prince, by order of the Archbishop, was carried off to the monastery, uttering remonstrance grievously out of character with his new *rôle*, Don Munios and his friends proclaimed the establishment of the Republic of La Guayro. The thing had been done without the pop of a gun or the loss of a single life.

"Rayner," said I, as we sat in Munios's library late that night, "now that all is over, do you mind telling me your plan? Natural causes have——"

"Natural causes!" returned my friend scornfully. "I arranged it with Drake and the Palace electrician, a clever young Scotsman, and while the lights went out I dropped a potion into the Prince's cup."

"But the custom?"

"I discovered that night in the library—recorded in Volume iii., Chapter 4, of that set of Curiosities of Spanish History. In chumming with the Archbishop I found that it was still 'practical.' But I say," said Rayner with a twinkle of appreciation, "do you suppose that the Prince, in all his varied experience, ever had a sensation that matched his, when he found out his fate?"

PETER CONNOLLY.

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What Love will Do.

MAX VANNER leant against an oaken door-way, and out of his dark, magnetic eyes, carelessly scanned the gliding throng until——

Yes, there she was! He could not mistake that exquisite form—that beautiful face.

As usual she was surrounded by her "Knights of the Carpet" court, poor moths. He was stronger than their strongest, yet he had been singed, and——

Carelessly he sauntered to her side.

She lifted her violet eyes; such strange, half sad, half tender, wholly proud, defiant eyes, that their fringing glance had long since pierced his heart.

But just now the eyes languidly lifted to his were tinged with boredom; the faintest curl of contempt just curved the beautiful, mobile lips, and she turned from her eager suitors with an insolent, unmistakable shrug of her exquisitely moulded shoulders.

"Is it true that you are going to that hot-bed of fever, South America, Dr. Vanner?" she asked in a low dragging voice which always entered his dreams, and haunted his waking hours. "It is the latest rumour," she added, with another eloquent gesture of contempt, "with which my brilliant knightly train has been seeking to amuse me."

"I hope they have succeeded," scornfully returned Max, a flash of wrath in his masterful eyes. How cold and cruel her flexible voice jarred upon his senses! "To amuse Miss Armyn would be a more difficult feat, and praiseworthy, perhaps, than to exterminate Yellow Jack for ever."

A crimson stain mounted to the pure Grecian brow, swept down the lovely face, and died under the jewelled bodice of her white silk gown.

"You should have been a surgeon," she said coldly. "You would have had no nice scruples about inflicting torture"

"Torture?" he whispered hoarsely, his warm breath fanning her lovely cheeks.

They had drawn apart from the pushing crowd, or the pushing crowd had drawn apart from them; neither, in this intense moment, noted which or cared.

"Torture? How little you comprehend what it is!"

Visibly she shrank from the fire in his eyes, the passion in his voice. Her action brought him to his senses.

He laughed lightly.

"Well, you have had your pound of flesh," he said. "And had it from the heart. Are you satisfied?"

She flashed him a disdainful glance from her great luminous eyes. They expressed a strange commingling of emotions.

"Do you blame me?" she asked bitterly. "You boasted of your strength. You were so proud, so cynical, so self-sufficient, and I was a woman, a coquette, what you will!"

She paused, then resumed with a little reckless laugh.

"What a great pity I could not escape my own flail when it fell!"

She had spoken almost fiercely; yet she turned with a smile on her exquisite face when a tall, pompous, middle-aged man walked in between them, placing a hand upon the arm of each.

So, in actual life, he stood between them.

"Is this thing I hear true, Vanner?" he asked. "Are you really so rash as to fling away your life in that pestilential city of Rio?"

"More valuable lives by far are flung away every day in the case of humanity, Charring," returned Max quietly.

He could not help but notice how deathly white Maud Armyn's lovely face had grown.

A great pity smote his heart, and bore away its bitterness.

He would not seek to see her again. After all, had she been to blame? If they had only met before she had sold herself to Mammon, personified in Paul Charring—if her training had been different from the worldly thing it was!

"Was going to ask you to be best man at my wedding," Charring's voice was saying, when Vanner again comprehended.

"If anything could tempt me to stay," retorted the physician, infinite scorn in his eyes, his firm lips smiling, "that would certainly be effective. But I wish you just as much joy of that occasion nevertheless. Now I must bid you both farewell. I leave London soon."

He shook hands with each, quite as if it were the most indifferent thing on earth; then sauntered down the long brilliant rooms, and disappeared from Maud Armyn's burning eyes.

"Are you ill, my dear?" exclaimed her betrothed, as a low moan passed the lovely lips.

"By Jove! Water, Ware; she has fainted! This infernal heat has overcome her."

But, whether due to the heat or a deeper-seated cause, next day Maud Armyn was down with brain fever.

Her wedding—that anticipated event of the season—was postponed, while, in her darkened room, the beautiful girl fought with a grim and grasping monster the battle of life and death.

People came and went with solicitous inquiries. Charring haunted the Armyn mansion like some giant ghost out of its element.

The doctors gave up all hope, and sat down to await the issue: then suddenly the tide was turned, and they knew that Maud Armyn would live.

During her convalescence, she was given a newspaper by her own request.

Her heart was hungering for news of the fevered Rio, where Max Vanner toiled above those writhing victims of a fell disease.

Suddenly her eyes fell upon the list of dead. They ran along the column; then with a wild cry she rose and staggered forward and fell in a shapeless heap, for Dr. Vanner's name was amongst them.

There was a long relapse, more dangerous—far more dangerous—than the first had been.

Although she had prayed to die, Maud recovered

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from it, however—but recovered and came back to earth so sad, so shadowy, so hopeless, that it brought tears to one's eyes to gaze upon her.

She sent for Paul Charring and told him the truth, blaming herself as he, in his manhood, never could have blamed her.

He would have comforted her in her wild, hopeless anguish, if he could. But he could not, so, regretfully, he freed her from her galling chains, and sailed for Australia.

Then society knew the engagement was off. Miss Armyn had thrown over a prince of finance. Was the girl mad? Or what had come between them?

"I shall never marry now," mused the girl wearily. "Never. Oh, my love, my king! why did I let you go? Why did I let you go?"

Then calming herself after a violent burst of grief, she would press her frail, white hands against her burning brow, and——

"I must go away—away, or I shall go mad!" she would murmur. "The world—Oh, I could not bear it. If only—only I could hope it would be over for me, too, soon!"

* * * * *

The narrow cots are pitifully full of writhing, suffering victims to that awful scourge—the Yellow Jack.

The nurses and physicians attending them here and there are pitifully few. So many are scattered throughout the city, stricken at its core.

"I wish you would look after the new nurse in the fourth ward," said one of the noble physicians to his doctor who came to relieve him. "She does not seem familiar with hospital work. Indeed, I should say she had never been familiar with any kind of work; but she was so eager they gave her the lightest cases."

The other bowed and went his way—a grave, brave, thoughtful way, treading down the thorns which lay so much thicker than roses in his path.

He attended all urgent cases, then, utterly unconscious that the windlass of fate was unravelling his destiny, silently entered the fourth ward.

A slim form, clad in grey, was bent over one of the cots.

Tears were streaming down her cheeks, for, with his childish hands in hers, its occupant had just passed away.

She looked up as the physician came forward and stood on the opposite side of the cot.

Their eyes met and he recoiled. She fell upon her knees with a low whisper.

He lifted her quickly in his arms and bore her from the infected room. He bore her beyond it, and out into the damp and drizzling air.

No word was spoken between them until they stood in the cool, deep vestibule of a silent churchyard. Then:

"Great Heaven! What are you doing in this infernal place?" panted Vanner, for he, indeed, it was. "Where is Charring? Is he mad, to bring you here?"

"I—I came myself. He does not know. We have parted for ever," stammered the beautiful nurse spasmodically.

Her eyes were bathed in happy tears; her heart, despite the danger and misery, dancing with bliss.

There followed momentary silence, then:

"And you—you have come to me, Maud?"

This was not the time for dissembling. Gladly she placed her hands in his outstretched palms, explaining to him the cause of her presence there.

"My noble darling," he whispered, drawing her close to his breast, "it was an error in the report. I remember noticing it, and smiling grimly to think it was chronicled on your wedding-day. Heavens! And to think there is nothing between us now, sweetheart. But I must take you from here at once—at once. I could not bear to lose you, now that you have been mine a moment."

Their lips met in a long, passionate kiss, from which plague, nor pestilence, nor death itself could ever take the tenderness; and in the cool, dark house of God they were joined that day, to work side by side through the weals and woes of all life's fevers for ever.

As she refused to leave Rio without her husband, they remained in the field of affliction, nobly striving for humanity's sake, until the fiend of destruction shrunk out of sight at winter's venomed touch.

Lally O'Brien.

FIFTY GOLDEN SOVEREIGNS GIVEN AWAY EVERY WEEK.

Every week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses fifty envelopes to fifty people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign, and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD and address it to the Editor under the following conditions:

☞ Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

Fifty names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 11 distribution must reach us by December 19th, addressed to The 11th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of the Eighth Distribution appears on page 789.

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A POINT OF HONOUR.

"EVERYTHING'S settled," said Clavignac cheerfully, entering the café where Fougeret, surrounded by the usual group of journalists and professional men who frequented the place, awaited his return, "pistols, twenty paces, firing to go on till a result is reached."

"Good!" said Fougeret calmly, "and the rendezvous?"

"Vezinet race-course, 10 a.m. Then on to Asnieres. Order me a carriage for eight o'clock, and be sure to have the same driver. He'll bring us luck."

"As you say."

"And do not forget the doctor. The pistols I'll attend to; I have a brand new set, and it's a fine chance to try them."

"I leave all to you."

And with a warm hand-clasp to Clavignac, Fourgeret turned, nodded a hasty adieu to the rest of his friends, and left the room.

"A cool head, that Fougeret," admiringly remarked the sporting editor of a morning daily.

"Infernal cool!" came in a chorus from the group of men left behind, as if, in some way, their comrade's courage reflected credit upon them.

"He ought to be cool too," declared Clavignac, pouring himself out a full glass of absinthe. "Fougeret is not a chicken at this business; his fourth affair, if I count aright."

"So it is," responded the journalist respectfully.

"He shall head the line in my forthcoming series of the noted duellists of Paris."

Meanwhile Fougeret had passed into the street.

At the door of the café he had paused a moment as if to reflect; then, with a decided gesture, he started down the boulevard at a rapid gait.

Presently he halted before the window of a big book store filled with placards and gaily-bound volumes.

Prominently displayed in the front row were a dozen or so dainty little pamphlets neatly stamped on the back:

CONTES ROSES
ARMAND FOUGERET
THIRD EDITION.

He opened the door, entered, and passing between the long files of book-laden cases demanded of a clerk:

"M. Lavine—is he in?"

"In the office alone, sir."

Fougeret turned to the right and tapped at the door.

"Come in," responded a voice beyond.

Fougeret obeyed. The publisher, a man as young as himself nearly, with blonde beard and lively eyes, met him cheerfully.

"Come in, come in," said he, "glad to see you, too; 'Contes Roses' going splend dly. You saw them in the window. Third edition already. But what can I do for you to-day?"

"Can't you guess?" replied Fougeret, smiling in return.

"Money? The dickens!" cried the publisher, his brow clouding visibly; "always money. You have already drawn in advance, it seems to me."

"True, but I go out to-morrow, and it is necessary——"

"A duel!" broke in the other, "with Saint Landry, of course, for his article on 'Contes Roses.' You are right, my friend, entirely right. The critique was in bad taste and has affected our sales. Now, a duel as an offset will be an excellent advertisement, and, better still, will cost us nothing. Every paper in Paris will have the affair in full, and in giving the cause of the quarrel will speak of the book. A capital, admirable idea. Ten louis be enough?"

"Amply sufficient."

"There they are, then," said the publisher, piling ten pieces of gold before the author, while the clerk drew up a receipt.

"A thousand thanks," Fougeret answered, as he gathered up the money.

"Not at all, not at all," said the other, carefully shutting the receipt in his desk. "Always ready to oblige you. I count on seeing you at the Varieties to-morrow night."

Fougeret took the hand extended to him and went out.

It was not five o'clock, and Fougeret took his way to the Madeline, briskly keeping step to a lively opera air that he whistled between his teeth, till he reached the throng of public vehicles that crowd the streets of that quarter.

Bearing in mind his friend's injunction touching the choice of a driver, he hunted up the wheeled mascot.

instructed him to call for Clavignac at eight sharp the next morning, and then turned his step towards the Saint Lazare station.

These preparatory details did not seem to disturb him at all; he knew them all. Every affair was the same, and as he walked along he ran over in his mind the duels that he had already been engaged in. The first was seven years back, at Savigny-sur-Orze, where he made his journalistic *début* on a local paper. A follower of the Noirville candidacy he found himself arrayed in fierce opposition to the Legitimist organ in a controversy that wound up in the field. He was wounded, but Noirville was elected by a large majority.

The second occured from a Bourse transaction, where he figured as Noirville's secretary, a connection that involved him in a dispute with a jealous colleague, who sought a quarrel and found a sword thrust. The third was not very long after the second, and close on his heels came the ruin of his patron, Noirville whose speculations terminated in a sudden collapse. With the great banker's fall went all the secretary's prospects, and Fougeret's little savings were almost swallowed up in the general whirlpool.

Despondent at first, Fougeret rallied quickly and sturdily set to work to recover lost ground. He had others to think of besides himself—his brave little wife, whom he had married in days of prosperity, and who had clung to him closer than ever in the hour of misfortune. The thought of her and his two little children stimulated his efforts and strengthened him in the struggle for existence.

Through his connection with Noirville, Fougeret knew a number of journalists, and through the kindness of one of them the doors of the *Review* were open to the young writer, whose contributions were received with marked approval by the literary world. His first novel achieved a brilliant success, and the comedy taken from it met an enthusiastic reception on its first performance at the Odeon.

From that time on his success was assured, and he, in consequence, began to acquire enemies. The present collection of some of his articles into a volume entitled "Contes Roses" had drawn from the pen of the cavilling St. Landry a critique so scathing, bitter, and unjust that Fougeret, acting on his friends' advice, had sent his seconds to his jealous colleague.

And to-morrow he would be on the field as calm and careless as ever. What greater satisfaction could be given him, thought Fougeret, as he halted before his modest house and turned the key in the door.

"At last, Armand," said a soft voice coming from the kitchen; "I am so glad. Wait in the dining-room; dinner is ready."

He entered the room. The table was set with four plates, and looked so tempting and inviting that the young man gave a contented sigh. Then the door of the kitchen opened, revealing a dainty little woman, a trifle pale, with very blue eyes and very blonde hair, bearing a smoking tureen, followed by a four-year old baby, who solemnly brought up the rear with the ladle.

"But how is this?" Armand inquired, seating himself and unrolling his napkin, after tenderly kissing his wife and children, "you are waiting on the table? Where is Rose?"

"Rose," replied the little woman, with a shade of embarrassment, "Rose is gone. I sent her away."

"Sent her away?" said Armand, surprised. "And why?"

"She was dishonest," responded Claudine. "I could not keep her. I paid her a week in advance and dismissed her. You owe your dinner to Georget and me."

"Yes," said Georget gravely, "it was us. Don't you like the soup, papa?"

"Delicious!" declared Armand; "you are famous cooks. But—" dropping his voice a little, "where did you get the money, Claudine, to pay her?"

"I used what you gave me for the house this week. I knew that since your new book was nearly completed you could go to your publisher to-morrow morning and ask for an advance."

Armand trembled.

"So you see" continued his wife, "we can get along nicely. I would rather wait, of course, till the novel is finished, but I do not think that I am strong enough to go without eating until then. I have the will, but not the power, you know."

"And the money you shall have," broke in Armand hastily; "you will tire yourself out. I will have it—I will take it—two, or even three hundred francs if you desire."

"That will be better," Claudine assented, with a charming air of content, "because then I shall not have to part with my little piano. I did not intend you to know, but I found it a superfluous article of luxury, and they were coming to-morrow to take it away. Three hundred francs will get a nurse for the little one and many needed things besides."

"I see," said Armand, with a sad smile, "that the money will not last long."

"But in three weeks' time your book will be finished and we shall be rich again. Then I can have a new dress. This has been made over so many times, that there is scarcely enough left to hold the threads together."

"Yes," replied Armand, gazing consciously at the little threadbare gown, "I know—I know."

"And you need some new clothes, too, dear; and a new dress for Georget. Why, we will spend at least fifteen hundred francs."

"Fifteen hundred francs," repeated Armand thoughtfully.

"Fully fifteen hundred. A tremendous sum for us at present, dear, but your novel will bring us at least three thousand, and to think that twenty days will see it finished!"

"Twenty days," echoed Armand, speaking like an automaton.

"Ah, how happy we shall be!" Claudine went on, her eyes sparkling at the prospect of the pleasure she saw in advance. "We can pass the summer at the seaside; Georget can have a little red cap, and we'll all enjoy

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ourselves as we did four years ago, when we were rich. How it all comes back to me, and with it all the other pleasures that I owe you. Kiss me, dearest!" and the loving little woman threw her arms about her husband's neck, who embraced her tenderly.

"But really," said Claudine, when she had disengaged herself from Armand's arms, "it is nine o'clock already. I must put baby to bed, lock up the house, and see you settled at work before I go. Come!"

And taking the lamp she preceded her husband into the little library that adjoined the bedroom.

"There," said she, raising her lips for a parting kiss, "now work fast, get through it and remember that our happiness depends upon these pages."

Left a one Armand seized the pen, but found it impossible to write a single word. Other thoughts which refused to be banished, occupied his mind. His head on his hand and staring vacantly into space, he remained in one position two long hours.

Presently a light tap sounded on the door.

"Armand," murmured the sweet voice, "I'm going to bed. Baby's asleep and everything's locked up safe and secure. Don't work too late—you should not weary yourself, dear."

The words recalled him to himself. He looked at the paper. It was blank.

"Come," muttered he, "this won't do. I must get to work!" and resolutely beginning he wrote on and on with feverish haste, filling five or six pages without raising his head. Suddenly he stopped. He had just written the words placed by himself in the mouth of one of his characters: "So be it! if a duel your are seeking a duel you shall have."

"A duel!" he cried, "why I am going to fight a duel myself!"

And a vision of the morrow passed swiftly before his eyes—the open clearing, the group of seconds, two men dressed in black facing each other, pistols pointing at the grass awaiting the signal, while the sunbeams shone through the trees and the birds sang joyously.

But the scene changed suddenly. It was a man he saw now, pale, and with closed eyes, lying on a litter, while one of the carriers stood knocking at a door—his door, as he recognised instantly. The woman who ran to meet the mournful cortège—the trembling creature who, with a terrible cry, threw herself upon the body—he recognised her, too. It was Claudine!

Armand rose hastily and rapidly paced the room. The thing was true. To-morrow he was to fight. To-morrow, pistol in hand he would be risking his own life to take another's.

His life! Great Heaven! did it belong to him? Had he the right to dispose of it? Did he not owe it as much as he owed money, to those that depended on him? Were he dead, what would become of the wife and the children thrown helplessly on the mercy of his terrible creditors? He had no means. There wasn't as much as a hundred franc note in the house. His sole dependence was his pen, his brain, and his talent. Where would they be to-morrow?

And his little wife, so frail and delicate, what was in store for her? The hospital. And after that? His children too: Georget, so bright, so happy, so intelligent; his little girl, his merry darling, what would become of her?

Fougeret continued to nervously pace up and down. The veins in his temples throbbed to bursting. He wetted a towel and bound it about his head. The cold water helped to cool his burning brain. Now he saw it all clearer. He had exaggerated the situation. A duel was not necessarily fatal. Had he not fought three already, and was not he still alive on the verge of the fourth?

Yes, but then he was alone in the world. His life was his own; he had a right to dispose of it as he pleased. He had no wife to leave behind, no children to leave fatherless, penniless and helpless. And as these thoughts began again to whirl through his brain, he fancied that he could see the shining barrel of the pistol with the little round dark hole aimed directly between his eyes.

He tried to shake off the presentiment, to think of other things. It refused to vanish. He was responsible for those he loved. They lived through him, and they would perish without him. The ball that struck him would take more than one life. There would be three victims, three to whom he owed love, happiness, and bread. Great Heaven! How terrible it all was!

But another thought, equally cruel, tortured his soul—his honour.

He knew his comrades and the scoffing strollers of the boulevards. He heard their comments and their pitiless mockery. What were they saying? "A coward?" No! Impossible! Some of his comrades would surely defend him. Men were good at heart. Some would be found that could understand.

"Armand," cried an anxious voice from an adjoining room, "is anything the matter, dear? You have been talking to yourself so loud, so strangely, for more than an hour. Are you ill, dear?"

"No, no, little one," returned Armand with a smile. Then, as the lids fell heavily over the sleepy eyes she added drowsily:

"Just think, Armand, what would become of us—if you—were to—be—ill—the babies and me. Good-night, dear."

And the loving wife resumed her dream.

At the other end of the room, tucked in her little crib, smiling and peaceful, her little hands clasped across her bosom, little Georget slept tranquilly.

A sudden storm of tears wet Armand's cheeks. He rushed to his desk, caught up a sheet of paper and wrote furiously.

At half past ten next morning a man, irreproachably clad in black, stood on the Vezinet field holding out a letter with agitated air to another individual, equally anxious and no less solemn.

"Is it possible?" cried the first.

"Simply incredible!" responded the second.

"He forgets himself and reflects upon us."

And with a grave air the two men advanced towards the opposing group, who were viewing these proceedings with a puzzled air.

"Messieurs," said one of the two, speaking clearly in the midst of a general silence; "we regret to announce that our principal and former friend, M. Armand Fougeret, will not be on the field to-day. He declines to fight. It is needless to add," continued he, replacing the hat on his head with a sweeping gesture, "that we are entirely at your service—in M. Fougeret's place."

Ronald Maclean.

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"Sandy Carmichael,"

BY

CUTCLIFFE HYNE,

- - - - Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc. - - - -

THIS GRAND ROMANCE STARTS NEXT WEEK IN

"SHORT STORIES."

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How it was decided to turn for home: how the ambergris was seen: how the black squall came down; how the jolly boat rode it out: and how she fared afterwards.

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How Erman sorcery failed to make water run uphill: how Murtagh O'Neill solved a simple problem in hydrostatics: how matrimony was suggested; and how a festival was interrupted by the ominous arrival of Dajian emissaries.

How Murtagh O'Neill essayed the rôle of Theseus: how war was decided on: and how the Ermans refused to learn a "complete art of war" other than their own.

How the Dajian canoes landed on Erma: how a great battle was fought: and how Sandy Carmichael discouraged anthropophagy.

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How the three Europeans refreshed themselves: how the chief sorcerer turned traitor: and how Sneyd and O'Neill got a respite from the oven just in the nick of time.

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CONCERNING A SOJOURN AMONGST THE DAJIANS.

How Sneyd and O'Neill landed on Daji: how they were imprisoned in a prehistoric temple: how they tried to break gaol: how they met with an impediment: and how they had an unexpected lady visitor.

How the Dajians foolishly arrived before their appointed time: how Norah wisely and pluckily did the same: how she and the two white men climbed the giant stairs: how they supped off baked eggs: and how Sneyd and O'Neill made a solemn compact.

How the storming party was repulsed: how the retreat was continued to the mountain tops: how a raid was made for food: and how the Chief Sorcerer came to a bad end.

How Sneyd and O'Neill decided to annex Ebry's quarters: how they returned to the mountain camp, and learnt of Norah's abduction: and how they schemed future plans.

How Sneyd and O'Neill followed up Norah and her captors little by little: how they arrived in the nick of time at a certain hut: how the Dajians tried to roast them out: and how they walked through the flames unscathed.

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How Sandy Carmichael stirred up the Ermans: how he led them to victory: how the Dajian canoes went away: and how the Ermans did homage to their King Alexander.

How Sneyd and O'Neill vowed allegiance to King Alexander: how Norah was made Mrs. O'Neill: how a plan was schemed for the defence of the island: and how the same was carried into effect.

How the brig *Eliza Williams* rescued two starving men from a canoe out at sea: how these two men were pressed on board H.B.M.S. *Serpent*, and met an old acquaintance in her captain: and how Sandy Carmichael, *alias* King Alexander, proved to be Henry Weldon Vivian, Esquire.

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THE PURSE WITH THE RUBBER BAND.

CHIEF CONSTABLE PARKER'S term of office in an Australian town was drawing rapidly to a close. Although crime had been rampant during his reign, not one arrest of importance had been made. Of course, he would not be re-elected unless he redeemed himself.

"Rat-tat-tat."

"Come in," cried the chief.

The door opened slowly and a tall man, with a tall silk hat in his hand, entered. The hat showed frequent ironing, and his long coat was shiny at the seams. Even his shirt was limp, and his face unshaved.

"I see the chief, I presume?" spoke the stranger, in oily, inquiring tones.

"I am the chief."

"I suppose, sir, that you have a clerk within hearing here, so that no important information which comes to your ears may lack corroboration?"

"Well, ah, no. I've thought of that, but have been too busy to look after it. What is your desire?"

The stranger's eyes twinkled with satisfaction as he answered:

"My name, sir, is Paul Tracy. I am the manager of Tracy's Opera Company, which, for reasons financial, has been compelled to disband in your town. Now, suppose, my dear sir, that I should come to you and tell you that I had been robbed—that my purse containing thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence had been taken from me by a highwayman, what would you do?"

"I would endeavour to recover the money and catch the thief."

"You would fail."

"Perhaps I should."

"Of course you would," responded Tracy; "of course you would, and then good-bye to your re-election, for I should make my loss public. Now, let me ask you how much this post is worth to you?"

"My salary is four hundred and fifty pounds a year."

"And how much can you earn if you lose it?"

"About three pounds a week, I should fancy."

"Exactly. One hundred and fifty pounds a year. This job, then, is worth three hundred pounds a year more than outside employment would be, and, besides, it is more congenial. Now, I'll let you have it for one more term if you recover my purse with thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence in it."

"What!" exclaimed Chief Parker. "How can you let me have another term? You are not even one voter, much less a majority."

"I suppose you know the value of advertising?"

"Yes."

"I come to your office to-morrow morning with a couple of reporters. I have told them my loss, and it has been printed in the morning papers with a fling at yourself. Of course they are assured of your failure, and I am condoled with on the way. We enter here. You invite us to be seated, and you go to your desk and unlock it. You produce a worn purse with a rubber band round it, and ask me if it is mine. I say 'yes.' You tell me to open it and count the contents. I find them correct—thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence. Why, man, it will be like a chapter out of a French detective story. The newspaper fellows are amazed at your success, and the journals cover you with glory. The public reverses its decision, and you have a walk over. Do you agree?"

"But I don't think I can recover your purse."

"Great Scott, man! Can't you raise thirty-one pounds four shillings and sevenpence?"

"Why, yes. You mean——"

"There are plenty of old purses in the second-hand shops, and I see a couple of rubber bands on your desk."

"You mean that I shall make believe I recover your money?"

"Precisely."

"And, in fact, it must come out of my pocket?"

"That's it. You've got it at last."

"Well, I'll do it."

"Thank you. I'll wait on you then, to-morrow morning about eleven. Until then, good-bye."

* * * * *

"Good-morning, Mr. Tracy. How are you, gentlemen? Please be seated."

As Mr. Tracy and the two reporters sat down they

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became conscious of another person in the room. A small, sharp-eyed man advanced from the window.

"I have the honour of presenting you to Mr. Hawkins. He is a member of our detective force, and will have a slight connection with this case. Mr. Tracy, I will ask you to describe your lost property, if you will."

"A worn leather purse held by a rubber band."

"And the contents?"

"Thirty-one pounds in gold, four shillings in silver, and seven pennies."

"Where did you get this money?"

"Why, I got it at the bank," replied Tracy slightly disconcerted.

"May I ask what bank?"

"The Victoria National."

"Have you got that, Mr. Hawkins?" asked the chief, turning towards the detective.

"I have," answered that person.

The chief stepped to his safe, and, unlocking it, took therefrom an old purse.

"Is this yours?" he said to Tracy.

"Yes," answered the ex-manager eagerly.

"Examine it, and see that the contents are all correct."

Tracy poured out the glittering coins on a table and counted them. Everything correct, even to the pennies.

"Are you sure, Mr. Tracy, that those are the same coins that you drew from the bank?"

"Quite sure. Here's a nick in one that I made with a penknife. I remember the dates also, for I always look at the dates on money."

"Is there no possibility, Mr. Tracy, that your money may have been changed by someone?" put in Hawkins.

"None whatever, sir. Why, I could swear to these coins in a court of law."

"Gentlemen," said the chief to the reporters, "will you be kind enough to take a look at that money?"

They did so.

"Mr. Parker," cried Tracy, in an irritated tone, "I came here to receive my property. If you have done with me, I will take it and go."

"I have done with you, sir; but I think Mr. Hawkins has not."

"What do you want with me?" Tracy angrily asked the detective.

"Your company to the gaol. Those coins are counterfeit. Hold out your hands, please."

Tracy was sold. He had drawn the web round himself. The cashier of the Victoria National Bank swore positively that he had never received any money from him.

Chief Constable Parker was re-elected by an overwhelming majority. CHAS. SLADE.

CURED OF LOVE-SICKNESS.

AT a meeting of the Medical Society, early in May, I read a report of some work that I had been doing with an improved stethoscope devised by the celebrated Hofhauer of Vienna, and threw in some remarks upon the theory of Nordau and others, that love is a disease, claiming that I had detected it in several hearts, and in one had succeeded in accomplishing a complete cure.

There was one listener to whom my words went straight as a message from Olympus. He called upon me somewhat more than a month after the date of that meeting.

He was a tall young fellow, of a very graceful figure. He had a well-shaped head, crowned with wavy yellow hair, strikingly contrasting with his dark, well-marked eyebrows and hazel eyes. He was extremely nervous, and his bearing suggested that of one who has just begun to suspect the presence of serious organic disorder.

"You have my card, doctor," said he. "I am Arthur Langford, son of Doctor Langford."

I replied that I was flattered he had consulted me instead of his distinguished father.

"I couldn't go to father about this," he said; and then added, with a nervous laugh: "I came to you as an expert."

"What seems to be the trouble?" I inquired.

He hesitated a moment, and then said:

"You remember the essay that you read before the Medical Society in May? Well, I was there with my father. That was after his accident, you know. I heard what you said about—about love. I have been thinking of it ever since, and I have come to ask you if it is true that love can be cured, like any other disease."

I was painfully in doubt as to the proper course to pursue. I might have told him the exact truth, and have sent him away without help or comfort, or it was open to me to hear his story, and do my best.

"What are the symptoms in this case?" I asked at last.

"They are very serious," he said. "You mus'n't think that I am altogether a fool. I haven't come on a mere boyish notion, but because I can't live much longer unless something is done for me. This woman that I love is not the most beautiful in the world—I wouldn't claim that. She is well born, and in every way high and noble. Yet it isn't that. It's because she is just herself, and there is no one else in the least like her."

His face was flushed, and his eyes shone wonderfully

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bright. Suddenly the colour vanished from his cheeks, and the light from his eyes.

"She loves somebody else. I might as well tell you who it is; she loves Bertram, the artist—Walter Bertram. He's done something in the world, and that's more than I can claim, but he's nearly forty; and he's beginning to look it."

"I know him slightly," said I. "Are they engaged?"

"It isn't announced, but it's easy enough to see how matters stand."

"I thought she was away this spring," said I.

"What! You know who she is?" he exclaimed.

"I can't help thinking that you mean Miss Wilmot," was my answer; and he bowed his head reverently at the mention of the name.

"She got back to town on the the first of June," said he, after a pause; "and it began again, at once. Neither I nor any other fellow can get a chance to say two words to her. There doesn't seem to be any opposition from her people, and everybody expects the announcement of their engagement, and a wedding in the autumn."

"Which brings me back to the symptoms," said I.

He paused in his restless pacing of the floor, and gripped the back of a heavy chair with his long and delicately slender fingers.

"In the first place," said he, "I am dying for sleep. I think that in three weeks I have not slept half-an-hour at a time. When I lie down, I toss about for awhile; then fall asleep, and instantly wake up. I start up as if at a blow; it is the thought of her. A million times in a night I do this, and in the morning I am utterly exhausted. They say the Chinese have a torture like that, and it kills the victim in a little while. Then I can't eat. My father has noticed that, and he is worried about it. He has given me some medicine for it," and he laughed bitterly.

"You should see me try to work," he continued. "I simply cannot do it. I ought to tell you that I am an architect—only beginning, of course—but I have a fine chance, and everyone says I have unusual ability."

"Have you lost much in weight?" I asked.

"All I can," he said. "Look here."

He threw his coat upon the floor, and bared his arm. The muscles were startlingly defined. I passed my hands over his body, and made up my mind that he had lost all he could. Without considering fanciful theories, here was a love that was strictly pathological.

"I am beginning to notice a very annoying headache," said he. "It is right between my eyes, and it feels as if my head were being pressed together. There's a pain just under my heart, too, that's pretty bad at times."

"A nervous contraction," said I. "You'll be full of such pains if this thing does not stop. Can't you give up thought of her?"

"Not without your help."

"And are you sure that you want to?"

"Of course. Why am I here?"

"Very well," said I. "We will cure you and at once. But mind all this! All the responsibility is on you. Do not blame me afterwards."

If I had not been perfectly sure of the result, I should not have ventured on such a piece of charlantry; but it seemed necessary to clear his mind of the fanciful notions, under the influence of which he had been led to ask a magical cure from me. Once set him right in that matter, and he might be saved by proper means from the complete nervous collapse with which he was immediately threatened.

I mixed a dose of bromide of soda in a green goblet of very impressive appearance.

"Drink this," said I, "and you will cease to love her. Go on as you are going, and you will endure these tortures that you describe, and others that are worse. You will wreck your career, disappoint your parents, and gain absolutely nothing, so far as I can see."

He took the goblet in his hands, he raised it to his lips, then suddenly dashed it down.

"Utterly hopeless! Utterly hopeless!" he cried. "Yet I would rather love her and die!"

He sank into a chair and sobbed.

"Just as I supposed," said I. "You don't want to be cured. Nobody does. A doctor who made a speciality of that wouldn't earn his rent. Since you don't want to get rid of it, let's build you up so that you can more thoroughly enjoy it."

"Enjoy it?" he groaned.

"Well, endure it, then, if you like the word better. Will you take the treatment that I will give you for a couple of weeks merely for the sake of the experiment and to satisfy me?"

After some difficulty I got him to promise, and for about the period named he was under my care. I succeeded in making him sleep, and inducing him to eat three meals a day, and he began to look and to feel a good deal better. One day he burst into my office, the picture of health and happiness.

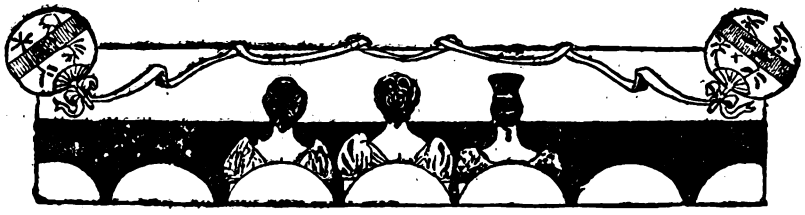
"Doctor!" he cried, "I am cured. I've found the remedy for all the pangs of love. It's love cures love. It's love returned that has cured me. Doctor, she's mine!"

"Thank heaven!" I said fervently. "When did this happen?"

"Last evening," he replied, "I was at her house, and somehow I got the courage to say what was in my heart; and now it's all right. But suppose—suppose for just one instant that I had taken your cure and had lost this!"

"I don't care to think of it," said I; "it's a dangerous subject for a doctor to meddle with. I think I'll let it alone."

Howard Fielding.



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A CRY FOR HELP.

MANY of the occurrences which are now regarded, even by learned men, as manifestations of the supernatural, are capable of easy explanation by natural sciences. That they remain mysteries is often due to the fact—as we have already found in some instances—that the explanation is so easy that it either does not occur to us that it can be the true one, or that we reject it as improbable just because it appears to be so much more simple than we expected.

A mystery of this kind, with which was connected a page of the life drama of three persons, occurred a few years ago in New South Wales.

Extending for thousands of feet below the surface, and connected by numerous tunnels and leads, is a mine of rich magnetic iron ore famous throughout the colony. It has been worked for many years in the past, and will probably continue its yield for very many more years in the future, but there is one vein of the richest ore which is not now touched. It is looked upon as haunted for the reason which I am about to set forth; and although the mystery has been cleared up, the superstition is as strong as ever.

One day, some few minutes before the hour for leaving work, a big Irishman was working with his heavy sledge-hammer at the extremity of the tunnel where this vein is situated. He had paused for a moment to rest from his work, when he was startled by the sound of a voice coming from the wall of shining ore in front of him. He looked round with a scared face, but the next instant he laughed at his fears, and picked up his tool to continue his work.

"Be jabers!" he muttered, "I'll tache thim to play tricks wid me."

But the heavy hammer which he had already raised for a blow fell from his hands, as, with a cry of horror, he started back. His face was blanched, his eyes glassy, and his hair seemed to be rising on end, as there came to his ears the clear sound of a voice on the other side of the wall, uttering a piteous appeal for help.

Tim O'Connor shook in every limb; he glared at the wall from which the sound proceeded. Then he heard it again:

"Help! Help! Oh, help!"

There was no mistaking the sound. It was the cry of some captive—someone entombed behind that wall. Tim had stood as though his feet were fixed to the spot, but at this last cry his fear gave him strength to move, and he fled down the tunnel toward the main shaft, uttering loud cries for assistance.

As it happened, the foreman and three or four men were descending; the cage was stopped, they stepped out, and the foreman hastily inquired what was wrong.

It was some seconds before Tim could give a sensible reply. At first he could only point in the direction he had quitted and mutter fragments of words, but at last he was able to reply in a coherent manner.

"It's all rubbish, Tim," said the foreman, "there can't be anybody at the back of that wall—how can there be? Some hing has scared you. Here, come along with us, and we'll show you that there's nothing to be afraid on."

Somewhat unwillingly, Tim accompanied the foreman and the other men to the extremity of the lead. The foreman looked about by the light of his lamp, and all the men listened for the cry that Tim had heard; but they neither saw nor heard anything to confirm his story.

"I told you there was nothing," said the foreman, rather angrily. "Have you had anything strong to drink while you've been down——?"

He stopped abruptly. He had been standing close to the wall as he uttered the last words, and he had heard a sound that cut short his remarks. The abrupt ending of his speech created intense excitement among the others; all listened, and they heard what appeared to be the end of a cry:

"Oh, hel—!"

The excitement of the men now rose to fever heat. Every one of them had heard it, and there could be no doubt that it came from somewhere at the back of that mass of shining ore. Some poor fellow was entombed; but how did he get there? So far as they knew, no other lead came within considerable distance of it, and the ocean was above and beyond it.

The foreman felt that he could do nothing on his own account, but must communicate what had occurred to the manager.

The manager could not refuse to believe the evidence of all the men that they had heard a cry for assistance; and although he considered the thing impossible, he gave orders for half a dozen men to work away at the wall within certain limits. Beyond those limits they dare not go; if they did, the water would enter and the mine would be flooded.

Willing hands attacked at the wall, but although the

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men—working that day and the next—penetrated as far as prudence permitted, there was no result. Yet that same evening the cry for help was heard again.

The affair created considerable stir, not only among the miners, but also among the people of the outside world. A rumour that that part of the mine was haunted quickly spread abroad. The men refused to work at that point, and curious people from outside visited Tunnel No. 6, in order to hear the ghostly cry. Among the latter were a well-to-do young Englishman and his sister, who had been living there for about a year, having inherited some property in the town.

Henry Chard was known among the residents as a dabbler in the occult sciences, and his sister was credited with the same liking for the mysterious. That they should desire to visit the mine and hear the cry was regarded as a matter of course, and the manager, who was on friendly terms with them, readily agreed to act as conductor.

"I can't promise you that you will hear it, Mr. Chard," said the manager. "Only two people, besides the miners, have heard it. Those who didn't hear it are disposed to think that they have been 'had.' The evening seems to be the best time; on each occasion it has been the evening when the cry has been heard. I confess that I haven't heard it myself, and am inclined to look upon it as an illusion."

The three descended in the cage, and made their way from the main shaft along the lead to the haunted vein.

"This is the spot," said the manager, as they arrived, "and this is just about the time when Tim O'Connor first heard the cry. You had better stand with your best ear quite close to the wall and keep silent."

It was a weird experience, and all three felt instinctively impressed by it. As the seconds went by, and they listened intently and expectantly, their nerves were strung up to the highest pitch. The manager forgot his anxiety concerning Miss Chard's powers of endurance in his own excitement. Would they hear anything? If so, what?

Suddenly, in the midst of the almost oppressive silence, there came in low but distinct tones:

"Help! Help! Oh, hel—!"

"There it is!" said the manager in a suppressed voice, which quivered with emotion, "did you hear it? Three call for help, just as O'Connor said! What can it mean?"

"Very strange," returned Chard. "It seemed as though the last word 'help' had been cut short. What do you think, Lucy?" he added, half turning to his sister. "What is the matter—are you ill? It has been too much for you."

She had clutched his arm, and he felt that she was trembling violently. He was about to put his arm round her to support her, but she pushed it aside.

"Listen!" she exclaimed, and her voice was strangely altered. "Listen carefully! The last word is not 'help.' Oh, Harry!"

Chard was moved and mystified by his sister's conduct, but all three listened for a repetition of the appeal.

"Help! Help! Oh, hel—! They will kill me here!"

There was an addition this time, and the words were followed by a noise which they likened to that of iron knocking against iron. Before either of the men could make any remark, Lucy uttered a scream and fell sobbing upon her brother's breast.

"Oh, Harry!" she sobbed. "It is Jack's voice! I recognised it distinctly."

"Come, come, my dear!" said Chard soothingly. "You are overwrought. This has been too much for you."

"Yes," added the manager sympathetically. "Let us be going from here. The place is haunted, sure enough."

"No, no!" returned Lucy Chard. "I tell you that it is the voice of our cousin, Jack Strong. I recognise the tone, and the last words is not 'Help,' but 'Hal,' and he is calling for you, Harry, to help him. Oh! stay and listen again!" she continued, releasing herself from her brother's embrace and wringing her hands. "Listen again, and you will see that I am right."

The manager shook his head incredulously, but all kept silence once more. After a few seconds they heard the appeal again. To the manager there was no difference in the sound of the third "help," but to Chard and his sister it was now plainly, "Oh, Hal!"

Without another word Chard turned to retrace his steps to the main shaft, drawing his sister gently with him; and it was not until they reached the surface either of the three spoke, and then it was only to say good-bye.

Chard was now inclined to his sister's opinion that the voice was that of their cousin calling upon him for assistance, yet it was so wildly improbable that he could not bring himself to believe that it was so. The last they had heard of him, he was travelling in Italy, that was three months ago, and although it was strange that they had not received any further letter from him, they did not apprehend any untoward occurrence. Had the voice come to them in their own room, they would not have been surprised; their belief in spiritualism prepared them for manifestations of that nature, but the fact that the voice was heard down a deep mine and in one particular spot, did not come within the range of their experience.

Yet both brother and sister were now certain that the words used were "Oh, Hal!" and not "Oh, help!" as the other hearers believed.

It was a strange fact that Henry Chard was called "Hal" by no one except his cousin and school-fellow, Jack Strong. The mystery was too deep for him to solve. Late into the night the brother and sister sat and discussed the matter from all possible standpoints without arriving at any key to the difficulty. They retired to bed, but neither slept till the early morning, when tired nature asserted her rights.

Day after day for nearly a week Henry and Lucy Chard visited the haunted vein. On the last occasion, Henry Chard told the manager when he reached the surface that he was going to leave the colony by the first steamer for England, where he would probably remain for some weeks. The next morning, Chard, in answer to the inquiries of the manager, whom he met near the mining company's office, explained the reason of his journey.

"My sister and my cousin are engaged, although, as in many other cases, there had been no formal declaration of the fact. Jack has business in England which he expected would keep him there for nearly two years after we left; then he was coming over here to settle with us.

"My sister is so convinced that she heard his voice in the mine that she will not rest unless either she or I undertake a journey to Europe and make a search for him. He was travelling when last she heard. If news is received from him after the steamer reaches England she will telegraph to me, and I am to keep her informed by wire of my whereabouts. If no news comes from this side my search will continue until I have found him or am convinced that he is dead."

"That seems somewhat quixotic, doesn't it?" asked

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the manager. "You can't be absolutely certain that you are correct——"

"In any case," returned Chard, "my sister's happiness depends upon finding out what has really become of Jack. If I do not undertake the search, she will; and I can hardly permit that. I want you, Sims, to look after my sister as much as convention will allow while I am away. She will want to visit the mine pretty frequently, I expect; sometimes you can dissuade her, but at others it will be cruel not to humour her. I must leave that to your discretion. We have been good friends during the past year, Sims, and I want you to help me so far as you can in this difficulty."

"You may rely upon me, Chard," returned Mr. Sims, "and on my side I will see what can be done to elucidate this mystery. I intend to get the company to call in some scientific men and see if we cannot get to the bottom of it. When do you start?"

"I leave home in three days," returned Chard, "in order to catch the first steamer."

"Well, I hope that by the time you set foot on shore at Southampton, you will receive a wire from your sister or from me that the mystery has been solved, and that in return we shall receive a message from you that you have found your cousin alive and well."

Henry Chard left for Europe, and in course of time scientific men were at work endeavouring to clear up the mystery. Lucy Chard paid frequent visits to the mine, in company with the manager; it was generally supposed that she went there from her love of the occult, and that her brother had been called back to England on business, for the real facts were kept secret partly out of consideration for Lucy's feelings.

Weeks passed, and several scientific men endeavoured in turn to find an explanation for the sound of a voice in the haunted vein. The appeal for help was heard at intervals, almost always near the hour when the miners left off work. The scientific men formed the cries based on various natural phenomena; they made elaborate calculations and measurements to satisfy themselves that the manager was right in saying that it was impossible to penetrate the wall much farther without flooding the mine; they racked their brains to obtain some clue to the puzzle, and one after another they were forced to give it up.

No news was received from Strong, and Chard's messages conveyed no certain intelligence; he was seeking his cousin in different parts of Europe. At the end of three months there came a message from Chard to the effect that he was afraid his cousin had become mixed up with some political complication in Russia, and that he was doing his best to trace him in that country.

Two weeks later there arrived at Sydney two learned gentlemen—an Englishmen and a German—who had come, with the latest scientific implements and theories, prepared to spend months in the mine with the view of solving the problem. They were devoted to science, and their expenses were to be paid by scientific bodies in their native countries.

These gentlemen set to work in real earnest. They made the usual calculations and measurements, they listened to the appealing voice, carefully arranged their sensitive seismic and other scientific instruments in position near the wall, and argued the matter from all points of view. Every law of magnetism and electricity, and transmission of sound, was called into requisition.

Their first theory was that the sound did not come from the back of the wall, but was transmitted from some other point of the mine. But it was not possible now to believe that some one was entombed in the mine; such a captive would long ago have died of starvation, so that theory had to be relinquished. Other theories were formed and abandoned in like manner.

Lucy Chard occasionally accompanied these gentlemen when they descended into the mine to make their experiments, and they caught some of her excitement; this, combined with their own devotion to science, made them more determined than ever to surmount the difficulty. The solution came unexpectedly.

One evening the two scientists had arranged a phonograph and microphone close to the wall, for on the last occasion there had been another sound too indistinct for them to catch. They all waited and listened intently. Presently there came sounds which at first could not be properly distinguished. They almost imagined that a conversation was being carried on, and Lucy's nerves were so strained that she was trembling in every limb. Then the conversation became distinct, and although they could not hear all, the three listeners stood transfixed with amazement at what they did hear. To Lucy it was more clear than to the other two.

She knew that her brother had discovered Jack imprisoned in a cell and had found means of releasing him. The words: "Thank Heaven, you have come to release me, Hal!" were distinctly audible to all three.

Lucy's explanation of her brother's search gave the scientific men the clue to the mystery, which was afterwards explained by one of them in the following words:

"This rich vein of magnetic iron ore is in reality a natural telephone, and has transmitted to us the cry of a prisoner confined where the natural conditions were similar. The vein has served the purpose of a perfect conductor. If Miss Chard's idea is correct, the sounds have been transmitted from Siberia, and it is a fact that to the north of the Ural Mountains, in the bleak Obdorsk region, there is a valuable mine of superior magnitits, where prisoners are confined. As these great veins of loadstone trend north and south, and as that part of Russia is almost due north of us, it is not improbable, however much so it may appear to the non-scientific person, that we have been listening to a conversation going on in that dismal region. As a familiar name has occurred in the conversation, we must believe that this explanation is the true one. If Mr. Strong has been released by Mr. Chard, we shall not have long to wait for a confirmation of my statement."

It proved that Strong, who was warm-hearted, but certainly had no head for the revolutionary business, had become mixed up in some political trouble, and sent to the very mine mentioned by the scientist. He was imprisoned after the day's work in a cell, and in the agony of his mind he had often called upon his cousin for assistance.

Chard had traced little by little, and, having succeeded in rendering a service to one in authority in Siberia, had been able to procure his cousin's release on the expressed stipulation that Strong should leave Europe.

Although the authorities had no power to enforce this stipulation, the cousins gladly agreed to it, and took steamer to New South Wales as soon as Jack had settled what remained of his business in England.

Jack and Lucy were married soon after the two men reached the colony; but, as the whole affair quickly leaked out, they removed to another part of the colony, where Lucy is endeavouring to make Jack and herself forget that terrible experience. M. WOODFORD.

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SEVENTY-ONE
.. AND ..
SEVENTY-TWO.

They met at the Mont-de-Piété. This office of pledges and redemptions—this Parisian shrine of poverty and central altar of official usury—was crowded. A long line like a torpidly winding serpent stretched itself lazily far out into the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. For several hours the clerk behind his grated window had droned out the numbers as he bent his worn face above the greasy book in which he is busy inscribing names and addresses.

"Again? So soon? And still pretty," with a vicious smile. "Lace pin—with small diamond—hum! Twenty francs for Seventy-one. Pass on quickly! Next! Well? And you? A carved crucifix. Ivory? No. Five francs for Seventy-two."

"No more?"

"No more. Take or leave. You detain the others. Decide."

Number Seventy-two hesitates. Suddenly a rough hand tugs at her shabby shawl. She turns. It is number Seventy-one. A moment later the two girls stand side by side in the street.

"Here. Take this," mutters Seventy-one. "I insist. I stole your luck by my odd number. Besides—it is to cheat the devil. No? Why? What a little fool!"

Seventy-two has a face of pale flame. Her lips are blue, and much shivering has rounded her thin shoulders. Seventy-one is read easily, a feminine gamin. She thrives on Paris as a dandelion flaunts from the crevice of paving stone. The one is smiling, yet dumb with amazement. The other talks, laughs, yet will never smile again.

"Tut! A few francs. What are they to me? and I shall redeem my pin to-morrow, while you"—a glance completed the sentence.

"And I—it was that I might celebrate Paul's fête day——"

"You live—"

"At No—an attic in the Rue Sainte Marguerite. He—Paul—works at the theatre. It is a good position, but it is necessary that he appear well to keep it. This eats his earnings as a moth eats feathers. We are from the South—Paul and I. He is happy here—but I—"

"Amuse yourself by starving that he may—oh! I understand. Here!"— and she draws her into a wine shop. "Waiter! A basket! Now fill it, pate—some of those. 'Tis I who shall supply Paul's feast. But on one condition my friend—that you eat half. And the wine is for you." Paying the waiter, Seventy-one drops the change into the loaded basket.

"And I who accept this—do not yet know your name." Seventy-two is grateful, but there are no tears. Tears are a luxury with the poor.

"Call me number Seventy-one."

"I shall call you—my saint."

"Anything but that, my girl. Well, Seventy-two, I shall see you again." And she watches her stagger away beneath her burden.

"Mademoiselle is generous," ventures the waiter who has followed them outside the shop.

"Nonsense! It is my whim. She is a dying girl. It is written. And her Paul. A fine, selfish scamp, I'll warrant." And with a laugh and a whirl on her heel she hurries away.

* * * * *

One year in a Parisian garret. One year of green country quiet exchanged for the lullaby of Paris—that mother who often sings her babies to their deaths.

To be sure, there has always been Paul, and looking in his eyes Jeanne could forget her home-sickness. And with his arm for a pillow, her straw had not seemed such a hard bed. But he was forced to be at the theatre early and late. And nowadays his absences were growing longer. Jeanne fancied at times that he was less tender. Paul was tired—tired of being poor. Was it that Poverty was pinching Love to death? She did not know—but felt a chill about

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her heart—a dangerous thing when the body is also cold.

Someone else would beat the ragout on Paul's next fête day. But Paul came and went, and noticed nothing.

One night in his sleep Jeanne heard him utter a name. She leant to listen, but he said no more, only smiling in his sleep. She thought it was "Susanne." In the morning she questioned him.

"I was dreaming. What of it?" said he, evading her eyes.

Before he went away that morning he drew her fondly towards him, and tenderly kissed her rough and reddened slender hands. It was a revival of love, Jeanne thought, and sang softly to herself all that day. Life was easier after this. Paul grew more kind, and a new pleasure was also hers.

She did not know that it was a man's way when he loves one to kiss the other dumb.

And every day at noon her "saint" came for an hour. Every day in some small way, Jeanne's small wants grew smaller. Every day Seventy-one sat beside Seventy-two upon the low straw pallet, and laughed and jested until Jeanne grew merry from sheer contagion.

"We will thank her together when you are well again, my Jeanne, and find out her real name," Paul would say in his absent-minded way.

When Jeanne was well again.

One morning she seemed suddenly so weak that Paul found it impossible to leave her. For the first time he became uneasy. She did not complain, merely remaining strangely quiet. And her eyes shone as on that night beneath the lindens long ago; the night they first spoke of a marriage—their own.

"But it is nothing," she murmured, while her starry eyes looked past him across the glaring roofs so coldly bright in the wintry sunlight. It was broad day in Paris, but in Jeanne's life candle-time had come.

"Paul!"

"My Jeanne!"

"You love me?"

"My little one. How can you ask? You break my heart!"

"As dearly as ever, Paul?"

"As dearly as ever." And Paul softly stroked a very happy face.

Just then, above the lullaby with which Paris was singing Jeanne to sleep, some rollicking distant bells rang out the hour. Jeanne raised herself upon her elbow, and with one hand threw back the drooping locks from her little white ears.

"Hark!"

As they listened they heard a merry clatter of high heels on the bare staircase.

"It is number Seventy-one!"

As she spoke a piquant figure stood framed within the low doorway.

"Paul!—my saint!"

And then the two stood alone in the little sunny garret, for just at that moment Jeanne's soul fled.

"Susanne! You—her saint!" and with a hoarse cry Paul dropped the dead hand on the straw.

"And so—to her, you were Paul! Great Heaven!"

And Jeanne?

A little smile stole softly about her lips. It was Death, who in joke had tricked Life out of one sorrow.

JESSIE MILLER.

"Did you hear Kusser has dyspepsia?"

"No. How did he get it?"

"Slugem made him eat his own words."

Tommy: "Oh, father, mother said she was a donkey."

Father: "I am glad to hear she told the truth for once, my boy."

Tommy: "Yes, she said she was a donkey to have married you."

Flossie: "Are you sure you love me, and that you'll never look at another woman?"

Willie (fervently): "Yes, on my honour."

Flossie (coldly): "No, then; I don't want to marry a freak."

Johnny grumbled at his small share of pudding one day.

"It's a liberal helping," said his mother.

"Then I'll have a conservative helping," said Johnny and wanted to take the dish. Oh, these political kidlings!

RESULT OF DISTRIBUTION No. 8

One half of the sovereigns offered this week were set aside for the members of the great Jones family. One of them has been claimed by:

Mrs. A. JONES, 10 Whitworth Place, Plumstead, Kent.

Four of the remaining twenty-five sovereigns have been applied for by:

H. PELLING, 21, Temple Street, Brighton.

E. A. WALTON, 103 Fitzwalter Road, Sheffield.

A. SWEET, 50 Portman Street, Rowbarton, Taunton.

F. WOODFORD, Stamp Office, Poole, Dorset.

The unclaimed sovereigns were addressed to:

A. D. Allan, 458 Gallowgate, Glasgow; Jabez Attwood, Union Street, Stourbridge; A. C. Quick, Church Square, Guernsey; Miss E. Beal, 33 Basuto Road, Poole Park, Fulham; J. Ramsden, 176 Albemarle Street, Ashton-under-Lyne; G. F. Matthews, 20 West Street, Chichester; Miss A. Bullock, Blaby House, Drayton Road, King's Heath, Birmingham; G. F. Saunders, 37 North Road, Bishoston, Bristol; Mrs. Reichert, 5 Windermere Villas, Tottenham Lane, Hornsey; T. Carpenter, 17 Bridge Avenue, Hammersmith; J. Jackson, 5 Hanover Place, Coleraine; J. Begrie, 172 Causewayside, Edinburgh; T. E. Gooden, 19 Park Street, Bolton; Jos. Broster, Band, H.M.S. *Ganges*, Falmouth, Cornwall; G. Singler, 57 Poplar Walk, Herne Hill, S.E.; S. K. Hocking, 18 Avenue Road, Crouch End, N.; John White, Livery Stables, The Avenue, Minehead; W. Toon, Grove Villa, West End, Faroham; Jas. Rees, 43 Surrey Street, Ryde; Geo. Hall, 3 Regent Street, Hinckley, Leicestershire; J. Steel, 89 Frankfort, Street, Gateshead; J. B. Jones, Church Road, Redditch; Miss Jones, High Street, Wallingford; J. Jones, Red Lion, Corn Street, Witney; W. B. Jones, farmer, Barrow-on-Humber; Mrs. Jones, The Manor House, Finchley; Miss C. Jones, 2 Crescent Terrace, Cheltenham; John Jones, Barrack Street, Castlerea; Mrs. Jones, 1 Solent Place, Bath Road, Lymington, Hants; W. Jones, Newport Road, Cowes; Mrs. Fenton-Jones, 12 King Edward Street, South Hackney; A. Jones, 21 Silver Street, Wisbech; W. R. Jones, 128 Denmark Road, Lowestoft; Mrs. Jones, Downham, Norfolk; H. Jones, Strafford Villa, Moorgate Road, Rotherham; F. Jones, 4 Howden Place, Leeds; Thos. Jones, Station Road, Wombwell; Miss Jones, 8 Studley Road, Harrogate; Thos. Jones, 18 The Lound, Kendal; E. Jones, Tiffin Lane, Workington; T. A. Jones, Smedley Street, Matlock; Jas. Jones, Hoo Ash House, Ravenstone, Ashby-de-la-Zouch; S. Jones, 5 Trinity Street, Stockton-on-Tees; O. G. Jones, Staff Sergt.-Major, 8 Albany Place, York Town, Surrey; Geo. Jones, Sandy Lane, Worksop.

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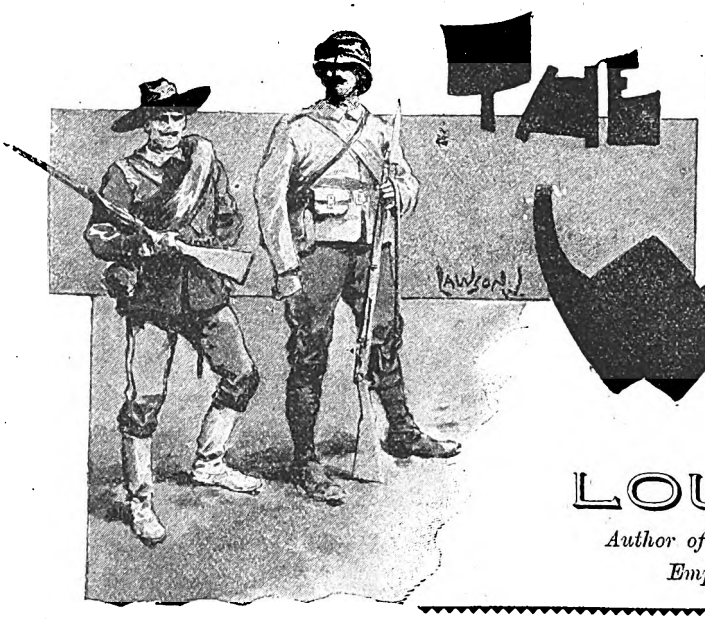

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XLI.

The Shadow of Doom.

In one of the chief streets of St. Petersburg stands an imposing house, whose bold façade seems to challenge the gaze of the passer-by and to thrust itself forward with proud security in that great City of Despair.

No one would dream of associating it with intrigue or crime. Not the secret police themselves, as they slunk along in unsleeping watchfulness, had ever looked upon it with distrust. As its powerful owner passed in and out, he was greeted with deference; for his influence was great in high quarters, and his arm was long and merciless.

And yet within a fortnight of the passing of the British army into Central Asia, a strange meeting and a strange conversation took place within this princely house, which would indeed have exercised the speculation of the police could they have been present in secret.

He was greeted with deference.

On a certain afternoon in June, an officer of the Imperial Guard sat in the spacious library, engaged intently in examining a series of maps and statistical tables which lay exposed, carefully drawn and coloured, with many curious marks and signs, upon the table. He wore the rich uniform of the royal service, but he was clearly not occupied at the moment with royal business.

It was Pochowski, the man of many parts—now lionised as a Russian tenor in London drawing-rooms, now a humble valet in the service of a British ambassador—now an imperial officer—clearly one of varied acquirements and singular adaptability—practised in disguise, and playing in the seclusion of his own house alone his real part.

He looked up from the documents he was examining, and hastily glanced at the clock. Then he drew down the shutter of his desk, threw himself into an easy-chair and waited.

His thoughts wandered to the stupendous, the sublime task which he had made the object of his life's mission, a task to which he had sacrificed everything, love, honour happiness, and for which he had courted danger and death.

For he was one of the brave champions of Russians freedom. He strove to attain nothing less than the liberty of his native land and the deliverance of her people. And now the hour seemed to approach, the hour of destiny, for him, for the throne, for the great Empire of the East.

"Count Lucovitch, sir."

It was his servant who thus broke in upon his reveries.

Pochowski rose. As he did so, a tall officer, of noble aspect, with stern, resolute face, and firm stride, entered the room and bowed with a touch of ceremony.

"You have not failed me," said Pochowski. "We have but one hour and we must lose no time."

"An hour? What do you mean?" asked his visitor in surprise.

"Count," said Pochowski gravely, "in an hour the fate of Russia will be decided. We shall meet the Provincial Presidents. We shall decide whether we shall take this supreme opportunity which Providence has given us, of winning independence for our country and freedom for our people, or let the tale of Russian servitude roll garrulously on for another century."

"I have consented to discuss with you, Captain," Lucovitch observed, "this torturing position. I have not consented to take a part; much less to give assent so soon. Our country is now in danger. Is it not the first duty of patriotism to rid our shores of foreign enemies before we turn to rend ourselves?"

Pochowski took from a cabinet at his side a bundle of papers and rapidly glanced through them.

"These are the reports handed to me as Supreme Head of the Nihilist Party," he said at last. "At the present moment there are 640,000 of Russia's bravest sons ready

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to take the field if called upon to vindicate their liberties. It needs but a word, and a vast host of indomitable spirits will swarm round the capital and crush it in their grip."

"What!" cried the Count, in tones of horror, whilst the Tsar is thus beset?" claimed

"Count Lucovitch, sir."

"Precisely, sir," ex-Pochowski in commanding tones. "The blow must be struck now or never. Can you conceive it possible that if the Tsar wins this infamous war, we shall ever again have such a chance, when the hand of despotism is strengthened and the champion of liberty is hurled to the dust? Let us by all means be patriots. But what is patriotism? It is to fight for the people, for their freedom, for the restitution of their manhood; not for tyranny and oppression, villainy and dishonour. Now is the moment of destiny. The whole world is fighting its great battle of independence. Do you think this is merely a squabble of nations, merely a bout between England and her foes? You cannot. It is a war of principles. Oppression is striving for universal despotism. Liberty is striving for universal peace, for the true brotherhood of man. If England is beaten, we are all beaten, humanity is beaten with her. The light of freedom goes out; man crawls back into his chains; the dungeon once more gapes open. Yes, in such a struggle mere selfish and narrow patriotism is swallowed up. We must side, not with Russia or with England, but with right or wrong, with peace or war, with liberty or servitude. And in such a moment are we, *we* of all men, who suffer most, who have most to gain, to throw in our strength with the forces of evil, and hurl back the splendid birth-hour of a universal freedom? No, Count, your heart is too generous to harbour such a thought. We call upon you to become our general in the field. To *you* is intrusted the task of leading an invincible army to certain victory in a holy cause."

Pochowski's eyes glowed as he spoke thus passionately, and a pallor came over the Count's face. He was visibly moved.

"All this I see and admit," he remarked after a pause. "But I am a soldier, and how can I side with the invaders of my own country? It is this that haunts and disturbs me. How can we, in the cause of Russia, call in Russia's foes?"

"I might reply," answered the other quietly, "that in freedom's cause it is both natural and usual. Did not England call Holland in to help her, and America, France? Nay, the Dutch, too, sought the armies of Germany, and Germany those of England. And who more fit to help us than the great nation which has made liberty her watchword and is the bulwark of humanity? But I will not urge such pleas. Count, there is another point of view which I will lay before you."

"Ah! You have some scheme?"

"Let us be diplomats as well as soldiers," tranquilly replied Pochowski. "I will place before you the two only possibilities. I reject Russia's victory over England. You yourself cannot deny that, in such an event, our cause is lost for ever. Not we alone but the whole earth will groan in servitude. Such a prospect we cannot even glance at. Let us, I say, reject it. Now, in the first place, England may conquer the Tsar and his armies—I do not say Russia, for it will not be Russia. The true Russian secretly longs for England's victory. England may conquer—I say she must and *will* conquer—the Tsar's armies. She will sweep over our country and seize the capital. We shall be in the grip of a foreign nation. She will dictate her terms to us. Mind you, *I* do not fear that. I should welcome it, for I have confidence in England. She will give us our liberty. She will drive away the baneful breed of despots whose madness it is to believe themselves God-ordained autocrats of countless subjects. But how do *you* like such a situation? Would you prefer to have your rights given to you, not by yourself, or by your Tsar, but by a foreign power? Do you prefer that we shall be pensioners on the good will of an alien race?"

The Count ground his teeth, but made no other reply. Pochowski went on:

"Well, there is your prior alternative. You do not care for it. Exactly! I guessed so. Then what is left? Clearly the course I have been advocating. If we do not care to have our freedom given to us—thrown to us—we must take it ourselves. And how? It is simplicity itself. We must summon together all the forces that we have, rouse Russia to her heart, seize the Capital, dethrone the Tsar, and make ourselves masters of our own dominions. Having done that, we shall ourselves extend the hand of alliance to our invader, cancel the war, make our peace, give her idemnity, bid her retire, and then avoid the unlovely spectacle of our capital invested, and arrangement of amnesity that shall be honourable to all. Is not that the only prudent—nay, the only noble—course that is open to us?"

Pochowski waited for a few moments whilst he allowed his words to sink into the heart of his hearer.

"But your Nihilist army," said the Count, after some reflection, "it is but a poor, ungoverned horde."

Pochowski smiled.

"You may be pardoned the belief, Count," he replied: "it is a mistake that is carefully cultivated. But do you really believe that these poor wretches who throw about bombs and assault innocent people are the heads and leaders of our great movement? Let me assure you that they are rebels to the cause rather than its guides. We cannot restrain misguided fanatics; there must always be some madmen in so great a multitude of oppressed. Nay, we cannot even direct and be certain of them. There may yet be outrage. But it is abhorrent and abominable to me, to all our officers, to the great mass of our people, and, above all, to the cause. Believe me that neither the People's Right nor the People's Will dominate to our movement. It is in high quarters, amongst men of rank and position, amongst our officers, wherever true greatness of soul animates a clear intelligence, that you must seek our leaders. When the time comes you will be amazed. Your neighbour to right and to left, your superior officer, your intimate friend, the nobleman whose patronage you seek—all will be found staunch and courageous champions of the cause. The real chivalry of Russia is on our side."

Pochowski held out his hand.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed the Count amazed. "Do you mean that the Court itself is so deeply tinged by it?"

"Wait!" was Pochowski's reply, and he smiled grimly as he spoke. "You will see, when the moment comes, how pitifully isolated, how tragically alone, is the race of the Romanoffs. There are those upon their side, we will grant—a few fanatics like themselves, some trained to the hateful

and insidious lie which support a despot's throne, most mere office-bearers and self-seekers, petty tyrants whose power is part of the greater power we seek to destroy. But when the hour of danger is at hand, how many of these will stand by and gives their lives for a hopeless cause?"

The Count rose and paced the room, and as he moved the watchful eyes of his host followed him. At length he turned, and, approaching Pochowski, said:

"Either way there is something that is distasteful. But it may be that personal pride, perhaps even personal honour, must yield to a greater principle. I have heard your arguments and admit them. I will do what you say. I will command your army, and will even lay hands upon His Majesty. But upon one condition. It is that there must be no swerving from the policy you have outlined. We, the people of Russia, shall fight our own battle of liberty, and then supreme in our own capital, bid England retire. We will grant what terms she demands. But it it must be our defence that we would ourselves spare Russia the degradation of a hostile investment, and since our government is so mad as to seek our own humiliation—that we throw it aside the better to protect the honour of our native land."

These words, spoken with quite dignity, moved his hearer. Rising to his feet, Pochowski held out his hand.

"May I die the death of a traitor and be despised of all men," he said, "if I am guilty of thought, word, or deed that is dishonourable to the true cause of patriotism."

The two men gripped each other's hands. Each was affected by the tragedy of this solemn dedication.

"It is one of the greatest moments of the world's history. So must Brutus and Cassius have felt when they swore alliance for the death of Cæsar!" It was the Count who spoke.

"I accept the omen!" cried Pochowski. "So may the new Cæsar be overthrown, and no new Anthony undo our work. But our hour is up. You must come with me. Henceforth we shall have little time for speech."

Pochowski called upon the delegates to make their statements.

The two officers descended the stairs, and, entering a carriage already awaiting them, drove rapidly off.

"Conspiracy does not always conceal itself!" declared the Count almost gaily.

"Conspiracy that conceals itself," observed Pochowski, "acknowledges itself already beaten. We are safe because we are too transparent. If you wish to avoid detection, do not shun the policeman; make love to his daughter!"

Thus jesting, they passed through some of the spacious streets of the Capital, until they reached a noble house, palatial in size, and buried amongst trees already heavy with summer foliage.

The Count started.

"Duke Paul's!" he exclaimed in amazed tones.

Pochowski nodded.

"He cannot help us, but he is with us. Blood ties cannot be rudely broken. But he is a generous patriot, and throws around us his protection. Do you not know that through his influence alone our great teacher, Tolstoi, has escaped persecution?"

The Count looked further mystified. But he made no reply. In a few moments they had entered.

Without delaying, Pochowski and his companion pressed forward, and passing through a door at the end of the passage, descended into a spacious apartment, where, scattered about in little groups, sat a score or so of men.

They rose to their feet as the President entered, and, as they observed the Count, exchanged looks of mutual satisfaction.

Proceeding to a raised chair at the end of the room, and keeping the Count by his side, Pochowski called upon the delegates assembled to make their statements.

It appeared that European Russia was divided into twenty-eight districts, each of which had several sub-divisions. In every district was a Nihilist officer of repute, whose duty it was to keep himself accurately informed of the number and strength of the multitude under his control. He was unknown to any save the sub-officers, and his sympathy with the popular party had never created a moment's suspicion in the minds of the bureaucracy. On this fateful day, summoned by urgent messages, they assembled to report themselves and to deliberate on the great step that was about to be taken.

Each in turn rose and made his brief speech. And every speech was as satisfactory as it was terse. It appeared that there were, in all, nearly 700,000 sturdy enthusiasts ready when called upon to take the field. Some of them had been trained in war, many had been exercised in drill and with the rifle. Animated by a fierce indomitable spirit of patriotic ardour, they formed a superb army which, distracted by a double invasion, the Tsar would find difficult, nay impossible, to withstand.

"You have made it clear," demanded Pochowski, when they had done, "that there is to be no outrage, no individual violence, no private revenge? And you have forbidden dynamite and such brutal instruments of carnage?"

There was a common assurance of this.

"I have done all I can," observed one (he was President of the Moscow District), "but I guarantee nothing. There are fanatics who will promise anything, but can never be trusted. Moscow," he added significantly, "has suffered much from the Imperial scourge."

"It is instant death to anyone who violates the strict rule of war," replied Pochowski sternly, and his brow became overcast. "Meanwhile, I have the pleasant tidings to impart that Count Lucovitch has consented to take supreme command in the field. He will meet you here to-morrow and give you full instructions. The blow must be struck at once."

There was a murmur of approval at this intelligence, and the officers pressed round the Count, whose knowledge of military tactics was held in high regard, and congratulated him upon the noble part he had consented to play in the liberation of his country.

"It is not altogether with a glad heart, gentlemen," he responded; "but I cannot oppose my private feelings to the supreme considerations that are before us. We shall at least be allies of England and not dependents. Our cause is the same. We fight for the liberation of Russia, and she for the liberation of the world."

In another hour's time, after some consultation and much anxious questioning, the two Nihilist chiefs drove off. Neither of them slept that night. Until early the next morning they were deep in discussion and in the examination of charts and reports and in searching criticism of the position. Before St. Petersburg rose for its breakfast its fate was determined.

And thus, when England was hurling her splendid armies upon the shores of Russia, a terrible and irresistible danger grew to monstrous maturity in the very heart of the empire, and the grim shadow of fate was creeping upon the throne itself.

It was a situation worthy of the Greek tragedian. Whilst exultant despotism, arrogant in its supremacy, was stretching out its hand for its final crown, its doom was already pronounced and its end prepared.

Dramatic irony such as this Sophocles himself would have appreciated.

CHAPTER XLII

Rodney Becomes an Admiral.

Early in July the leading detachments of the Indian army began to reach Uzun Ada, and the Naval Brigade was hurried forward among the first arrivals.

Rodney was now in command of this small party of three hundred sailors, as the senior officer originally selected for the post had the misfortune to fall ill shortly after the defeat of Alikhanoff on the banks of the Helmund.

They went on a tour of inspection.

Sir George White, the Commander-in-Chief, and his staff also travelled rapidly to the front, as the wholly unexpected success of Peyton's operations in Transcaspia had changed the aspect of affairs very materially. The government of India had always contemplated the possibility of rudely upsetting Russia's preponderance in Central Asia, but the idea of marching the Indian Army to Moscow was generally regarded as a fantastic dream which must be utterly subjugated to the practical project of breaking down the Muscovite sway on the Northern confines of Afghanistan.

But the seizure of the Transcaspian railway, and Applin's remarkable capture of nearly every available steamship on the Caspian, had altered the entire position.

Not only was Russia compelled to marshal her first line of defence to meet the British attack on the Black Sea littoral, but her Caucasian army was unable to cross the Caspian to attempt the reconquest of the lost provinces, and it now became a matter of choice between developing the movement from India into a determined effort to penetrate to the capital, and quietly consolidating resources around Merv and on the Oxus, to await the outcome of events in European Russia.

In view of these two courses it was plain that Sir George White and his men were inclined to the more audacious one.

Rodney was in Uzun Ada two days before the Commander-in-Chief, and he lost no time in examining the fleet. There were, in all, seventeen steamships, for which petroleum supplied the motive power. But they were small, with limited deck capacity, and, at the utmost stretch of accommodation, barely capable of bringing 10,000 men across the Caspian.

This inland sea, too, is liable to severe and unheralded storms, so that to crowd men into the wretched native craft that swarmed in the harbour, attracted thither by the news that roubles were now unusually plentiful, was to court disaster, whilst to attempt to occupy Baku with a small force meant absolute annihilation at the hands of Russia's best troops, the army of the Caucasus.

Rodney knew that the problem, tough as it was, must be solved somehow. He found Applin to be a congenial spirit, and discussed it with him. As the result, they went on a tour of inspection to the timber-yards and locomotive shops.

When Sir George White arrived he sent for Rodney.

"Well, sir," he said genially to Frank, "now that you are the Admiral, I must ask you how you propose to carry my army across to the other side."

"At the end of six days," said Rodney, "I will be able to land 100,000 men simultaneously at any point you may select within about thirty-six hours from the time of departure from this port."

"What?" shouted the Commander-in-Chief, astounded at this reply. "Surely it is impossible! They can't swim there, you know."

The sailor modestly disclaimed any such flight of genius as was suggested by the retort. He explained that there were eighty engines at present gathered on the sidings at Uzun Ada, together with 2,000 waggons. There was an ample supply of timber available elsewhere, and he believed that by utilising the labour of every man in the place, something like forty gigantic rafts could be rapidly knocked together, whilst two engines per raft might be converted, with equal ease, into a modified form of the American rear-driving paddle-wheel principle. Each raft would hold 2,000 men with stores. They would be fitted with sweeps to eke out the steam power, and the steamers would accompany them to safeguard against accident. The remainder of the troops could go on the steamships, and in the best of the native craft, but very few horses could be taken in the first expedition.

Rodney came to the interview prepared with plans and estimates of labour, and five minutes after the Commander-in-Chief was made fully acquainted with the details he accorded his hearty approval to the proposal, and the naval officer was given *carte blanche* with regard to men and money.

As the work went on it was deemed desirable to reduce the number of troops to 75,000, and to increase the space for horses and guns. Never stranger craft navigated the sea than these ingeniously constructed rafts, which when fully loaded were almost submerged. But the locomotives, fixed fore and aft, were placed on elevated platforms, and the first experiment showed that with steam alone a speed of two miles an hour was obtainable, whilst with long sweeps, each manned by twenty strong-armed soldiers, this rate of progress was almost doubled.

Tommy revelled in the congenial task of christening these giant monsters. Officially, they were known by numbers, but this suited not the eclectic taste of the "swaddy."

Thus, No. 1 was called "Sudden Death," because a structural weakness at one end caused the sensational disappearance of an engine into the depths of the Caspian during the trial trip. No. 2 became "Lady Godiva," on account of a certain simplicity in outline which was found to be most convenient after experiment had shown the faults of the first construction. Nos. 5 and 7, built side by side, were dubbed respectively "Caster" and "Pole-axe."

"Admiral" Rodney hoisted his flag on the *Sarmarkhand*, the largest and most powerful of the Baku-Uzun Ada fleet, and it was a proud moment for him when he led the gigantic procession of ships, rafts and dhows through the tortuous entrance channel and out into the open sea.

Everyone believed that an attack was to be made on Baku.

An unwonted degree of openness was manifested by Sir George White in discussing the possibilities of effecting a surprise during the hours of darkness by an unexpected landing in that neighbourhood, and the imprisoned officers of the Caspian steamers were closely questioned as to the conformation of the coast-line and the main features of the approach by water, with the possibilities of defence.

There was consequently much perturbation when it was discovered, on the morning of July 27th, the day fixed upon for the sailing of the expedition, that a steam-launch had been mysteriously cut from her moorings in the night and was now well on her way to Baku, with half-a-dozen Russian officers on board.

The people who seemed to care least about the occurrence were those primarily responsible for it.

Sir George White and Rodney were supremely indifferent to the obvious fact that, thus forewarned, the Grand Duke Paul would make it very hot indeed for the invaders, but this nonchalant attitude was somewhat explained when the troops saw the sun rise over the waste of waters after their first night on the rafts, and found that instead of sailing due west to Baku they were heading north-west to Petrovsk.

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"Well, sir," he said genially to Frank, "now that you are the Admiral, I must ask you how you propose to carry my army across to the other side."

"We are a lot of silly jossers," said the humble philosopher of the Royal Fusiliers whom we met before at Karachi. "Anybody with a grain of sense could ha' seen that we shouldn't land on the south side of the Cowkysus. We're a-going to Mosky we are, an' it ain't likely we'd stick a lot of bloomin' mountings in the way when we can sail round 'em. There's no flies on Sir George, is there?"

There were no flies on Private Watson either. He had correctly read the Commander-in-Chief's strategy, and at dawn on the following morning he and the rest of the 7th, with some Ghurkas and Bengal Infantry, occupied two lively hours in clearing Petrovsk of the few Russian troops who held it.

The work of disembarkation proceeded rapidly. As fast as regiments landed they were hurried forward through the town to occupy a low range of foot hills through which ran the line to Moscow, Petrovsk being the terminus of that railway on the north of the Caucasian range.

It was well that great energy was shown in the matter, as the Russians, though taken by surprise, strove bravely to remedy their mistake, and it was clear, from the rapid concentration of troops that was going on some few miles inland, that a determined assault would be delivered on the British at the earliest possible moment.

It came, hotly enough, during the afternoon.

The Russian general in command at Vladikavkaz hurried up some 20,000 infantry, three sotnias of Cossacks, and fifty guns, and dashed at the English position with great intrepidity.

So severe and determined was the assault that it assumed the character of a hand to hand struggle. Reinforcements were arriving on both sides, but it was far easier for the Russians to hasten up their supports than for the Indian army, with inadequate-landing places, without cranes or steam power on shore, and delayed by the unwieldy nature of the rafts in a shallow harbour abounding in sand-pits—distant also some miles from the scene of the encounter—to strengthen the fighting line.

From the beginning of hostilities the advance division was outnumbered. It suffered terribly from the fact that the Russian guns were unopposed by artillery, and Sir George White, who conducted the defensive operations in person, was devoutly thankful when Colonel Doyne's brigade of cavalry appeared in the rear.

This consisted, it will be remembered, of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards, the 5th Lancers, the 2nd Bengal Lancers, and the 7th Bengal Cavalry.

The afternoon was well advanced as they came up at the trot, but the blazing sun still rode high in the heavens, and the drifting sand-clouds obscured everything in the front, except that through the murky air occasional puffs of smoke, and deep red jets of flame showed where the devastating guns of the enemy were located.

After a weary plod through the sands, Colonel Doyne wisely relegating the pace to a walk, the troopers reached the right of the fighting line.

The sun at last set over the distant hills in a deep crimson glow, but the dust still rising over the scene rendered any intelligible idea of what was going on impossible to the newcomers.

The Royal Fusiliers and the Hampshire Regiment were at this moment bearing the brunt of the attack, both regi-

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ments being in extended order, with the 5th Ghurkas and the 2nd Bengal Infantry in support.

The Russians kept up a furious cannonade, firing salvoes of six guns with shrapnel, and Colonel Mortimer, of the Fusiliers, who commanded the fighting line, sent word to Sir George White that he could only hold his position and attack the enemy's skirmishers, whilst an advance was out of the question.

It assumed the character of a hand-to-hand struggle.

The Commander-in-Chief dispatched a aide-de-camp to acquaint Colonel Doyne with the position of affairs, and to ask him if he thought his brigade could silence the guns.

The cavalry commander answered with a smile: "I will try." He at once gave the necessary orders for the performance of his desperate plan, which was to deliver an unexpected attack upon the enemy's right—this, too, during the uncertainty of darkness, and against unknown odds.

The brigade moved quietly off without attracting Russian notice, and they were soon completely hidden from view by the undulating ground.

Withthe sudden change peculiar to the region, darkness, was now fast setting in, although but little more than an hour previously the sun was visible. The moon rose soon after, and there was something inexpressibly weird in the strange spectacle of the dark mass of men and horses silently advancing through the now almost insupportable dust-clouds, whilst through an occasional rift a bright steel scabbard or glittering curb-chain would gleam for an instant.

Meanwhile the noise and turmoil and lurid blaze of the conflict raging on the left only became more fearful in their intensity.

At last the brigade crossed the intervening ridge, having gained the position desired by Colonel Doyne, and as the dense body of moving cavalry showed against the bright background of moonlit sky and arid earth, they were perceived by the enemy.

Directly in front, and about three-quarters of a mile away, were the guns, and as soon as the Russians became aware of the existence of a British force in this new direction, they devoted all their attention to the movement. Twenty guns quickly changed front and shells soon screamed through the air, shrapnel exploded and sent its missiles tearing and hissing on all sides, whilst the numerous tiny flashes in the enemy's lines, followed by the pinging sound of the bullets, showed that their infantry were at work. Fortunately the Russian aim was high, and the brigade took ground to the right to still further disconcert it. But the advance could no longer be delayed, for by this time Colonel Mortimer must be hard pressed in his difficult position.

As the brigade moved forward, the Russian artillerymen again saw them, and now the enemy's fire became more fatal, for men and horses began to drop out of the ranks. The cavalry advanced in echelon from the left, preceded by the 2nd Bengal Lancers, and, under cover of these, the 4th Dragoon Guards and the 5th Lancers formed to deliver their charge with the 7th Bengal Cavalry in support.

Colonel J. J. S. Chisholme, of the 5th Lancers, the brigade major, passed the thrilling words along the line:

"The cavalry are to charge those guns."

As this order was repeated from squadron to squadron, these gallant soldiers straightened their stalwart figures in the saddle, and set their teeth hard as they looked at the seething cauldron of fire and smoke into which they were shortly to plunge. Even the very horses felt that some desperate deed was imminent, for they pawed impatiently and clanked their accoutrements in the wild desire to be moving. Fatigue, hunger, and thirst vanished to the winds.

If there came to that band memories of home and friends, they were banished by the proud consciousness that the honour of England was intrusted to their keeping at that supreme moment. Each man knew that the lives of his struggling countrymen in the main body depended upon his success, and he thought with rage of the dear comrade who, five minutes ago, was riding carelessly by his side, but who now lay rolling in the agonies of death upon Russian soil.

Captain Adams, of the 5th Lancers, was adjusting the chin-strap of his helmet when a voice behind him said:

"It's a warm shop here, sir!"

Turning in the saddle, he saw his soldier servant—a sturdy Yorkshireman named Bolland, who hailed from his own parish—grinning at him from the front rank of the troop.

"You here, Bolland?" said the Captain sternly, for his faithful comrade was supposed to be sick in hospital from a slight attack of fever. "You had no business to be on parade to-night."

"No business, sir! Do you think I would stop behind when the regiment was going into action? Lor' bless you, sir, no fear!"

This reply was unanswerable, and now everyone felt that the period of waiting had passed, for Colonel Doyne rode rapidly to the front of the brigade.

The shot and shell were falling fast on all sides. It was a curiously helpless sensation to be so hotly fired at in the dark.

Two officers in the 2nd Bengal Lancers instinctively reined their horses close together whilst they exchanged a friendly hand pressure.

"Hope to meet you at the mess to-night," said one.

"Same to you, old chap, and a Happy New Year when it comes," was the cool response.

Then Colonel Doyne's voice rang out clearly through the gloom:

"Now we have them! Trot—gallop—charge!"

The last word electrified every pulse like a galvanic shock.

Away dashed the host of men and horses, right into the teeth of the leaden hailstorm, amidst dust, and smoke, and spurts of bright fire. Their path lay straight ahead, and they followed a guide in the Brigadier who would only falter when laid low by the enemy.

"Hope to meet you at the mess to-night."

A brief but maddening rush through the whizzing bullets and terrific sand-clouds raised by the galloping hoofs, and they were among the Russians. Like a living steam-hammer they pounded down upon the molten group of guns and men, rendered fiery by the flame of the last terrible volley which sought to check the impact of the British troopers.

But the effort was in vain. The long bright sabres flashed in the air as they dealt death to the struggling artillerymen, and the powerful horses crushed irresistibly through the wavering infantry which lay beyond the guns.

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Doyne's horse was shot under him, but mounting another that was riderless, he still led the van as they swept the enemy off the field, for the Russians forthwith abandoned guns and position.

Captain Adams had cut down two of a group of stubborn gunners who seemed to prefer death to an ignominious flight, when he suddenly saw Bolland hard pressed by a trio of Cossacks, one of whom was an officer. He spurred hard to get alongside the youngster in time, but he was too late, for the Cossack officer wheeled his horse to the rear and stabbed the brave Yorkshireman in the back.

With a frenzied yell Captain Adams galloped up and gave the cowardly Russian such a hearty blow that he nearly severed the man's head from his body. The others made off at top speed.

Bolland had fallen from his horse, and Adams, hastily dismounting, bent over his prostrate figure.

"My poor boy, are you much hurt?" he asked, with keen anxiety in his voice, for Bolland was born on his own estate, and could not be gainsaid from following the squire's son into the Lancers.

"Yes sir. It's all over with me, I'm afraid," was the feeble response. "That beggar's sword passed through my back and came out of my right breast."

"You must not despair, Bolland," said the officer, though the words almost choked him. "The ambulance will soon be here, and with care you'll get set up again."

"There's no chance of that, Captain. I'm done for. But I saw you drop him, an' it served him right. Oh, I'm dyin'!"

Captain Adams gave the Russian a hearty blow.

For a moment it seemed as though he had breathed his last, but Adams found that his heart was still beating, and he remembered that he had a small flask of brandy in his sabre-tache.

He poured some of the liquor into Bolland's mouth, and its influence revived him for a moment, but it was too evident that he was sinking fast.

In a short space he began to talk again, and his words reverted to the familiar tongue used in his Yorkshire home, such as he knew long before he was drilled and smartened into being a spruce cavalryman.

"Captain," he said, "ye'll leuk after t' puir awd mother, A knöa, for she's nöabody left to care for her now!"

"Heaven knows I will, if I am spared," was Adams's earnest answer.

"Ye'll be spared right eneuf, sir," said Bolland weakly. "Tak' ma word for 't."

Adams could not answer him, for the tears were in his eyes, but the dying Lancer went on:

"And, Captain."

"Yes," answered Adams.

"Tell 'em, when you reach t' awd country, that A died like a true Yorkshireman, one of t' right söart, and that afore A dropped A'd fixed four of 'em."

"Yes, yes, my lad; you will not be forgotten."

"Thank you, Captain. Remember—poor—awd—mother, and may God—bless her—and you—and all t' föaks at höam. Oh! Captain, it's over. Goodbye. If A could see t' little plëace—once more—it 'ud be easier."

As he uttered the last words the young Lancer raised his head and shoulders with a spasmodic effort, and then fell back upon the sand. His features relaxed from their drawn fixity. A smile came over them. He had added one more name to the glorious death-roll of England's brave soldiers.

When Adams regained his troop the battle was at an end, and the remainder of the disembarkation was effected, quietly and uninterruptedly.

Whereupon "Admiral" Rodney steamed off again to Uzun Ada, towing his rafts in order to bring across the rest of the Indian Army in two sections.

This duty he accomplished in five days, and he then left his warrant officers to carry on the work of forwarding stores to the base at Petrovsk, whilst he made haste to reach headquarters, which by this time were located at Vladikavkaz. Rostoff, on the Moscow line, was already in British hands. With the army of the Caucasus safely locked up behind the impenetrable barrier of snow-clad mountains, it was but a matter of a few days for the railway to be repaired where it had been destroyed by the Russians, and for Sir George White to meet Lord Methuen.

England had now nearly 400,000 men in European Russia. (*To be continued.*)

She: "You say you would do anything for me, Charlie."

He (fervently): "I would, darling."

She: "Well, you know how frightfully red my hair is, I want you to dye yours red, just to keep me in countenance!"

May: "You wouldn't think from her looks that she is one of the newly rich and has forced her way into society."

Old Boy: "No; but you might be sure of it from the looks of every other woman in the room."

Little Girl: "I'm afraid to go to sleep in the dark."

Mamma: "Nonsense, dear; remember that little angels are with you."

Little Girl (ten minutes later): "I can't go to sleep, mamma. One of the angels is biting me."

"I don't think this ham is perfectly cured, my dear," said Mr. Newlywed.

"Well, what shall I do, Tom?" asked the sweet young wife anxiously. "Send it back to the shop or telegraph for the doctor?"

Miss Clara: "You say, Ethel, that you only paid sixpence for having your gloves cleaned? Why, only the other day I was actually asked ninepence!"

Miss Ethel (with a slight but not dangerous cough): "Indeed, dear, but I suppose the size is considered!"

Mother: "Johnny, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Here you sit in bed yet, while the sun has been up for hours."

Johnny: "Yes, but the sun is warm, while I am always cold when I get up. There are different kinds of sons, and you've got them mixed up."

A young rascal on one side of the road pinned something to the coat-tails of a passer-by, and as the man went across the street, several persons saw it and smiled. A second boy ran up to the man and said:

"Mister, there's a card pinned to your coat. Let me take it off."

"How did that get there?" said the man.

"One o' them ragamuffins put it on, I s'pose."

"The young wretches! Well, here's a penny for you."

Two minutes later, the good little boy pinned it on to another man, and his partner on the other side collected another penny.

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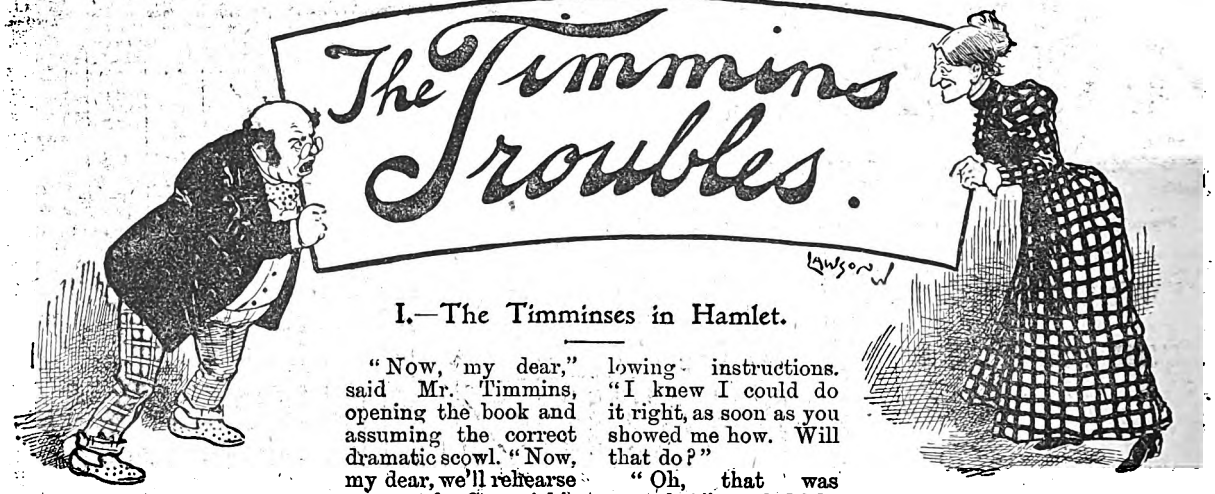

I.—The Timminses in Hamlet.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, opening the book and assuming the correct dramatic scowl. "Now, my dear, we'll rehearse our part for Specwick's theatricals. I'm to be Hamlet, and you're to be the Queen, and we want this thing to go off all right. The hardest part we have to play together is where I accuse you of poisoning my father, and we had better try that until we get it perfect. I'll commence:

"'Now, mother, what's the matter?'"

"Well, I was thinking whether I had better wear my black silk or my maroon dress," returned Mrs. Timmins, sticking her fingers in her mouth reflectively. "Do queens wear——"

"Will you be kind enough to tell me what pack of cards you got that idea of a queen from?" demanded Mr. Timmins, fixing his wife's eye with a glare. "Do you suppose that the Queen sent for Hamlet to get his opinions about bargains in millinery? When I say that, you must say: 'Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended!'"

"Oh, I understand," pleaded Mrs. Timmins. "I thought you asked me what I was thinking about. I didn't know you had commenced the play."

"Well, you be careful this time," recommended Mr. Timmins, in a tone of solemn warning. "This is a play, this is. Do you think you know the difference between a play and a bankrupt sale?" he repeated:

"'Now, mother, what's the matter?'"

"There's nothing the matter now," replied Mrs. Timmins, straightening up and preparing to be Queen as soon as her turn came. "Go on, dear, I understand it now."

"Say it, can't you?" thundered Mr. Timmins. "Don't you know your part?"

"What shall I say, dear?" asked Mrs. Timmins, looking at her husband with a dazed expression.

"Say!" roared Mr. Timmins. "Sing a comic song. Didn't I tell you what to say? Look here," and Mr. Timmins lowered his voice to the intense pitch, "have you ever read this play?"

"Why, yes!" faltered Mrs. Timmins. "You come in and stab Mr. Specwick behind the ears, and I scream."

"Hear her!" moaned Mr. Timmins, frothing at the mouth. "Stab Specwick behind the ears! That's all right. Now you scream. Scream. Why don't you? You know so much about your part, why don't you play it?"

"W-e-e-e-e!" squealed Mrs. Timmins, faithfully following instructions. "I knew I could do it right, as soon as you showed me how. Will that do?"

"Oh, that was queenly!" snarled Mr. Timmins, dropping into a chair, and regarding his wife with rolling eyes. "Just do that again! Four of those dramatic efforts will make this play the greatest of modern entertainments! Do it once more!"

"It hurts my throat," complained Mrs. Timmins. "Can't we make it do with one scream, dear?"

"Mrs. Timmins," said her husband, with unnatural calmness, "there's been some mistake made in this thing. You should have been cast for Ophelia."

"What does he do?" inquired Mrs. Timmins.

"She was an idiot from birth, and afterwards went crazy," explained Mr. Timmins. "That was the part for you."

"Then I'd rather be Queen," returned Mrs. Timmins, bridling a little. "Now, dear, let's begin all over again, and I'll do it right this time."

"You can't do it worse," growled Mr. Timmins. "I'll try it once more, just to see what kind of foolishness you are capable of.

"'Now, mother, what's the matter?'"

"We-e-e-e," squeaked Mrs. Timmins, satisfied that she was perfect this time. "'Hamlet! oh, Hamlet!' we-e-e-e!"

"Turn it off!" yelled Mr. Timmins, springing from his chair, and capering round the room as though a mad dog had bitten him. "What's the matter?"

"We-e-e-e!" squealed Mrs. Timmins, profoundly impressed with the idea that the play was still going on, and that she had at last mastered its intricacies.

"Will you ever shut up?" gasped Mr. Timmins, wilder than ever to think his wrath was mistaken for acting. "Have you got some kind of a notion that the Queen's a foghorn?"

"I did just as you told me, dear," argued Mrs. Timmins, completely taken aback by her husband's criticism. "You said I was to scream when you asked me what the matter was. Didn't I do it right?"

"Oh, that was right!" shrieked Mr. Timmins. "You struck the keynote of high art both times! I'm going to fit you out with a hair trunk and a pair of hoofs, and start you for a menagerie! Such talent as that can't be wanted on any cheap Shakespeare plays while I've got the money and influence to get you a job in the legitimate circus," and Mr. Timmins kicked the book through the window, and buried himself in his evening paper.

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Paste or tablets, 1d. to 6d. All dealers.

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Hairdressers fitted up. Estimates free.

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Plays Hymns, Popular Airs, Quadrilles, Waltzes, Hornpipes, &c. A mere child can play it. Cash or easy payments. List of tunes and full particulars free.

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Who would be without a

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Folding and Portable, Square legs, Gold bronzed, very durable.

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3/- parcel post free. Two for 5/9, Three for 8/6. Carriage Paid.

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7 Southampton Row, London, W.C.

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ALL FAT PEOPLE

readily Reduce Weight and Cure Corpulency Permanently by taking TRILENE TABLETS (Regd.) for a few weeks. They are very agreeable, harmless, and never fail to PRESERVE both HEALTH and FIGURE without change of diet. Reduction begins immediately.

An English Countess writes: "Your Trilene Tablets act admirably."

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Send 2/6 to THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 Finsbury Pavement, London, E.C.

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THERE IS NO BETTER REMEDY IN THE WHOLE WORLD FOR ALL COUGH AND THROAT TROUBLES THAN KEATING'S LOZENCES. ONE GIVES RELIEF. THEY WILL CURE, AND THEY WILL NOT INJURE YOUR HEALTH. THEY CONTAIN ONLY THE PUREST DRUGS.

Sold everywhere in 1/1½ Tins.

PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Rivetted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

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Agents wanted where not represented.

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Christmas AND New Year Cards.

Special Offers to the Readers of "SHORT STORIES."

Our Cards this Season are without question even better than before, and are the best we have ever had the pleasure of offering

SEE PRESS OPINIONS.

"These selections are very choice and really marvels of cheapness. Beauty and variety deserving the highest praise, being as perfect as it is possible to imagine or produce."—*Queen of Fashion.*

"We recommend our readers to send for these charming parcels if they wish to form any idea of the variety of pretty souvenirs that can be procured at the lowest possible outlay."—*Weldon's Ladies' Journal.*

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1/- Fifty Christmas and New Year Cards. An old title but New contents. Bright and attractive Designs. Every Card different, with seasonable verses and greetings. The value here is really wonderful. Sent, post paid, 1/1.

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Twenty-four Splendid Cards, all of which are choice Folding Cards, usually sold at 1d., 2d., and 3d. each. A very welcome assortment when quality and quantity are required. Sent, post paid, 1/1. 1/-

NO. 3.—THE "EMPIRE" PACKET.

1/- Artistic Gems. Twelve very handsome Folding and Tri-folding Cards Fresh ideas bound to suit the popular taste. Embossed and Jewelled Designs. The majority are well worth 3d. and 4d. each; also including Novelties which are alone worth the price charged for the whole parcel. All will be delighted with this selection. Sent, post paid, 1/1.

NO. 4.—"BLACK AND WHITE" PACKET.

Twelve Fine-Art Folding Cards. Photogravure studies in black and white; fine Etchings executed in a manner superseding steel engravings; distinctive and stylish, with selected Greetings. Sent, post paid, 1/1. 1/-

NO. 5.—THE "ELITE" PACKET.

1/- Contains Six really beautiful Cards; their artistic merit is simply perfection; published at 6d. and 9d. each; elaborate designs after clever artists, with quotations by celebrated authors. A capital selection when only a few good Cards are desired. Sent, post paid, 1/1.

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A choice selection of Six most beautiful Folding Flora Cards with carefully chosen Religious Verses by FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL and H. M. BURBRIDGE; also with this packet is presented a very chaste Booklet, entitled, "The Way, the Truth, and the Light." Poem, which cannot fail to please. Sent, post paid, 1/1. 1/-

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1/- Contains Four Sixpenny Packets—Goodwill, Flowers of the Spring, The Lord Knoweth, Voices of Praise. Forty-eight Cards, all with appropriate Scripture words and Season's greetings, suitable for Sunday School classes; sure to be appreciated. Sent, post paid, 1/1.

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More Novelties. Real fun without vulgarity. Eighteen most humorous designs, quite new, Shaped and Folding, comprising many good Jokes and Novelties with appropriate lines; very funny; also some capital Pun and Puzzle Cards usually sold at 2d. and 3d. each. Sent, post paid, 1/1. 1/-

The Most Remarkable Value ever offered by any firm.

The FANCY TRADE should send for Wholesale Catalogues and Samples of Christmas Cards, Novelties, etc., post free, 3 stamps. CHEAPEST HOUSE IN LONDON.

JOHN THRIDGOULD & CO., 18 & 20 SYDNEY STREET, COMMERCIAL ROAD, LONDON, E.

Established 1851.

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ON THE BEST AUTHORITY.

Hiss.—Some of the native races of Africa—the Basutos, for instance—express their approval of an orator or a spectacle by hissing.

P.—Soap has been in use for quite 3,000 years, and is twice mentioned in the Bible. A soap-boiler's shop was found in the ruins of Pompeii. Yet there are people even in this country who scarcely know what it is.

R. E.—One of the most primitive railways in operation at the present time, is that between Atami and Ogawara, in Japan. The cars, or carriages, hold four people, two on a seat, and sitting back to back, and the train is made up of two, sometimes three, carriages. The motive power is furnished by human beings, the train being pulled along by coolies.

R. E.—Gaust, in the Pyrenees, is a small republic. Its area is just about one square mile, and it has 150 inhabitants.

J. B.—The smallest pony in the world is owned by the Marquis Cercano, an Italian horse-breeder. Its height is twenty-eight inches, and it is often harnessed to a small carriage for two persons.

I. L.—Forty-four muscles are called into play for the production of the human voice. In the case of the small boy interviewing his father, two lots of muscles are usually working, connected by a strap.

Mus.—The present system of musical notation was invented in the eleventh century.

S. N.—A cubic foot of newly-fallen snow weighs five and a-half pounds, and its bulk is twelve times that of an equal weight of water.

P. N.—The population of London equals the combined populations of Berlin, Paris, St. Petersburg, and Rome.

T. H. L.—The record for wear on the part of a carpet appears to be held by one in the hall of the Shah's Palace. It is stated on good authority that it has been in use for nearly two hundred years. It is quite certain that no dirty boots are ever wiped on that.

Iberia.—Spain should be a very rich country, for her mineral wealth surpasses that of any other country in Europe. She possesses rich stores of copper, zinc, iron, silver, quicksilver, and antimony. But the Spaniards do very little in that direction, and where the work is carried on, the best posts—if not the whole concern—are in the hands of foreigners.

Colon.—Although the French have made a terrible hash of things as colonists, they go on steadily acquiring territory. During the past twenty years they have annexed 2,000,000 square miles of territory in Africa. They now have Algeria, Tunis, the Western Soudan, a large part of the Somali coast, Dahomey, the French Congo, Senegal, "the light soil" of the Sahara, and are making progress in Abyssinia.

C. C.—The coffee tree produces fruit to the age of seventy-five years.

Hal is of a statistical turn of mind. "If all the Queen's subjects were to file past a certain point, singly, how long would it take?"————Passing uninterruptedly day and night, it would take seventy years, for there are more than 450,000,000 people in the British Empire.

Carpenter.—Nails can be driven into the hardest wood in ordinary use, if they are first dipped in lard.

Coolie.—India has more species of plants than any other country; the number is given as nearly 15,000, whereas the flora of the whole European Continent contains fewer than 11,000.

Fire.—The London Fire Brigade receives more calls on Saturday than on any other day in the week.

S. J.—Among the lower classes of the Siberian population there is a law or custom which gives to a husband the right to get rid of his wife by simply tearing off her veil or other head covering. This is taken advantage of by the husband on the slightest disagreement.

Y.—The tobacco seed is so minute that any ordinary thimble will hold enough to sow an acre of ground.

V. C.—A good Arabian horse can go for twenty-four hours in summer without drinking, and for a longer time in winter, despite the fatigue of carrying a rider across the arid plains.

"Why are certain birds and animals called 'game'?" asks B. P. H.——This is a case of transferred meaning. The old Saxon word, from which our modern term is derived, meant, not the animal pursued, but the sport of pursuing. Certain birds and animals were gradually selected as the noblest quarry of knightly sport, and, in order to keep themselves, the lords of the soil placed them in a class by themselves, and protected them from all attacks, save their own, by means of laws and penalties more or less ferocious. These were the origin of our game laws, the term "game" being used to distinguish between the protected and unprotected birds and animals. Game, therefore, now means any bird or animal which may not be shot or hunted while alive or dealt in when dead, without a special license from the Revenue authorities.

R. G.—I should say the sprat is about the most difficult fish to capture alive. When caught in the ordinary way the fish dies as soon as it comes in contact with the meshes of the net.

G. P. asks: "When did people first begin to take an annual holiday by the sea?"————Of comparatively recent years. About the year 1750 a certain doctor noticed that the fisherfolk of a little hamlet—now our modern Brighton—when suffering from scrofula and other skin diseases, made a practice of washing their bodies in sea-water and binding up the affected parts with sea-weed. He began to prescribe this treatment to his patients. The new cure "caught on," and soon developed from a sanitary practice to a pastime, and it became the fashion to go to the seaside for a portion of the summer months. The people of the Middle Ages regarded the sea with horror, so much so, indeed, that a compulsory plunge into the sea was once a legal form of punishment in this country.

L. L. D. C.—A flirt, broadly speaking, is any woman who is attractive enough to be opposed to marrying, without being thereby any less likely to marry.

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Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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GOOD! ITS MASON'S

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY
MASON'S WINE ESSENCES
AND
MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS.

Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3; three assorted 1/8.
Agents Wanted.

Manufacturers—
NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

"WORTH A GUINEA A BOX."

BEECHAM'S PILLS

FOR ALL
BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,
SUCH AS
Sick Headache, Constipation, Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion, Disordered Liver & Female Ailments.
SALE NOW OVER SIX MILLIONS YEARLY.
In Boxes, 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.
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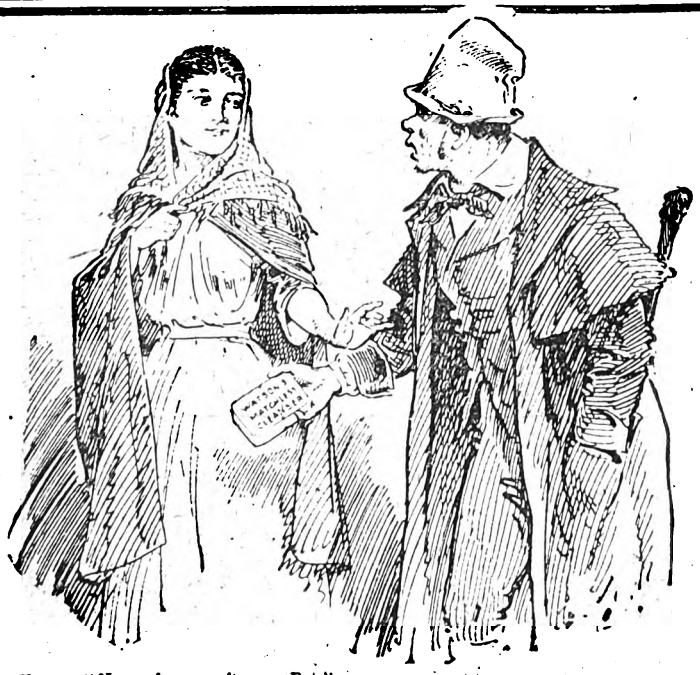
Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.



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PAT—"No, darlin', it's WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER I've brought ye."

The Cheapest, Purest, most Economical Soap made in this Country is

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER.

It does the work **QUICKLY.**
It does the work **CHEAPLY.**
It does the work **THOROUGHLY.**

Lathers Freely in the Hardest Water,
and is equally successful in the Household as in the Laundry.

WATSON'S MATCHLESS CLEANSER
IS A
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Each Tablet weighs SIXTEEN OUNCES as against Twelve Ounces in the Short-Weight Soaps.

OF ALL GROCERS.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

A 16-ounce tablet for 3d. equals 3 1. per lb.
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A 12-ounce tablet for 3d. equals 4d. per lb.

AT ALL STORES.

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Ask your Draper for
HOYLE'S
LOOK FOR THIS STAMP ON EACH PIECE
THOMAS HOYLE & SONS LIMITED REGD MANCHESTER
NEW SEASONS DESIGNS NOW READY
PRINTS
WARRANTED FAST COLOURS

"MATCHLESS"
WARNING TO LADIES.
BEWARE of POLISHES containing injurious ACIDS which RUIN your metals & SPOIL your HANDS.
TEST
TRY IT ON A PENNY. Dab a small quantity of Polish on a penny & leave it overnight. If it contains ACID, it will turn quite green by the following morning.
BUT "MATCHLESS" WONT!
FREE FROM ACID POISON OR GRIT.
LARGEST SALE IN THE WORLD
METAL POLISH.
PATON, CALVERT & Co MANUFACTURERS LIVERPOOL.

"LOUIS"
VELVETEEN

See that the name spelt L.O.U.I.S is stamped on every Yard.
TRADE MARK
NOS ASPERA JUVANT
LOUIS XI KING OF FRANCE 1461-1483.

LYLE'S GOLDEN SYRUP
LONGEST ESTABLISHED PUREST & BEST.

TO SAVE TIME AND TROUBLE ASK FOR AND USE ONLY
GIBSON'S STONED RAISINS
IN 1LB PACKETS READY FOR USE.
STONED & CLEANED BY GIBSON'S PATENT PROCESS WITHOUT REMOVING ANY NUTRITIVE PART
Untouched by Hand!
RETAILED EVERYWHERE.
WHOLESALE ONLY Wm BROWN & Co OF LIVERPOOL, LTD

ZEBRA
Grate Polish.
In Packets or as a Paste in Tins.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 521. FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 24TH, 1898. [TWOPENCE.

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REQUIRE NO SPANNER.

AS USED AND RECOMMENDED BY *the Editors of the C.T.C. Gazette, The Hub, Cycling, Cyclist, Lancet, British Medical, Queen, Field, and Pearson's Weekly.*

JUST THE THING FOR LADIES.

Away from the Steering, the Knees, and the Wind.

PATENTEE & MAKER,
H. G. TURNER,
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TURNER'S BI-CARRIER.

Fastens with Finger Nuts and

Leather Lined Hinged Clips.

Weight of Carrier, from 1lb.

A.	14 by 6 inch top	8/6
B.	14 by 4 ,, ,, ...	8/3
C.	10 by 4 ,, ,, ...	7/6

Postage, 6d.
Other sizes to order.

Equally useful on a Gentleman's Bicycle.
Clips to fit round D and Oval Backstays are stocked.

TURNER'S SKELETON CARRIER.

Black, from 3/6
Plated, ,, ... 4/6

Suitable for carrying Luggage athwart the backstays.

THE ORIGINAL USED AT THE NAVAL, MILITARY & OFFICIAL BALLS, THE "WHITEHALL" ROOMS, & 70,000 DANCES, *bears this signature & address*

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THE VALISE FASTENS AT THE BOTTOM, THUS LEAVING ALL OPENINGS FREE.

Patent applied for.
Regd. 303999.

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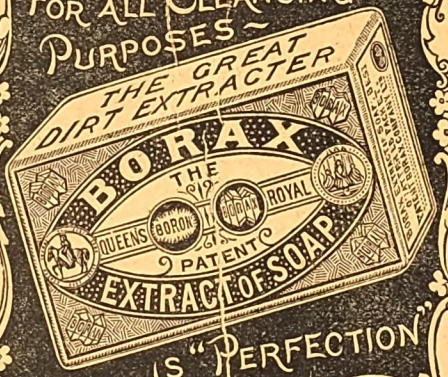
AS SUPPLIED TO THE QUEEN

FOR ALL CLEANSING PURPOSES—

THE GREAT DIRT EXTRACTER



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MAKES LINEN WHITE AS SNOW AND ALL CLOTHING SWEET AS NEW MOWN HAY.

SOLD BY GROCERS EVERYWHERE.

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Royal 3d. Magazine.

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ORDER IT AT ONCE.

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12,000 Stitches a Minute.

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A LADY writes:
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Easily learned. Cash, Hire, and Work Terms from S.T.S. Dept., 67 Southwark Street, London, S.E.; and 58 Union Street, Glasgow.

You'll Tide

OVER

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FESTIVITIES

Without any distressing symptoms arising through over-indulgence

BY TAKING

BEECHAM'S PILLS.

COFFEE WITHOUT DREGS.

GOOD! ITS MASON'S

MASON'S ESSENCE OF COFFEE AND CHICORY

EXPELS THE OLD METHOD

An agreeable, stimulating and sustaining beverage. Instantly prepared and most economical. Equal to the very finest coffee. Highly recommended by the Medical Profession.

Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

ALSO TRY

MASON'S WINE ESSENCES

AND

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Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3; three assorted 1/8.

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NEWBALL & MASON, NOTTINGHAM.

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SHORT STORIES

No. 521. TWOPENCE.

For the Week ending December 24, 1898.

A CHRISTMAS SINNER.

By L. E. Edwards.

"'WHO's this yer Sandy Close I hear the kids talking about, Todd?'

"'Well, I never! Ain't yer never heard of old Sandy that fills the stockin's?'

"'With snowballs?'

"'No, you softy, you!'

"''Cause I was goin' to say he couldn't work none of 'is jokes off on me, 'cause my winter stockin's ain't made me yet, ner shoes, nuther. See?'

"And as the two waifs gave a simultaneous shiver, and huddled together in the wretched dry goods box, which served but poorly to protect them from the driving storm——"

The Editor of the magazine shivered even more simultaneously, if possible, rose, and, going to the shaky stove which did its dispirited best to protect him from the December blasts which whirled through the window and doors of his office, jammed into its handful of

CHRISTMAS NUMBER.

HEARTY GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR & STAFF

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reals a sheet of paper containing the above-written lines—for I am in haste to inform the intelligent reader that they were his, and not mine. Having accomplished this with the aid of a poker and the most overworked word in the English language, he went back to his desk, for the sixth or seventh time wrote the words, "The Christmas Saint" at the head of a sheet of paper, and began to say hard things at a reflection he suddenly caught sight of in a small but honest mirror which hung on the wall opposite him. That personage was not half bad looking, considering what Nature can do in the line of noses and mouths, but the Editor saw fit to go for him, and call him by the name of Diabolus.

"You think you can do the pathetic, don't you?" he sneered, scowling at the thin, harried-looking face. "The pallid-waif-and-empty-stocking song and dance. Yah! You make me tired."

"The thing's advertised, you know," suggested Diabolus brightly. "Our Christmas number will contain a powerful and pathetic story by an anonymous author—wasn't that the way it ran?"

To this the Editor scorned to reply. Instead, he wrote "The Christmas Saint" on the top of another sheet of paper, and wrote a few lines, carefully avoiding a glance at the mirror for fear of Diabolus' derisive smile. While he wrote he muttered like a stage villain.

"If I were not poor I could get some other fool to write this story. If I were not honest I could steal it. Oh, hang the empty stockings! No, I mean the waifs—great goodness, what a sentiment! Better hang empty heads. I do, every time I meet my creditors. I say, Diab, how about changing the name to 'The Christmas Idiot?' or 'Every Editor His Own Contributor?'"

"A trifle old," observed Diabolus disparagingly.

And then someone opened the door.

The Editor of the local magazine looked up with a glazed eye. It was a good magazine, and he was a good editor, but in the effort to convince the mass of readers of the former and the mass of writers of the latter fact, he was rapidly losing hair; and not only hair, but money, which can replace it; and not only money, but sleep, which can wrap a man in blissful oblivion to the loss of both. And subscribers were few, and bill-collectors many, who passed in and out that creaky-hinged door—rarely, however, closing it behind them.

The incomer, of course, was a young lady, or why should this story be written? A sparkling, smiling, pretty young lady.

She was everything that a girl should be. She brought an atmosphere of violet perfume and a vision of fresh, girlish sweetness into the room; she wore a Gainsborough hat and a Gibsonesque expression of mingled hauteur and bewitching innocence, and there was a fresh, young, wholesome ring in the voice in which she inquired crisply:

"Have you a story written for your Christmas number?"

"No, I haven't," admitted the Editor, wondering if he were an embodiment of conscience, or a contributor, which he infinitely less preferred. But in a trice the pastal white envelope was withdrawn from the stylish little sealskin muff by a shapely ungloved hand, on which a diamond sparkled.

By the primordial instincts planted in the bosoms of the sons of men, he noted that it did not bedeck the engaged finger, and so felt the greater pity as she spoke rapidly, yet shyly, with a catch in her breath.

"I have written a story—oh, I suppose you get stacks of them—but this, I think, is really good. It is about a little street waif, and is called 'The Christmas Saint.'"

"Good gracious," said the Editor with an effort, not to speak, which to him was never an effort, but to say "Good gracious!" as if he were accustomed to it.

"I hope it's good enough, and you're gracious enough to take it," said the girl almost pleadingly, and the Editor wished he were rich.

"You might leave it," he said unhappily.

The girl looked oppressively prosperous. What business had she dropping into literature with her silken skirts and her sealskins?

"My good girl," he said mentally, to see how it would sound, "this magazine can't pay its own office rent or get its Editor's overcoat out of the pop-shop, let alone pay for stories. No, I'd have to explain to her what 'pop-shop' means. Pride or truth must have a tumble, so here goes":

"You can leave it," he said again, "but I'm afraid there's not much chance; the fact is, I've half ordered a Christmas story from another man."

"He is a good writer, I suppose?" Disappointment trembled in her voice.

"Very," emphatically replied the Editor.

When the silken skirt had swished out of the doorway, leaving it looking uncommonly blank, and the high French heels sounded fainter and ever fainter down the stairs, the Editor took up "The Christmas Saint," and his eye was caught by the line written across the top of the paper: "Price £5."

Then the Editor rose in haste, and leaning his cold forehead against the cold window-pane, found relief in the utterance of words which were not "Good gracious!"

"Nothing mean about her, if she is rich, eh?" chuckled Diabolus from the mirror, whereat the Editor frowned and read the manuscript of "The Christmas Saint" very diligently.

The worst of it all was that the story was good. Despite certain traces of the amateur, despite situations slightly impossible and pathos a trifle overdrawn, it was undeniably and exasperatingly good. The Editor was indignant.

"Just the way the world goes! There's a girl who probably sits in the lap of luxury writing stories for which she wants five pounds, and which, bother 'em, are worth it; while a poor literary carpenter struggles vainly to save his journal from disgrace. Now, isn't that life?"

Diabolus nodded, and the Editor, sniffing at the portrait, rose, jammed on his hat, slammed the door after him, and went out in search of pathetic material.

"The worst thing about lies is that you've got to live up to 'em. Now, she'll watch for that Christmas story, and come out it must. Oh, 'Anon,' what crimes are committed in thy name!"

He stopped at the nearest pillar-box, and still with that undefinable feeling of resentment, dropped in a long envelope, addressed simply to "Isabel Allardyce, — Spruce Street."

"That will teach Isabel Allardyce to write better than her betters," he said, and was quickly ashamed of himself.

Then he struck off into that dingy and dreary part of the city in which a rapidly decaying aristocracy and a rapidly rising proletariat are crowded together, cheek by jowl

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Here he saw shrill-voiced children capering excitedly round the scraggy Christmas trees which were exposed for sale, and boldly stripping them of twigs and branches whenever the owners' backs were turned.

But although he noted all that was going on, he saw nothing that could be made into a Christmas story, nothing that might bring tears from sentimental eyes and subscriptions from reluctant pockets.

"I suppose if I were chasing comic material I could find pathos in chunks," observed the Editor, who was so young he could not help but be cynical. "As it is I'm the most pathetic object I've come across yet. These waifs all have stockings—they've got their legs in 'em now, and will have sweetstuff galore in 'em on Christmas Eve. Everybody seems to have overcoats, and homes, and the rest of the luxuries of life—or else seems to be pretty jolly without 'em—a lesson I've not learnt yet. If your 'Christmas Saint' is prowling about, Miss Isabel Allardyce, I think he had better minister to me. Who but a girl who had seen nothing of life would draw such a character—a philanthromaniac who went wandering about at holiday-time, kindling fires on dreary hearthstones, showering unexpected gifts on deserving paupers, and so forth? Here's the true saint of Christmas, he whose good will gets us our turkey, eh, Diabolus?" and he swept his hand sarcastically in the direction of the pawn-broker's shop, opposite which his wanderings had brought him, and whose garishly-lighted window displayed to the public gaze a sad collection of forfeited pledges.

"My watch will be there next week," said the Editor philosophically, then started at some words which sounded close beside him, almost like a continuation of his own speech—words said with a hard little laugh, at which he pricked up his ears:

"I suppose the wedding-ring must go next."

"Oh, Bell, no!" said a distressed young voice, and then a strong breath of sweet, resin-scented air blown in the Editor's face reminded him of what he had scarcely noticed—that he was leaning against a wall of Christmas-trees, which hid him in the deepening dusk from the two speakers on the outside, whose hushed tones showed extreme agitation.

"Why not?" repeated the first voice, with another laugh, the bitterness of which quickly melted into a half-sob. "That's the regulation thing, you know—first the engagement-ring, then the wedding-ring, then—I don't know what, except the workhouse."

"Don't you care how you hurt him?"

"Care?" There was a cadence in this quite indescribable. "What am I doing this for? What did I write that story for? Why, I'd sing in the streets for him; I'd take in washing; I'd—oh, Betty, you're young and don't understand loving! Here, take the muff, dear, and warm your poor little hands, while I run across the street and do the deed. After all, like dying, it's over in a moment."

"Isabel Allardyce, as I'm a sinner!"

For a moment the Editor stood dazed, watching the slim figure in the shabby, stylish silken skirts, which, to his limited masculine vision, had presented so brave an appearance, speeding across the street; then, without the faintest idea why he was doing it, he sped after her.

Was it his impetuous entrance, or the blast of air brought in with him, which sent a shudder through the girl with drooping head and scarlet cheek, who stood at the end of the counter talking to the bland, beady-eyed proprietor of the "loan office?" He could not tell, but at the first glimpse at the back of his head, which, with great presence of mind he had turned, she fled from the shop like a guilty thing, while the pawnbroker gazed after her in astonishment, only equal to that with which the Editor regarded himself in the big gilt-framed mirror.

How was he to account for his precipitous entrance?

"What can I do for you, sir?" said he of the golden balls carelessly, having summed up the somewhat seedy appearance of the editorial person.

Well, it had to be done sooner or later, and why appear like an idiot simply because you are one? The Editor lingeringly drew out his watch from his pocket.

"I want to pawn this?" he said.

As he left the shop a little piece of pink cardboard attracted his attention, and he stooped to pick it up. It was the pawn ticket which young Mrs. Allardyce had dropped in her hasty flight, and, in her ignorance of matters in which the Editor was thoroughly versed, had not valued enough to come back for it.

The next evening as the Editor, after having spent all his day in writing, save about nine hours and thirty minutes which he spent in meditation, slammed his shabby hat down on his head and prepared to depart. Diabolus looked at him from the glass and remarked:

"You're a fool."

"Give us some news, can't you?" asked the Editor.

"She's married," added Diabolus.

"I don't know why," said the Editor, with much moral severity, "the fact of a woman being married and a man being unmarried should make the aforesaid man unwilling to help the aforesaid woman out of a tight place. I'll grant you that it makes her less interesting, but it doesn't make her less hungry or hard up."

As he hurried along against a sharp whistling wind which cut like a knife, he could not keep from dwelling on the bare but tragic outlines of the story he had so unwittingly stumbled on. A loyal young wife, struggling against misfortune—she did not look poor any more than she looked like a wife, which only shows how seldom we can read between the lines of human documents—a husband either halt, maimed, blind, or shiftless—probably the latter—to whom she was so tenderly devoted, that she was ready to go any lengths to spare him the least pinch of poverty.

The Editor entertained cynical views concerning marriage, but a feeling of loneliness passed like a cold wave over the spot against which his gold watch no longer beat responsive, as he remembered the tone in which she had said:

"Care for him! I'd sing in the streets for him!" He half wished he was halt, maimed, blind, or shiftless, instead of able-bodied and independent, with a savage pride of poverty which had hitherto thrust all thoughts of woman's companionship or woman's tenderness behind it.

The house to which he had sent the "Christmas Saint" was just such a house people as the Allardyces might be expected to live in, a tall, gloomy, old, family mansion at the once fashionable end of Spruce Street, now crowded with lodging houses.

"Past, grand; present, dingy; future, squalid," observed the Editor, as he rang the bell, which was answered by the younger girl, who was plainly Mrs. Allardyce's sister.

"Can I see Mrs. Allardyce?" he asked.

Betty hesitated a moment before ushering him into the immense, cheerless parlour, with its general aspect of unheated vastness. Then she disappeared with his card.

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"It's the brute who sent back your story, Bell. Perhaps the Christmas feeling has thawed his heart and he's sorry."

A melancholy little laugh, like a ghost of the girlish gaiety it should represent, floated down the huge open fireplace to the Editor, and he tried to restrain his satisfaction in the old-fashioned architects, to whom a good draught was more sacred than a secret. I regret to say that he held his breath to hear the next sentence.

"If he'd bought that story you could keep the wedding ring, couldn't you?"

"Betty, be quiet! He'll hear you, and it will break his heart, as it's breaking mine. Oh, why did you start me crying when it's so important that I should look pretty?"

"Marriage," observed Diabolus to the Editor. "may make a woman less interesting, but not less coquettish."

Nevertheless, when brought face to face with Mrs. Allardyce, who was very pink, pretty, and excited, the Editor found himself in a quandary as to an explanation of his change of heart with regard to "The Christmas Saint."

"Heavens, I wish my tongue was the pen of a ready liar, as David says, or something like it. Fact is, Mrs. Allardyce," he said aloud, "that story was returned by—by my assistant before I knew anything about it."

"Oh, so you've an assistant, have you? I didn't see him when I was there."

"Well, he was somewhere about," said the Editor.

"What's his name? He must be a severe critic, to send back my poor little tale in such haste."

"He is," said the Editor veraciously. "I call him Diabolus, though that isn't his real name."

He left the house minus £5 and plus "The Christmas Saint" and a number of mingled sensations!

Firstly, Mrs. Allardyce was very, very poor; secondly, she was not used to poverty; thirdly, she was pretty to an almost surprising degree. The first two facts were as patent as the last. Fourthly, Mr. Allardyce was ill, not shiftless, for, *apropos* of something, she had said, with a distant air. "Mr. Allardyce is a hopeless invalid."

The Editor remarked to Diabolus that the more ill Mr. Allardyce was, the better he was pleased, and that personage retorted:

"You're a beauty to pose as a Christmas Saint, aren't you?"

For a penance he spent the next day writing a story of married love and happiness, which bade tender defiance to even the dread fates of illness, sorrow, and poverty. A noble youth figured as the good angel of the piece, and he heroically resisted the temptation to make the illness carry off the husband, and the noble youth carry off the wife.

Diabolus jeered at the story, but the Editor sent it to a daily paper, and when Mrs. Allardyce came to the office that very day with a hesitating inquiry as to whether he could use a few short sketches, and he noted, with a start, that the wedding ring was absent from her left hand, he gulped back his breath and said, "Yes, she might leave them."

"Heaven be merciful to you," said Diabolus, after she was gone.

Nevertheless, virtue was not left in solitary self-reward in this case. The day before Christmas a cheque came to the Editor in return for his story, and he thought joyfully, first of his Christmas dinner, then of his creditors, then of something else, whereupon he rose and put on his hat, and Diabolus said:

"You're a fool."

"No," said the Editor.

That evening, as he sat somewhat moodily at his desk, too depressed even to light the gas, he heard the quick click of French heels on his stairs again. He rose and threw the door open for Mrs. Allardyce, who came in flushed and panting.

"I was afraid you'd be closed," she gasped "on account of Christmas Eve. And I wanted to leave those sketches I spoke of."

"I don't take any notice of Christmas Eve," said the Editor, morosely. "Christmas is a deception."

"You wouldn't think so if you'd had my experience. See this?" holding out a hand from which the diamond ring flashed again, "I had—ah—lost this, and never really expected to see it again. It was my mother's engagement ring, and I was afraid my father would notice it was gone——"

"Your—what?"

"My father. I think I've told you that my father was an invalid."

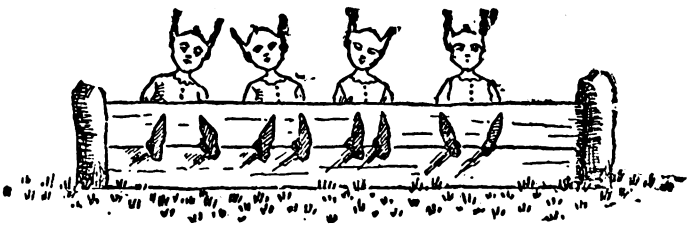
"Haven't you any husband at all?" almost shouted the Editor.

"One can live without a husband, I hope," said the young lady haughtily. "I didn't come here to be insulted, Mr. Hare."

"Please forgive me," said the Editor piteously, "I'm only insane. There's been a misunderstanding, that's all. Why I've been calling you Mrs. Allardyce all the time."

"I never noticed it," said Miss Allardyce. Then, observing his expression, she went on hurriedly: "As I said, the ring was my mother's—she gave it and her wedding ring to me when dying—and this afternoon's post brought it back to me, with never a word as to where it came from. Wasn't it lovely? I think it must have been sent me by a 'Christmas Saint.'"

"Some day," said the Editor dreamily "I hope to prove to you that there's no such person."



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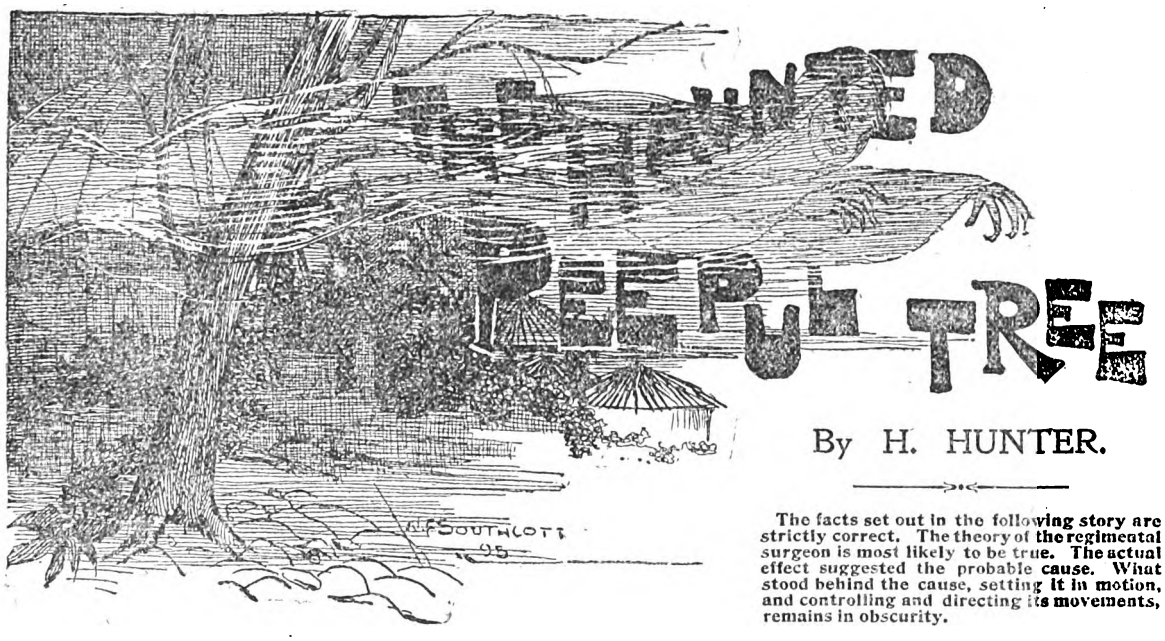

The facts set out in the following story are strictly correct. The theory of the regimental surgeon is most likely to be true. The actual effect suggested the probable cause. What stood behind the cause, setting it in motion, and controlling and directing its movements, remains in obscurity.

I.

A SKY of brass, a dusty road, and a score of palm-thatched huts huddled together under the friendly shade of a giant banyan. A stone's cast from the road a square brick building with a white domed roof, the tomb of some pious saint or worthy Hadji, fast falling into ruins, and now used by a utilitarian Government as a police post.

Within arm's length almost, of the ancient tomb, a tall peepul tree, and under the peepul tree three figures—two white faces stooping over a black one. A short distance away, and between the tree and the tomb, three other figures with dark faces, motionless, impassive, silently looking on.

All six figures are clad in the uniform of the Hon. East India Company but the white faces are protected from the deadly shafts of the fiery sun by the immense solar toupées worn by the Englishmen. The heat-haze lay over all, a thick, yellowish glare rendered nearly opaque by the dust-cloud which filled the air, obscuring the landscape for the time as effectually as the mixture of sulphur, soot, and moisture which darkens the atmosphere of London in November.

In the cluster of bamboo huts beyond the north wall of the tomb, there was neither sound nor movement. The stillness of death lay over them. Even the village mongrels had ceased to bark, and lain down to forget in the blessed effacement of sleep, the blows and oaths which were their waking portion. There was nothing moving on the broad bosom of the visible earth. The great globe seemed to have been suddenly emptied of life, to have gone suddenly silent, to have been converted into a gigantic funeral pyre, and to be covered with a vast yellow pall which enveloped all things in its stifling embrace.

Presently one of the stooping figures shifts its position, bringing life and motion into the picture, and lending human interest to the scene. Then both rise together, and stand looking down dubiously at the black figure lying there between them on the ground.

"Can't half make it out, Doctor, can you?" says one.

"Can't make it out at all, my boy," says the other. "The man had no excuse for dying, has no business to be dead, ought really to be as much alive at this very moment as you and me. It's the most confoundedly puzzling professional problem that I've ever been called upon to consider. Jumal Khan has not only defrauded the Company of the valuable services of an able-bodied sepoy, but, by choosing such a very inopportune moment, has practically deserted his post with arms in his hands."

"He was found dead by the *havildar* this morning, Doctor, when that officer went round to relieve guard."

"That's the 'head and front of his offending,'" said the Doctor. "The man had no business to do it. He had no valid excuse for leaving the service in such an abrupt and irregular fashion. It's a bad example to set the others."

The other man shrugged his shoulders, and the Doctor bent again over the prostrate form of Jumal Khan. He was dissatisfied with the negative results of his hasty examination. Lifting first one eyelid and then another, he looked long and questioningly into the sightless orbs of the dead sepoy. Whatever clue he may have hoped to find there failed to reward him, for he rose with a half-mortified expression on his face and a muttered exclamation on his lips.

"Nothing," he said, as he drew back a pace, "nothing whatever to account for it." Then, turning to his companion, Lieutenant Ash: "The man's dead," he said, "and that's all I can say about it."

"Then I'd better give orders for the burial," said the Lieutenant.

"In the name of Allah, the all-merciful," rejoined the surgeon, "Jumal was a son of the Prophet," and he pointed to the beads which appeared in a fold of the dead man's girdle.

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"The body's been lying here since daybreak," continued the Lieutenant. "The men wouldn't touch it till they sent for me, and I had to send for you. Fortunately the branches of the peepul have screened it from the sun."

The Englishmen walked slowly towards the white domed building, which was the most conspicuous feature in the dreary landscape, followed at a respectful distance by the three dark figures who had been silently watching the proceedings of the sahibs.

"*Ajáib!* God is great!" piously ejaculated Ismail Jemadar, on hearing from the mouth of the white men's physician—otherwise Edward Martin, regimental surgeon to the First Battalion of the Bengal Fusiliers—the plain, blunt story that Sepoy Jumal Khan had died for no reason at all that medical science could discover.

"'By visitation of God,' we'll call it this time," said the surgeon, adding, however, that it would probably be as well for the Jemadar not to lose too many of his men in a manner that was not recognised by the official authority at Agra.

"It won't help your promotion, Jemadar," interjected Lieutenant Ash. "The colonel-sahib will not be best pleased with the report I shall have to make him."

Ismail Jemadar salaamed till his forehead touched the ground.

"The will of Allah be done!" he murmured with pious fervour. "God is great—there is none greater. Let not man seek to contend with the Infinite!"

He was found dead

"Unexceptional sentiments," said the Doctor as they got into the buggy in which they had driven out from Agra. "The abstract wisdom of these people, my boy, approaches the sublime; but their practical intelligence is, unfortunately, somewhat defective. The key that will probably unlock the mystery of your man's decease, Bertie, is most likely to be found—there."

As he spoke the surgeon pointed across to the silent collection of bamboo huts looming out indistinctly through the shimmering yellow mist.

"Whew! ain't it hot!" exclaimed the youthful lieutenant, for whom personal questions had a more abiding interest than Asiatic mysteries.

II.

Six a.m. The yellow light of an Indian morning was streaming through the bamboo chinks. The English mail was to leave at sunset, and Edward Martin, M.D., was seated at his writing-table reading over the draft report of a "curious case" which he was communicating to a medical journal in London.

". . . The men were sepoys," ran the Doctor's statement, "stationed temporarily at a police post a few miles outside Agra. They were found dead under circumstances of such a singular character that, believing the story will be perused with interest by a large circle of your subscribers, I am sending you a full account of the incident, perhaps the most extraordinary which I have met with in the course of a long professional experience, together with a detailed report of the pathological examination of the second victim.

"Both men would seem to have died in a similar manner, and from a like predisposing cause, each of the bodies presenting precisely the same appearance to casual observation. Whether there were really any points of difference between the two I am unable to say, as that of the first victim only underwent an ordinary examination.

"In the second case the body was subjected to *strict* examination. Nothing was discovered, however, that would differentiate the one from the other, or that could be legitimately assigned as the actual cause of death.

"In each case the man was on sentry duty, his beat terminating at a peepul tree about thirty yards from the guard-house; and also, in each case, the body has been found beneath this tree, under which, as I have learnt, the sentry was instructed to remain for at least one minute before resuming his march. Death occurred between midnight and daybreak.

"The post is in charge of a native subaltern, who is visited daily by an officer from Agra. It has only been occupied since the 10th inst.—that is, for little more than a fortnight, yet in that time there have been two men reported dead under circumstances which up to date of writing have baffled all attempts to find a satisfactory explanation.

"There is a village close by, and I am——"

At this point the reading was interrupted by a sharp peremptory rap at the Doctor's door, followed immediately by the inquiry: "You there, Doctor?" in the excited tones of a man in a hurry.

"Come in, Colonel, come in!" cried the medico, who had recognised in a moment the owner of the voice.

"I say, Martin," burst out the Colonel, sweeping up

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to the table like a south-west monsoon, "this is a pretty state of things! Ash has just been in to report another man dead at Pali."

"You don't mean that?" said the surgeon, regarding the Colonel keenly. "I'm just sending off——"

"For goodness sake, Doctor," exclaimed the commanding officer, glancing suspiciously at the sheets of blue letter paper on the Doctor's table, "don't send off anything! Do nothing that will bring the Calcutta people down upon us before we're ready for them. We shall have a waggon load of papers sent in for us to fill up over this job; but we don't want them here till we've got a firm back to the story. Ash has brought in a tale which certainly supports your theory."

"I must go over at once," said the Doctor, jumping up quickly and throwing aside the sheets on which he had been engaged. He didn't stop to explain that his report was written for a newspaper in London, and not for the Army Medical Department at Calcutta. He thought that he might, probably, have something to add to it before it went.

"Everything, as I told you, Colonel," he went on, opening a drawer in his desk, and taking therefrom some diminutive object which he slipped into his pocket, "depends on my seeing the body as soon after death as possible. The suspicions I entertained in the first case were strengthened in the second; and the opinion I was inclined to was confirmed by a conversation I had subsequently with the *Chowkidar* (village watchman). But before committing myself to a definite statement I must find what I've been looking for, and unless I can see the body before *rigor mortis* has set in, all mere theorising is a waste of labour."

They were outside by this time. At the door the Colonel's buggy, with the champion trotter of the district between the shafts, was waiting for them.

"Good of you, Colonel," said the Doctor, throwing a look full of gratitude at his companion, "Dewdrop will take us there in twenty minutes."

"I'll back her to do the distance—over three miles, isn't it?—inside of fifteen. We ought to be there by six-thirty. How'll that do?"

"Not a moment too soon, but a lot better than half-past eight, which was the time of arriving on the last occasion," replied the Doctor, as the Colonel gathered up the reins and the mare went away. "I left instructions with the Jemadar on that occasion that if this thing happened again, he was to send in a man to report immediately. I suppose he wouldn't get in till after five?"

"Ash brought him round to my place at five-twenty; so the fellow hadn't lost much time. But I'd gone over to see Cotton, where Ash found me. The men it seems are all scared out of their wits—just quaking with fear. If they had white faces instead of black, I should call it funk. The tree's haunted by a vampire, is the pretty story my lieutenant's got hold of, and the men are in mortal terror. He has a notion the villagers would like to see the post removed."

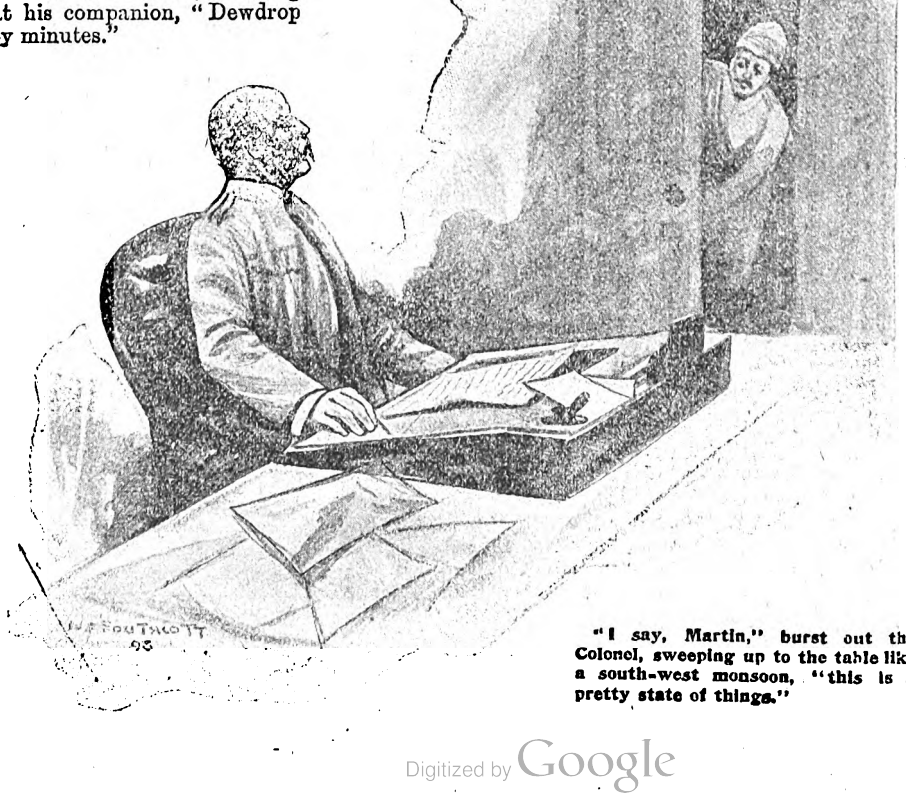
"The tree's got an evil reputation undoubtedly," said the Doctor, "that much I gathered from the talk I had with the *Chowkidar*; but a vampire, Colonel?—no, there's no vampire in this story, thank you. Vampires suck blood, and no blood had been taken from either of the bodies which I saw. I don't think the villagers care a *pice* whether the men stay or go. They're a quiet, inoffensive lot, whose only desire is to be let alone. They've no grudge against the police that I can discover; but they seem impressed with the belief that there's something uncanny about the peepul tree."

"You don't think they've put the story about?"

"No, I think the story, whatever it is, belongs to the tree, has grown up with it or, round it, and has become part of its history. I don't think the villagers have either invented it or circulated it. My bearer, who's been doing a little ferreting there on my account, tells me they won't speak about the tree until asked, and always avoid going near it themselves after dark. Certainly I had to use all my persuasive powers and rub a little oil on his palm before I could get Gitan the old *Chowkidar* to open his mouth; and then he didn't tell half a tale——hardly that."

"Hindoos aren't they?" queried the Colonel.

"Yes," from the Doctor.



"I say, Martin," burst out the Colonel, sweeping up to the table like a south-west monsoon, "this is a pretty state of things."

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"And our fellows are all sons of the Prophet. Ash was saying he thought the Malgoozar (headman) was perhaps scandalised at our turning the tomb into a guard-house. But the tomb's Mahomedan; so that can't apply. Hindoo prejudice is in no way offended by the occupation."

"Lieutenant Ash is no doubt a very zealous young officer, Colonel; but his knowledge of the country will improve on further acquaintance. What the Malgoozar probably said, was that the Hadji's tomb was built on the site of an old Hindoo temple sacred to Kali. That much I got from the watchman."

The Colonel pointed with his whip to a number of black specks in the sapphire sky. They were vultures hastening to an expected feast.

"Early birds," he murmured.

"Yes," assented the Doctor. "Wheresoever the body is there will the eagles be gathered together. Yonder's our goal, Colonel."

III.

Again, there were two white faces bending eagerly over a black one.

It was the third time that scene had been enacted under the high branches of the tall peepul tree. Again, there was a little group of silent watchers standing a short distance away—afraid to come nearer, afraid of touching that dumb, inanimate object, which a few hours before had been a man in the full enjoyment of lusty life.

"Do you see anything, Doctor?" asked the Colonel impatiently. The Doctor had been searching the dead man's eyes for several minutes with a powerful pocket

The Colonel gathered up the reins, and the mare went away.

lens. He did not at once answer the question. His whole attention was absorbed by the nature of his occupation. It was proving intensely interesting.

"What is it you see, Martin?" broke out the Colonel, noting the strange look on the Doctor's face, and growing more excited as the examination proceeded.

But the surgeon paid no heed to the Colonel's interrogations, and the examinations became prolonged.

"Got it!" exclaimed the Doctor at last, in the tone in which a man announces his success at a shooting match.

In his excitement, the Colonel could not refrain from laying his hand on the Doctor's arm. "Yes! What——?"

"H'm," murmured the medico.

"I'm afraid————ssh! *gone!!*" he cried savagely, glaring angrily at the Colonel.

"What——what is it?" stuttered the innocent offender.

It took Edward Martin, M.D., full five minutes to recover his temper.

"We can do no good by staying with this any longer," he said presently, moving off. "I've not got all I wanted, Colonel; but I've got all I'm ever likely to get—enough to enable me to put on record a definite opinion; more, I expect, than I can hope to make clear to the lay mind. But before saying anything I want first to go down to the village and have a bit o' talk with the *Chow-kidar* and the *Malgoozar*."

The Colonel stumped along by the Doctor's side, mute and mortified. He felt that somehow he had put his foot in it, and that silence best became his dignity. This was a doctor's matter. Responsibility lay with Martin. It was for him then, to take the initiative. It was a question of pathology or psychology, or some other "ology" that sounded equally well, but had no connection with regimental routine or military duty. When the M.D. made his report would be the time for the Colonel to take over the business and decide upon his duty to the Company.

The interview with the village officials proved an interminable business.

The men were evidently afraid of speaking—afraid of saying anything which they thought the sahibs would not like to hear—afraid of bringing down upon themselves the malignant power which they believed resided in the peepul tree.

Reduced by the Doctor to the lowest intelligible minimum, their contribution to the story went no further than this. A temple dedicated to Kali had formerly stood on the site of the Hadji's tomb—long ages ago it seemed, since its existence has been a tradition for generations. After the demolition of the temple—there was a choice variety of versions of this story to choose from—the idol was removed to the grove; and was set up according to the village chronicles, under the peepul tree which had been unluckily fixed upon as the boundary of the sepoy sentry's beat.

About the time of the birth of the present *Chowkidar*—that is to say some sixty years back—the image was carried off to Gola by a high priest of Kali who came from Benares. This worthy it would seem cursed with the curse of Kali, all and sundry who should hereafter defile the place where the holy altar had been set up and the sacred mysteries performed.

It was a fact known to all the village that men who had had the temerity to sleep under the peepul tree in the daytime had been smitten with leprosy or the black plague. Men who had lain down to rest there at night had been found dead in the morning.

The Malgoozar knew what would happen when he saw the sentry under the tree; and he couldn't understand how it was that Kali had not claimed a victim every night instead of only every week. He was afraid to speak, because he knew the sahibs did not worship the old gods and he feared their anger.

A demon lived in the tree, who was a servant of

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Mahadeva the destroyer, and it was not safe for any man to rest under its shadow. This was the native story.

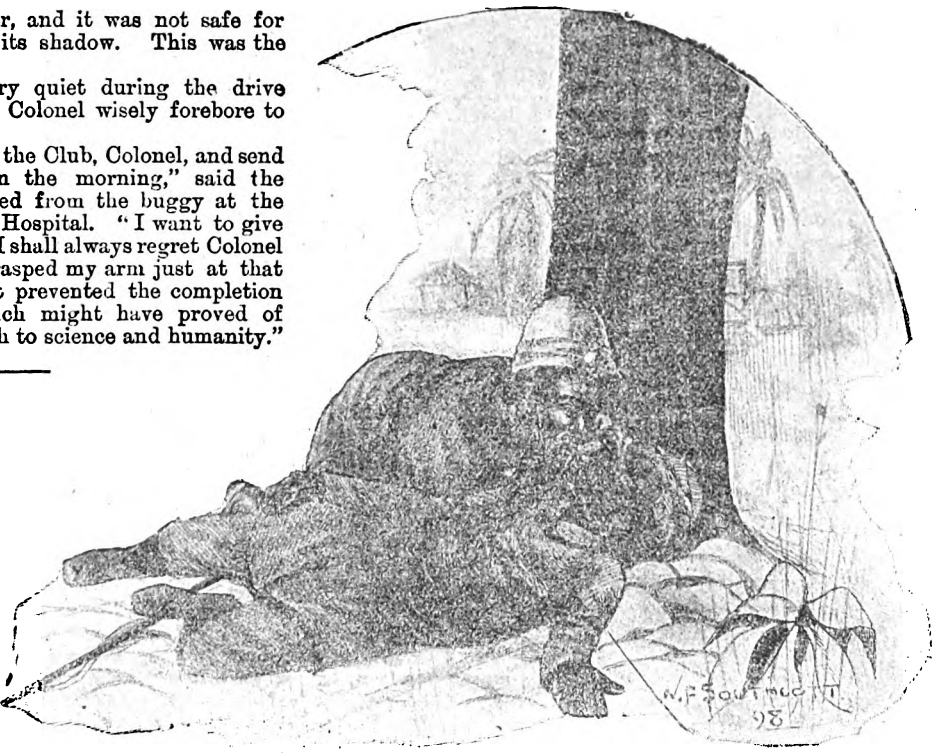
The Doctor was very quiet during the drive back to Agra, and the Colonel wisely forebore to ask questions.

"See you to-night at the Club, Colonel, and send in my official report in the morning," said the surgeon as he descended from the buggy at the doors of the European Hospital. "I want to give my nerves a rest. But I shall always regret Colonel that you should have grasped my arm just at that particular moment. It prevented the completion of an observation which might have proved of incalculable benefit both to science and humanity."

IV.

"THEN you think the man actually saw something?"

Doctor Martin had been addressing a select audience of three in the smoking-room of the English Club—three intensely interested listeners; the Colonel of the Sepoy regiment, the Adjutant, and Lieutenant Ash who commanded the detachment in temporary charge of the Police Post. It was the Adjutant who had asked the question.



Searching the dead man's eyes with a powerful pocket lens

"I am *certain* that he saw something," replied the surgeon. "Death in each instance was the result of fright. I suspected it in the first case. I detected what I thought were unmistakable signs in the second. But in the case of Azim Khan, not only were the signs clear and palpable, the terror being plainly manifest in the eyes four hours after death; but on each retina there was an *impression*, not very distinct, but obvious enough to a trained observer using a powerful glass.

"An impression of what? I had been carefully scrutinising the eyes, looking for it, before I caught it. It was stronger in the right eye than in the left, where it only appeared as a dark blurr without definite shape and was fading fast. On the retina of the right eye, however, the outline of one half of what may perhaps have been a head could faintly be traced; but the lower part was hidden by a limb which had been thrust before it—a limb which undoubtedly ended in claws, only three of which I had been able to make out, when the Colonel, without knowledge of the consequence, suddenly seized hold of my arm. The focus was thereby lost. I had been at great pains to find it, and before it could be recovered the impression had faded so far as to be useless.

"The jemadar, as you are aware, Colonel, has spoken to having seen the branches of the peepul agitated in the daytime, when there was not a breath stirring to account for the movement. They have been pushed aside, he says, as if to admit the passage of some animal through them, and have then sprung back again. But he never saw anything. Of course, Colonel, you cannot take account of village tales and native superstitions; but neither can you go on losing men in this way every week. Whatever the latent cause, the men die from active fright. That much is certain—as it is that, the peepul tree is a connecting link between the cause and the effect. Cut down the tree——" "and double the guard," put in the Adjutant.

"Good, sound, practical advice," said the Colonel, relieved at finding himself breathing the air of common sense, after inhaling so much mystery.

* * * * *

Before another forty-eight hours had gone by, the peepul tree was level with the ground. Lieutenant Ash had posted two men on guard, and was himself on duty at the tomb.

A week passed, and then a month. At the end of that time the guard was reduced.

The story of the haunted peepul tree had become almost as legendary as the tradition of the temple of Kali and the demon of Mahadeva.

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THE GOVERNOR'S NIECE.

A Story of West Africa.

By GERTRUDE PAGE.

Author of "Flat F. and Flat G.," "For a Woman's Kiss," etc.

Nessie Powell stood in the window of her aunt's drawing-room and looked across Hyde Park. She stood with her hands behind her, and her brow was puckered, and her eyes wore a far away expression; it was evident she noted nothing of the panorama passing before her.

Her aunt sat working at a little distance, and now and then she raised her eyes and glanced at the slim figure in the window. She was the wife of the Governor of Accra, and had been trying to persuade her niece to accompany her to the coast, to stay a month and then return with him when he came home on leave.

Nessie was a little afraid of the sea and hesitated.

"You will like it after the first few days," said Lady Mannering presently, "and it will do you so much good. You have been looking very poorly lately."

Nessie did not reply but went on weighing the question.

She was thinking how delightful it would be, when once there, to have broken away from certain old associations and memories, and perhaps make a fresh start without that perpetual longing at her heart.

Three months ago, Dick Pontin of the Lagos Secretariat, had concluded his leave in England and gone back to the coast; at the beginning of his holiday he had seen a great deal of Nessie, and they had soon become special friends, and then suddenly he had studiously avoided her. It had come like a shock, for she could not explain the change; she only knew that the season had lost all its charm for her, and the gaieties become mockery.

Two months afterwards she was told that he was engaged and her heart was very sore. She tried at first to be hard about it and persuade herself that she didn't care. She said he was evidently very fickle and not worth fretting about. She told herself she had had a fortunate escape.

But all the same she could not forget his steady grey eyes and manly bearing, which emphatically gave the lie to her charge of fickleness, and so she decided she had imagined too much and he had in reality been only just friendly with her.

She then faced her trouble bravely and prepared to make herself forget, but it was hard work and other things than late hours took the roses from her cheeks and the lightness from her step. Had there been any fear of meeting him on the coast, she would have declined at once, but she knew there was not the smallest likelihood of it, as Lagos was a long way from Accra, and he would not be returning home for some months.

So at last she turned her back to the window and came into the room.

"I think I'll go, auntie," she said simply.

Lady Mannering looked up with a pleased expression.

"That's right," she said. "You'll be certain to enjoy yourself when you've got the sea-sickness over," and she rose and put aside her work, saying she would begin to make arrangements at once, and must write some letters.

She was a tall, stately woman, with splendid dark eyes and massive coils of thick dark hair, but her mouth was hard, and one felt that she would be a difficult woman to withstand, if she made up her mind about anything. Without exactly letting it be apparent, she always had her own way, and what she attempted she usually achieved.

Nessie Powell was her favourite niece, and she liked her none the less because she was one of the few who dare occasionally go against her. At the same time she practically ruled the girl, but was careful never to let her know of it. Of Dick Pontin she had disapproved from the first, on account of his prospects, and in many little ways she had contrived to come between them. When she heard casually that he was engaged, she lost no time in telling the news to Nessie. Her idea now, was to marry her niece to her friend Captain Welbeck; and being a woman with nothing particular to do, she was not above scheming to carry out her plan.

Captain Welbeck had told her he was starting for West Africa shortly, and as she had long talked of going herself, she decided to do so now and take Nessie Powell with her. She felt the change of life and scene would do the girl good, and help her to get over her disappointment quickly, and she saw no harm in quietly ascertaining Captain Welbeck's ship and taking their passages in the same.

They arrived at Liverpool over night as the boat started early, and stayed at a hotel. In the morning,

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as Nessie was ready first, she stood by the large fire in the hall, warming her feet and amusing herself by watching the various people bustling about.

Presently a tall man, with a grey moustache and military bearing, came and stood by the fire also and Nessie coloured slightly, as she became aware that he was quietly scrutinising her from head to foot. At last she turned her head and looked straight into his eyes with a quick, fearless, half-defiant glance. He returned it a moment, then looked quietly away, but did not offer to move.

Nessie was just about to go, when her aunt came into the hall, and instantly advanced with outstretched hand and a surprised face towards them.

"How do you do, Captain Welbeck?" she exclaimed. "How strange that we should meet you here. Let me introduce you to my niece," and she turned to Nessie.

"I know Miss Powell very well by sight," he replied, with a gravely polite bow, "and I am delighted to make her acquaintance, though I wish it had been any time but the present."

Nessie looked slightly amused while her aunt remarked. "Why, how is that?"

He was quietly scrutinising her from head to foot.

"Because I am just embarking for West Africa, and I shall not be able to make use of my introductions for six months."

"Africa," exclaimed Lady Mannering, "surely not in the *Roquelle?*"

"That is my ship, why——surely——" and his eyes suddenly lit up, though his face remained unmoved, "surely you are not going out?" he concluded.

"Yes, we are going to my husband for a few weeks," said Lady Mannering.

"Then I am indeed fortunate," and he looked hard at Nessie.

Nessie looked away hurriedly, for something in his glance made her shiver a little, and she felt sure she should not like him.

But when, after five miserable days below deck, she made her appearance looking white and wretched, he proved so considerate and sympathetic, that her sudden aversion vanished somewhat. He placed a deck chair for her in a shaded nook and then, for over an hour, entertained her with anecdotes and adventures, while her aunt read a little way off.

And Nessie listened gladly, for she had been hopelessly wretched below deck, and was glad of anything that took her thoughts from herself.

By evening she had cheered up wonderfully, and Lady Mannering looked on contentedly while they paced the deck together, and admired the beautiful hues of the setting sun.

"I will show you my photographs to-morrow," he said to her as they were saying "good-night." "I want your opinion upon some of them."

Nessie laughed a little uneasily, "I don't know anything about photographs," she said.

"I think you will know sufficient to make your opinion valuable to me," he replied rather pointedly, looking hard at her; and again she was conscious of that little shivery feeling.

At the beginning of the third and last week of the journey, it was generally recognised among the few passengers on the ship, that Captain Welbeck's attentions to Miss Powell were not only marked, but genuine, and they waited with idle curiosity for the final move.

Nessie began to realise it also, and she began to feel too that somehow she was in his power. His manner to her had a certain air of possession about it, and a marked assurance. Sometimes when she was off-hand with him, she saw him set his lips tightly, while a gleam of determination shone in his eyes, and without exactly feeling afraid of him, she felt helpless to resist him. She felt that, if their wills clashed, hers would go down before his like a leaf.

And being a healthy, independent English girl, she resented the feeling strongly and made strenuous efforts to break away from his influence. Again and again she almost succeeded, and again and again she was reconquered.

Meanwhile Lady Mannering made no mention of the subject. While Captain Welbeck monopolised Nessie, she would pace the deck with her usual stately air and converse on the many subjects of which she was a complete master, with such of the passengers as happened to please her. Apparently she was quite unconscious of what was going on, and never appeared to throw them in each other's way. It was two days before they reached Accra that the climax came.

Nessie was standing looking idly across the blue waste of waters, and there was a shadow in her clear

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'No, no . . . it cannot be."

eyes, and a little droop about her mouth. She had resolutely put her sorrow away and as resolutely strove to forget it. She had buried it deep down in her heart and tried to trample its grave out of sight, but sometimes, as with all our hidden graves, the buried past rose up and shut the sunlight from the present. Nessie looked across the blue waters with steady eyes but a weight like lead pressed down on her, and a dreary sense of loneliness.

"You look thoughtful, Miss Powell," said a well-known voice to her.

She smiled slowly but did not turn. Instead she leant her arms on the rail and looked down into the water.

"I believe I was dreaming," she said simply.

He leant beside her and his arm touched hers. A nervous sensation passed over her, but she felt as if she could not move.

And presently she found herself gazing steadily down into the water, while he told her in measured tones of his love, and asked her to be his wife. When he ceased speaking they were both silent for some moments, then she looked up suddenly.

"No, no," she said hurriedly, as if afraid of herself "it cannot be, I don't love you."

She was conscious that his lips tightened and his brow lowered a little, but he only said quietly. "Perhaps you have not thought it over fairly. I can offer you every advantage in the way of money and position, and I am sincerely in love with you. I was first attracted to you at Lady Nevill's ball three months ago, but could not get an introduction to you. Will you do me the honour to consider what I have told you?"

"I feel sure it is unnecessary," she stammered, changing colour. "I do not think I am likely to change my mind."

"At any rate I may speak to you again, mayn't I? Let me take your answer to-morrow instead of this evening."

She glanced towards him and the pain in her heart gripped her.

He was strong and manly and kind, and she—she was tired and lonely, for the sweetness had gone out of everything, and she had not lived long enough to know how soon the sun would shine brightly again.

She thought it would be nice to be taken care of and not feel so lonely, and then that old sense of helplessness came over her again.

"Shall we leave it till to-morrow?" he reiterated; and she assented.

The next morning her aunt alluded to the subject for the first time, and seeing her niece's indecision, brought all her influence to bear on her. In a careful, collected way she talked down all her scruples and virtually settled the question for her.

When the *Roquelle* reached Accra the following day, Nessie was formally engaged to Captain Welbeck.

He was going on to Lagos, but had time to go ashore with them in the surf boat. His care and consideration for Nessie were unbounded, but all the time she was conscious of his iron determination and a little afraid of him. She did not feel free to speak and act as she liked, and the restraint rather fretted her. Still, his manner was kindness itself, so she laughed down her fears, and before he left them, he persuaded her, with Lady Mannering's help, to be married at Accra in six weeks' time, and remain on the coast with him until he returned to England.

Later on in the evening, Nessie stood on the verandah of the Governor's castle alone, and looked thoughtfully into the glorious African night. The castle was built close on to the sea, and the moonlight on the waters and on the palm trees and bananas ma e a beautiful, half-mystical scene. Now and then the stillness was broken by the noise of the tom-toms and uncouth singing, or by the laughter of a merry band of young Englishmen, returning to their quarters after an evening's jollity; but otherwise silence and peacefulness reigned.

Lady Mannering was engaged with her husband and one or two friends of his, and Nessie had been glad to have the opportunity of slipping away unnoticed.

Suddenly a quick footstep sounded on the verandah, hesitated a moment, then hurried towards her.

"Miss Powell," said a voice eagerly, and all the colour went out of Nessie's face, while the landscape became an indistinct blur.

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She turned slowly and stood face to face with Dick Pontin.

"I'm so awfully glad to see you," he continued in the same eager voice. "How are you? I had to go up country or I should have been here to receive you, as I have been staying at the castle lately. I have only just returned and had to fly into my dress clothes, for fear you would have gone to bed. How are you? You look cold. Shall I fetch you a wrap?"

"Thanks, I'm not at all cold," she replied, but she shivered and went if possible whiter, "I'm very pleased to see you."

"You look as if you had seen a ghost," he laughed. "Did I startle you?"

With a tremendous effort Nessie drew herself together.

"You certainly surprised me," she said with an attempt at lightness. "I had no idea you were in Accra."

"Didn't you know I had been promoted?" he asked with a gleam in his eyes, "I have got poor Nevill's berth. He died of fever you know, two months ago, and through your uncle's influence I took his place. I have been acting as secretary to your uncle for a week, as Hedley has fever, and that is why I am staying here, but I am afraid I go to-morrow.

"I hope we shall see a great deal of each other. I could hardly believe my ears when he told me you were coming out with Lady Mannering."

Nessie turned away. She had an odd feeling that if she didn't scream out or something, her head would burst. Instead she gripped the verandah rail until her knuckles stood out.

He noticed her constrained manner, and set it down to his sudden breaking off of their friendship in Eng'and.

"Did you have a good passage?" he asked, determined not to be repulsed, but to make the most of his opportunity. He had thought of little else but seeing her again, since he got his promotion. It had not occurred to him that his conduct in London could cause an actual breach between them. It was all so clear to him, that he imagined it was to her also. He did not know much about girls, having had little to do with them. He was so conscious of his own love for her, that he supposed she knew about it too, and would understand why he had acted as he had. He had never ceased loving her for a moment since he set eyes on her; there did not seem to him to be any need for preliminaries, or any reason why they should not go on just where they left off, with the only difference that he was now in a position to show his love.

"Yes very good," she replied to his question, without meeting his eyes. "I enjoyed it very much when I got over the sea-sickness."

"What do you think of Accra?" and he leant against a pillar beside her, taking in every line of her face and form with ill-concealed eagerness.

"I think it is interesting," she replied. "I am looking forward to exploring the neighbourhood. I suppose it is perfectly safe to go about alone?"

"Oh yes, but you might get lost and find it difficult to make yourself understood. I am not very busy just now, if you will allow me to be your escort sometimes, I should be only too glad."

Nessie bit her lips.

"Thank you," she replied constrainedly, "but I daresay my uncle will arrange for Lady Mannering and me to be shown round."

He looked surprised and pained, and for a few moments they were both silent. Her changed manner puzzled him, but being very straight by nature, he decided to come to the point at once, and not risk a misunderstanding.

"I hope you are not vexed with me about anything, Miss Powell," he began, standing upright beside her. "I know I may have seemed to behave rather strangely in London last spring, but I couldn't help myself. If you only knew what it cost me! I had no position then worth speaking of, and no prospects. As it is, I owe my present good fortune to having been able to serve your uncle in an unlooked for way.

"I was obliged to run away from you, I couldn't trust myself, but now——"

"Oh, hush——" she gasped and clutched tighter at the rail.

It was Dick's turn to go white now as he asked anxiously. "What is it? What have I said?"

"Oh, nothing," and she laughed fitfully. "It only sounds rather odd. I was told you got engaged before you left England."

"I got engaged——" in incredulous tones.

"Yes, I heard it from one or two quarters."

"What rubbish," and he flushed and looked annoyed. "I should have thought *you* would have known better than to believe it," with emphasis.

"How should I?" she asked with an attempt at lightness. "I am rather sorry; I was going to congratulate you nicely."

She turned slowly and stood face to face with Dick Pontin.

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"Well, I'm glad it's not necessary," and he looked perplexed. "But it is a good thing you mentioned it. We shall understand each other better now. I am hoping we can have some of those jolly times again like we had in England. Do you remember Henley and the Jubilee and the Derby? What times they were; I have often lived them all through again out here," and his eyes shone, "I'd like to take you to see the new golf links if you'll come. Will you?"

"I don't know whether I can manage it. I must see what Lady Mannering says."

He looked at her anxiously.

"You are so different somehow," he said. "What is it? I have pictured this meeting over and over again, since I heard you were coming, and now——" he paused.

She was looking out to sea with straining eyes and set lips.

"What is it?" he asked, with boyish peremptoriness.

She turned and looked into his face, and her own was haggard in spite of her efforts.

"I am engaged," she said slowly, "and going to be married almost immediately."

II.

"WHAT on earth's the matter with Pontin?"

The speaker was lounging in a hammock chair on a verandah, with his feet on the top rail. As he spoke, he carelessly knocked the end off his cigar and shifted his position a little in the listless fashion of the coast.

"Goodness knows, but he's jolly dicky," replied his companion, who was lounging in much the same fashion, only with his feet on a table.

The first speaker, Captain Drew, took a long whiff at his cigar, blew the smoke into rings, and finally remarked questioningly:

"Think it's Miss Powell?"

"Don't see how it can be. She was engaged when she arrived. She must have made short work of him if it is. Lady Mannering informed me of the fact in about ten minutes, as if to warn me off."

"They may have met in England."

Before replying Captain Lascelles took a drink out of the glass beside him, and lit a fresh cigarette.

"Possibly," he said at last, "but I hardly think so. I've never seen him speak to her yet; they don't take the faintest notice of each other."

"That's just what looks queer," replied Captain Drew. "Why the deuce don't they?"

"Quarrelled, perhaps."

"Not they. Pontin's not the chap to quarrel. There isn't a better fellow on the coast. I hate to see him looking as he does. Last night in the middle of the evening I saw him go out on to the verandah by himself. They made him sing and recite, you know. Wouldn't let him off. And when he'd done sending them into fits of laughter, he just went outside alone, and leant against a pillar. It upset me, and that's saying a good deal. I can stand a fair amount naturally, after seeing one's pals go home and die, as they do in this beastly place; but I can't stand seeing a chap play the fool with the look in his eyes that Pontin has."

"Sure to be a girl at the bottom of it, poor devil," said Captain Lascelles philosophically.

"Then if it's a girl who can play any tricks on a chap like Pontin, all I can say is, she wants smothering." And Alec Drew got up and shook himself with an energy quite surprising.

Lascelles smoked on lazily.

"Miss Powell wouldn't," he said presently.

"Good afternoon, Miss Powell."

"No, I don't think she would," replied Drew. "She's one of the best, and that's just why it's so deuced odd, because I can't help thinking she's in it somehow."

Just then they heard the wheels of a go-cart, and a moment later Dick Pontin himself rode up to the bungalow steps.

"What ho!" called Drew, and advanced to meet him. "Glad to see you, old chap."

Pontin gave some directions to his boys, and went up the steps with outstretched hands.

"I'm off to-morrow," he said. "Thought I'd just come round and say a good-bye. Hullo, Lascelles, you here! Thought you'd got fever."

"Sorry to disappoint you, old chap. Come and have a cock-tail."

"Thanks; I'm agreeable," and, with a smile, Pontin planted himself on the rail of the verandah, and leant forward with his arms across his knees, while Drew succumbed once more to his lounge.

"Off to-morrow," he said, when settled to his liking; "what on earth do you mean?"

"I've got Mannering to send me up-country."

"What the dickens for?" put in Lascelles.

Pontin shrugged his shoulders carelessly.

"A freak," he remarked. "I've persuaded him to let me join the party going up for a palaver with King Que."

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"Beastly work this time of the year. Rum idea to go just when there's a little life in the place. You'll miss Lady Mannering's ball."

"I'm not keen on dancing," and Pontin watched his cigar smoke carelessly.

"It'll be a swell affair," continued Lascelles. "A sort of formal announcement of Miss Powell's engagement, I hear. Welbeck himself is coming, and I believe they're going to be married a few days afterwards."

Both men watched Pontin narrowly, but he only went on gazing at his cigar end and made no sign.

"Nice girl," said Drew casually. "Too good for Welbeck. Can't stand the man."

"What's wrong with him?" and Pontin looked away from them and flicked a spider from the rail beside him.

"Starchy beggar. A German Emperor sort of a chap. He'll develop into a tyrant if she doesn't mind."

"Got the pull though," put in Lascelles. "The Griffin knew what she was about."

"Who do you mean by the Griffin?" asked Pontin.

"Lady Mannering, to be sure. She's got Miss Powell pretty well under her thumb, anyone can see. In fact, she appears to me to be disposed to boss the whole colony."

Dick swung one foot and said nothing.

"How long shall you be away?" asked Drew.

"Six weeks I should think."

"Then you'll miss the wedding."

"Yes."

"Not keen, eh?"

Dick laughed with an attempt at indifference which, however, did not go down with his friend. "Get quite enough funerals without weddings," he said.

"It makes a little variation," remarked Drew drily, and sat up to mix another cock-tail.

"When do you start?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"Well, don't leave your bones up there. You look pretty seedy."

"No, don't," put in Lascelles good humouredly, "because we can't work that Pierrot entertainment without you."

As Dick Pontin rode home again he met a girlish figure clad all in white, with a large white umbrella. He hesitated a moment, then called to the boys to stop, and alighted.

"Good afternoon, Miss Powell," he said rather gravely. "You are a little rash to be walking at this hour. Will you do me the favour of using my cart?"

"Thank you, but I am only returning home from Colonel Grant's, and it is such a little distance, I prefer to walk. Those things shake you to pieces," and she laughed nervously.

Again Dick hesitated, then said: "May I walk to the castle with you?"

Nessie Powell assented with a sickening feeling, for the strain of the last four weeks was beginning to unnerve her. Ever since that first night they had only met casually, and exchanged the bare civilities of conversation, but this was partly owing to Lady Mannering's vigilant eye. She had no sooner discovered Dick Pontin's presence than she had systematically monopolised Nessie's time. She talked incessantly of the approaching wedding, and would barely trust her out of her sight, while to Dick her manner was coldness itself.

By some mistake he was nearly always left out of the invitation list, and if he met Nessie at another house her aunt was certain to be near enough to prevent anything at all of a confidential conversation.

At first Dick was very indignant, but afterwards he thought it was probably Nessie's wish as well, so he avoided them altogether. But that afternoon, with the unavoidable perils of his up-country journey on his mind, and the consciousness that in all probability he would never see her again, he could not resist a few last words. So he sent the boys on with the cart and paced slowly by her side.

"I want to take this opportunity of offering you my good wishes for your happiness," he began in the same grave manner, "as I shall probably not see you again."

Nessie caught her breath, but remained outwardly calm and collected. "How is that?" she asked.

"I am going up country, and when I come back you will have gone from Accra."

"It is rather dangerous, isn't it?" she said, looking straight before her.

"Not if one is careful and takes proper precautions. Not that that would hinder me," he added with a sudden bitterness; "there are some times when one greets danger as a friend."

Nessie quickened her steps a little.

"I hope you won't run any risks," she said, striving to crush the anxiety from her voice and face.

He was silent.

"You ought to consider your people at home," she continued. "Your sister would almost break her heart if anything happened to you."

"Yes," he said at last, "I must consider Edith. No one else would care much, but I think she would."

"I should care," she said, then drew herself up short.

"Would you?" he asked pointedly, and looked into her face.

"Of course I should," and again she laughed nervously. "I cannot spare any of my friends."

"Is that all?" he asked, and his steady eyes seemed to look through into her soul.

She tried to meet them, but failed, and the words she would say died away upon her lips. He was watching her closely and saw it all.

"God help us both!" he ejaculated in a low voice, and stood still with his hands in his pockets, and gazed out to sea without seeing anything.

"Do you care for Welbeck at all?" he asked suddenly.

"Oh, don't ask me any questions," she said pleadingly. "Don't you know? Can't you see? Let us say good-bye now and get it over. I have taken my path and I am obliged to follow it."

"Do you mean you haven't the courage to own yourself mistaken?"

"No, no, not that! Oh, can't you understand?"

"The only thing I can't understand," he said slowly, "is why you let them ride rough-shod over you and rush this thing through, unless you like it."

"I can't play him false," she breathed in a low voice, "at least you might understand that."

"I will try," he said gravely, and they went on in silence, and parted at the gates.

The day of the ball the whole of Accra was more or less in a state of excitement. Every Englishman in the colony had been invited, and all the leading natives. The latter were almost beside themselves, especially the ladies, for most of them had brand new costumes from England, which they had probably been keeping months for a function grand enough to grace them.

In spite of everything Nessie could not help laughing, after the guests began to arrive, at the incongruities of

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The ball went forward gaily, and merriment was the order of the hour.

some of the marvellous toilettes. The clothes themselves were all right, but their owners were apparently in a delightful state of ignorance concerning how they should be worn. One gaily-dressed belle wore a feather-boa round her waist, and another a jewelled waist-band round her neck. Several ladies wore two-buttoned kid gloves with short sleeves, while one had decorated her skirt with a chiffon opera cape, panier fashion. Nessie counted three bodices worn hind before, and two sisters came wearing each other's skirts.

Lady Mannering received them all with her usual stately mien, but a careful observer easily detected a shade of anxiety on her face, and she constantly glanced at the door as if watching for someone. The fact was, Captain Welbeck had not yet made his appearance, and she was utterly at a loss to account for it. The ship he was to come in had been signalled in the afternoon, and ought to have arrived by now, giving him ample time to dress, but the minutes ticked on and still there was no sign of him.

Meanwhile, the ball went forward gaily, and merriment was the order of the hour. The Englishmen appeared to be getting unlimited amusement out of their dusky partners, and the dusky partners themselves to be coquetting wildly.

In the middle of the evening Nessie stood apart with Captain Drew, and watched the animated scene. They were on a little balcony, commanding a glorious view of the coast from without and a bird's-eye view of the room from within. After watching the dancers for a little while she turned, and, leaning against a support, looked wistfully out through the night.

Captain Drew pulled a low chair forward and placed it so that she could see the moon on the sea, and then persuaded her to be seated. He thought she looked dreadfully white and ill, and, without quite knowing why, he felt very sorry for her.

Nessie on her part was quite content, for she knew he was Dick's great friend, and somehow with him she did not feel obliged to seem lively. So she sat quite still and looked over the sea, and he sat on a small table beside her, swinging his feet and humming to himself.

"May I smoke?" he asked, and she bent her head in assent.

"Rather odd Captain Welbeck should be so late," he remarked presently in his usual slow, careless fashion.

"Yes," she answered, "I can't understand it at all. I suppose the ship is in?"

"Yes, but she hasn't been in long. Perhaps he's had all his dress shirts stolen, and had to go round borrowing."

Nessie smiled slowly and leant her head back. She did not pretend to be very concerned. She felt too tired to pretend anything.

"I wonder how Pontin's getting on?" he continued presently. "I hope he won't go and be rash. He looked rather as if he might."

"How was that?"

"I don't know, but he hasn't seemed quite himself for the last month. He's down upon his luck about something. Awfully good chap Pontin. Not a lady's man, perhaps, but a trump to the backbone."

"You know him well?"

She carefully avoided meeting his eyes, and half turned her head away.

"Yes. We used to 'dig' together. I suppose as he knew your uncle when he came out here you have met him before?" and he watched her narrowly.

"Yes, I have met him at dances in London," she replied, still looking away.

"I can't help thinking he's awfully cut up about something," continued Captain Drew. "He looks it somehow. Do you think he is?"

"I haven't heard of anything;" but, as she spoke, a flush dyed her cheeks and then faded away, leaving her paler than ever.

"You have never heard his name mentioned in connection with anyone else's, perhaps?"

"I heard he got engaged when he was last in England, but I think it wasn't true after all."

Captain Drew smoked hard for several seconds, with knitted brows, then remarked slowly:

"No, it wasn't true, but it was dashed impudence of whoever started it. It might have caused serious mistakes."

Nessie lowered her eyes to her fan, and for some

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minutes he watched her in silence. Then he went on irrelevantly:

"Women are strange creatures. They're so insanely fond of making martyrs of themselves for a sentiment, or a sensation, or something equally foolish."

She smiled a little.

"You are growing quite philosophical," she said.

"I am a bit of a philosopher in my way," he said. "We all get a bit so on the coast. It's just as well, because we have to put up with a good deal, to say nothing of the amount of funerals we attend. I can't take women philosophically, though. They annoy me when they act with blind foolishness."

"You are rather hard on my poor sex."

"Well, I want to do them good, you see," and he smiled a little. "Now you, for instance, with all due deference, I could easily imagine you going to the stake for a religion or a fad."

"Go on," she said, looking amused.

"Well, of course it's very noble and splendid, and all that; but, at the same time, it's dashed silly."

"It's often the easiest, though."

"In that case then, I should call it want of pluck." And again he watched her narrowly.

She winced slightly, and turned away.

"Perhaps you don't understand," she said slowly. "Men rarely do. They jump to conclusions, and pass judgment on their own side of the question only," and she stood up as if to go.

"Perhaps not," he said, rising also. "It's a queer old world, and mistakes are so easily made and so hardly unmade."

Nessie bit her lips and took a step towards the window, but she was suddenly arrested by his exclaiming:

"Hullo—what's up?"

She looked round, and then they both leant over the balcony together and watched a little group below. A messenger appeared to have come with important news.

"Died of fever yesterday," they heard. "Have come to tell His Excellency."

Nessie gasped and clutched hard at the rail.

"It's Dick," she breathed, in a hoarse voice, going deathly white.

Captain Drew was startled himself, but he read her secret.

"Oh, no, not likely," he said soothingly, "I should think it's probably some news from the ship. I'll go down and see, shall I, and come back here? Sit down while I go," and he led her to the chair again. "Don't be anxious; I'm sure there's no need. It can't be Pontin."

When he returned he found her looking hard before her, with set lips, and she did not move as he approached.

"It is bad news," he said very quietly.

She drew a deep breath, and said mechanically:

"What is it?"

"Dick Pontin died of fever yesterday," he replied. Then he turned his back on her, and leant over the balcony, apparently deeply interested in the people below.

"Dick Pontin died of fever yesterday."

Mr. Jawsmith: "Mrs. J., I am going to buy a pair of scales and have them sent up here to-day."

Mrs. J: "Why on earth do you want scales?"

Mr. J: "I'm determined to have my own weigh in this house."

"Human nature is inherently pessimistic," remarked the man who assumes great wisdom.

"There isn't any proof of that assertion."

"Yes, there is. Nobody ever stops to talk about the weather except when it's disagreeable."

Jack (to his *fiancée*): "I think of getting a musical instrument, Maud. Say, perhaps, a cornet."

Maud (in dismay): "Oh, no; not that horrid thing."

Jack (in surprise): "And why not, dearest?"

Maud (blushing violently): "It makes the lips so hard.'

Villainous-looking Character: "Wot's ther time, guvnor?"

Mr. Bluff (hitting him over the head): "It's just struck one."

Villainous-looking Character: "I 'ope your watch ain't a repeater."

Owing to the advent of Xmas, the next number of

"Short Stories"

will be on Sale on Saturday, December 24th, instead of the following Tuesday.

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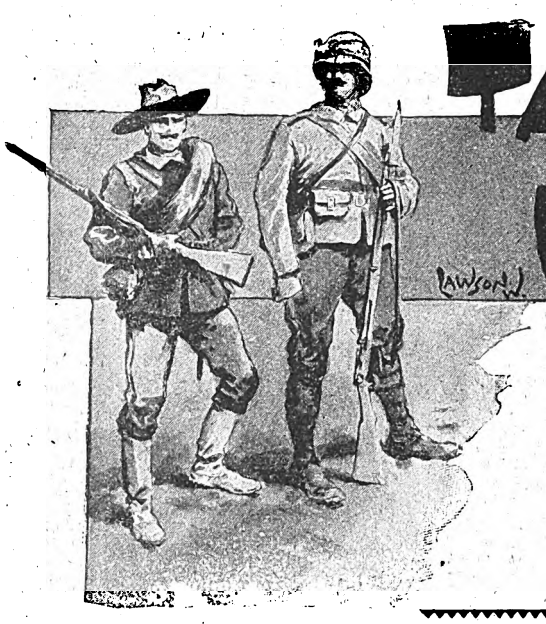

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

CHAPTER XLIII.

"À PARIS!"

SOME weeks elapsed before there was any severe fighting in France, after the tremendous events of June 2nd, 3rd, and 4th, in the environs of Rouen and Yvetot.

The French Government found it increasingly difficult to lay hands upon the subsidiary millions of men who always figure so largely in statistical enumerations of the Continental armies on the war footing. By this time the great mass of the people were utterly sick of a struggle which was clearly destined to bring nothing in its train, save personal loss and national humiliation.

But Paris was still France, and Paris was girding her loins for another siege. The military experts laughed at the idea of the threatened British investment of the fortifications. These, roughly speaking, inclose a ring of 125 miles, and to besiege Paris upon the lines adopted by the Germans in 1870, would require an armed force strong enough to resist sorties at every point of a circle measuring 130 miles along its inner circumference. Although England Canada, South Africa, and Australia had succeeded in lodging nearly a million of men upon French soil, it was obvious that for even this large force there was little hope of a successful attack upon the capital.

The total troops at Lord Roberts' disposal—it must not be forgotten that Sir Redvers Buller's Southern French Expedition would not be available for many weeks, even if entirely successful in the march through France—would barely suffice to encircle Paris with a line of men in double rank. Not, of course, that any such procedure would be necessary or possible, but the simple statement of fact demonstrates how difficult it would be to dispose the beleaguering corps in such manner as would enable them to check a determined assault delivered unexpectedly by the enemy in any definite locality.

Common sense at last began to prevail in the deliberations of the allies' Council of War. It was strongly urged, and not too hotly controverted, that the British army was invincible in the field, and that the most damaging tactics which could be employed against it was for the French to post themselves impregnably behind their *ceinture* of forts, and allow the English to spend their resources in vain upon the tremendous task of subduing Paris.

General Saussier himself saw the wisdom of this course, and he finally yielded to it, only stipulating that a well equipped army of 100,000 men should lie in the path of th British advance from Rouen, and delay and hamper thei progress in every possible way without engaging in opera tions upon a grand scale.

Above and beyond every other achievement, the duty of this Corps of Observation was to destroy roads and railways as it retired. Meanwhile it had to harass and annoy Lord Roberts to the utmost extent.

The scheme was sound enough in scope, but it counted upon one element which had, so far, been signally absent from the French plan of operations—Lord Roberts had a way of making his own arrangements, and his ideas had never hitherto coincided with those of the French leaders.

So he quietly detailed General Alleyne's division to keep the Observation Corps fully employed some ten miles beyond Rouen, while he personally devoted every energy to the concentration of troops and stores at this centre. Transport was, above all else, imperatively needed in abundance, and when the railway lines in the British rear got beyond the control of the limited staff available in the ranks of the army, the Commander-in-Chief asked the London and North Western Railway Company to take charge of the working arrangements.

Mr. Frederick Harrison, the general manager of that famous company, assumed personal control of this department, thus utilising what he ingeniously described as his "summer holiday," and the result was that trains were now run in France as they had never been run before.

Such was the extraordinary attitude of the people towards the conquerors, that quite a brisk passenger traffic was conducted between Havre, Honfleur, and Rouen, and a well-known provincial lawyer summed up the situation by saying: "The English have indeed beaten us, but at last we have got expresses."

Some weeks passed in active mobilisation before the English Commander-in-Chief felt himself sufficiently prepared to undertake the final rush forward to Paris.

Similar tactics had taken place in Germany, and the smart French papers, in their merciless analysis of events, did not scruple to point the moral for their disconsolate readers.

Thus the GIL BLAS said: "At the beginning of the war of 1870, Parisians cried 'A Berlin!' Ere many weeks had passed the Berliners retorted with roars of 'À Paris!' These English say nothing, but they are coming to both

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places. However, brave though they be, they will never return. The present generation of Frenchmen have not had time to forget the lessons of the last siege. We have food for years. Our forts are impregnable. We will dance behind our fortifications whilst our enemies die of sheer exhaustion."

Alleyne's division lay on the pleasant slopes of the south side of the Seine, with its centre in the quaint village of Pont de l'Arche. Two miles away were the French outposts, and for many days there had been warm but brief passages between the belligerents.

The Commander-in-Chief had ascertained that the country between this point and Paris was absolutely denuded of troops, and, what was more important, he knew that the railway was not yet destroyed, as the French naturally found it of the utmost convenience in supplying food, ammunition, and reinforcements to their fighting-line. But the French Commander, Général de Valois, deeming himself strong enough to retire in good order before an attack in force by the British, had made complete dispositions for blowing up bridges and embankments and derailing the lines at his convenience. He rested secure in the belief that no unforeseen circumstance could prevent the fulfilment of his mission. Any flanking movement by his opponents could not hinder the accomplishment of this portion of his duties, and a direct attack could not be so rapid as to interfere with his calculations.

Lord Roberts thought that it could.

On the night of July 5th—a day passed with less than ordinary excitement at the front—two fine columns, of 10,000 men in each, were drawn up a mile behind the British pickets.

They were led respectively by Brigadier-Generals Sir Frederick Carrington and F. J. Caldecott, and their object was to march, by parallel roads about a mile apart, right through the centre of the French position, and not to halt until they had reached Gaillon, a point eight miles in rear of the French lines.

Fighting, of course, they would have their fill of, but at any cost they must persevere in their advance, and thus act as a human wedge driven through the enemy, and leaving him open to be attacked and beaten in detail at dawn by the troops already *en route* from Rouen for that purpose.

There was no moon, and heavy clouds not only threatened rain, but rendered even the dark hours of a midsummer night oppressive in their impenetrable gloom.

Each officer and man in the columns knew exactly the purport and extent of the operations required from him, Lord Roberts' object being to secure, undamaged, a big slice of the main line to Paris. The Commander-in-Chief himself met the columns at their rendezvous in the outskirts of Pont de l'Arche, where the railway crosses the Seine to the south side.

Right in front lay the chalk hills strongly held by the French, and behind them the large village of Gaillon, where the French headquarters were situated. Lord Roberts felt that if the comparatively small, but carefully selected expedition, could only succeed in reaching and holding this centre until the culmination of the general attack at daybreak, the remainder of the railway to Vernon and Mantes, and thence to the environs of Paris, would be practically in his possession.

It was a bold stroke, and if matters went even a little to his liking a certain measure of success would be attained, for it would be much to have in his grasp the iron road even to Gaillon, which is nearly eighty miles from Havre, and about equidistant from Paris.

The chief difficulty which faced Sir Frederick Carrington and General Caldecott was to keep a straight direction towards Gaillon after the fighting commenced in the broken country.

They were discussing this matter with the chief when Harington, who attended Lord Roberts as aide-de-camp, was suddenly tempted to risk a snub by making a suggestion.

"Could not the drums and bugles be used?" he said.

"What on earth for?" said Lord Roberts.

Harington was sure that he had made an ass of himself, but he persisted bravely:

"Well, sir, it seems to me that once the attack begins the necessity for further concealment disappears. By placing some drums and bugles near the head of each column, accompanied by officers whose sole duty it would be to note the line of march, the men could always tell in which direction to rally after a skirmish."

The three experienced generals to whom he spoke listened in silence; then the two brigadiers looked at Lord Roberts to learn his opinion.

"It is a mad notion," he said at last: "but mad notions savour of genius in this campaign."

"It will be the most celebrated incident of the war if it comes off," said Sir Frederick Carrington.

"I like it," remarked Caldecott, with a laugh. "It will please the boys and astound the Frenchman."

The Commander-in-Chief turned sharply round upon Harington:

"Have you had a letter to-day from that girl, Lady What's her-name—I mean your sweetheart?"

Harington blushed down to his boots—or it felt something like it—as he admitted the justice of the Chief's extraordinary suspicion, for Irene was at Havre with her corps of nurses.

"Then, by all the gods of Asia, we'll do it!" cried Lord Roberts. "That young woman brings luck."

And that was how the famous "March of the Drums and Bugles" commenced.

How it ended is a matter of history.

When the advance guards of the columns encountered the French pickets the latter imagined that a reconnaissance was in progress, and promptly retired upon their supports. On the foot-hills of the range two regiments, the 61st and 117th Chasseurs à Pied, were encamped under arms, and they turned out to drive off the audacious midnight marauders who thus presumed to disturb their rest.

After a lively ten minutes with the 1st Battalion of the Highland Light Infantry and the 2nd Battalion of the Buffs, who led Carrington's column on the right, they found that there was unexpected trouble in store for them, and whilst they still strove to delay the advance the commandant hastily dispatched mounted messengers to the rear to warn the reserves.

About a quarter to one o'clock, as the two brigades were steadily breasting the hills, half-a-dozen bright rockets soared into the sky and lit up the landscape for miles around. They contained powerful illuminants expressly designed for the purpose of disclosing an enemy's whereabouts at night, and in their momentary radiance the full scope of the British attack was made clear to the French staff.

They were discussing the matter with the chief.

Hardly had the glare died out of the sky before there came to the ears of the astounded Frenchmen—loud above the rattle of musketry and the cries of the combatants—the measured boom of a big drum, played with all the energy of the drummer of the Buffs, followed by the quick rat-tat of the sidedrums beating a lively step.

Then the bugles rang out with triumphant clang, and for the next two hours relays of bandsmen kept up that never-to-be-forgotten roulade, with its far-sounding notes of simple but warlike music.

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The French gathered round the columns like flies, but they were swept aside as though a hurricane had burst upon them. Up the slope of the mountainous barrier, over its crest, and down the reverse marched the irresistible forces of England, never halting or faltering for a moment, suffering grievously, but inflicting much greater loss upon the enemy, driving their way through the French position with a cool and jubilant courage which dismayed and unnerved their opponents.

Amidst the wild uncertainty of fighting, the French leaders still strove to beat back this storm-cloud which seemed to travel along a predestined and cyclonic path.

Général de Valois, roused from a brief slumber, came to the front on an engine with the chief members of his staff, their chargers being hastily crowded into a horse-box behind.

When they reached the neighbourhood of the fight — Sir Frederick Carrington's column being much nearer than they guessed—they rode furiously forward to ascertain definitely what was in progress.

As they neared the fighting-line, with its chaotic surging of bewildered troops, and its mounted officers galloping madly to and fro, a new and wild fanfare of bugles and drums came to them on the breeze, for the big drum of the Buffs had been burst by a Lebel bullet, and the incident had been seized to relieve the breathless bandsmen with a fresh set.

"What devilry is this?" cried de Valois. "Is there a fête going on, then?" and he spurred ahead more eagerly.

"The English are amusing themselves with us, as usual," muttered a young aide-de-camp to himself.

At this moment some wooden outbuildings of a farmhouse flamed forth in rapid blaze. They had been fired by the command of a French colonel, who hoped by this means to fix a rallying point for his own men, and give them some guidance in a last desperate attempt to hurl back their assailants.

Into the zone of flickering light came the Highland Light Infantry, who were received with such a storm of lead that their colonel ordered them to halt and lie down for a few minutes.

Still shrilly dominating the crackling reports of the rifle duel, the bugles blew their cheerful strains, and the rattle of the drums kept up undaunted beat.

"'Strewth!" said a crouching Tommy to his front rank man. "They're playin' a bit of the revally. An' it's a nice summer mornin', ain't it?" he added, as a bullet knocked his helmet off.

The cause of the brief delay soon became apparent. Two flanking parties of Buffs had swept round on the French position unobserved, and were now attacking the defenders with the bayonet. The Highland Light Infantry charged in front, when the diversion thus created gave an opportunity. Général de Valois was knocked off his horse, his staff shot or captured, and before the driver of the "special" knew what was the matter, he was nearly rammed into the fire-box by an enthusiastic Clyde engineer.

"The excellent captain gives you a final chance," he explained.

General Caldecott's column was equally fortunate on the left. They came across the field telegraph line, which they promptly cut, and at 3 a.m. the first intimation received by the inhabitants of Gaillon of the proceedings among the chalk hills was given by the now wavering notes and

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unsteady beats of bugles and drums marching through the village street.

Meeting here, Sir Frederick Carrington and General Caldecott exchanged a hasty hand grip, and at once took steps to render their victory complete.

A train was got together and ordered to proceed cautiously to Vernon, whither it would be followed by a second and a third, whilst reinforcements would be sent by road as speedily as might be.

Caldecott's column now retraced its steps along the line towards the French position, to safeguard it from attempts at destruction by isolated parties from the French right and left.

The precaution was wise but needless.

The whole of the French army was now subjected to a bitter attack by a superior force, and the growing daylight showed that they had been hopelessly scattered over a wide expanse of country. Pursuit was kept up by cavalry all day, as Lord Roberts was determined to prevent anything in the nature of concentration of small brigades. He wanted to have his hands free for the march to Paris.

On the second morning after the battle, the country being now fairly clear after the desultory fighting that had gone on for many hours, scouting parties of fresh cavalry and cyclists were formed for the purpose of thoroughly exploring the valley of the Epte and the Plaine de Sainte André.

Among these the Catford Cyclists Corps was prominent, and at their head was William Briggs, less stout and more soldierly than when we last saw him at the "Cat and Anchor."

War, with its tremendous significance to the individual, moulds a man's character with compelling touches, and Briggs was quieter, more self-contained, more serious in demeanour, after these few weeks of momentous campaigning.

There was little trace of the old-time bombast in the manner in which he gave orders to his followers. In one respect alone did his wonted weakness for display manifest itself. Big and heavy in his proportions, he was yet the fastest rider of them all, and it was with loving care that he inflated the tyres of his bike that morning preparatory to the long ride before him.

For twenty miles the party passed through peaceful villages and broad stretches of pasture land and cornfields, in which the peasants were tending their cattle and crops as though the epoch-making events occurring in the locality belonged to another country.

At some little distance from the village of Beuil, where a small bridge in the centre of the hamlet spans the river Euse, the cyclists entered upon a broad straight road, that above all else suggested a fast "spin."

Four of them at once took the lead, and were separated by a hundred yards from their companions when they raced into the village street, shaded by leafy chestnuts and walnut trees, and seemingly the quietest and most sequestered spot they had yet encountered in their extended reconnaissance.

In an instant the place blazed into sudden life with sputtering rifle-shots, and the screams of frightened women and children.

Brigg's three comrades were shot dead, and he himself only escaped a similar fate by a heavy fall over a kerbstone, which momentarily rendered him incapable of movement.

The remainder of the detachment pulled up and strove to make some show against the company of Zouaves they had so suddenly encountered. But the affair was hopeless from the outset. Barely a third of the party succeeded in racing off again, and many of them were wounded.

When Briggs recovered his breath he found himself surrounded by a group of soldiers, who surveyed him with grim curiosity, and an officer addressed him in French.

Briggs had managed to pick up a few words of the language, but he was quite unable to follow the rapid utterance of his questioner, whereupon the Frenchman used some English words:

"Spy, shoot you, is it not, in three minutes!"

"I am no spy," replied Briggs calmly, though his heart throbbed tumultuously as he looked at the officer's stern face. "I am a scout. *Vous savvy. C'est proper dang la guerre.*"

Again the Frenchman became voluble, but he apparently addressed some questions to Briggs, who wholly failed to understand him. Someone was sent for, and a young soldier appeared who spoke English perfectly.

"The officer says," he told Briggs, "that he can shoot you as a spy—just now, this moment. And he will do this thing except on one condition. If you tell him truly the present position of your army and its line of march, with the strength of the leading divisions, he will grant you your life."

Briggs rose to his feet and looked proudly about him, for he was taller by inches than any of the Zouaves. "It is your officer, then, who would indeed make me a spy?" he said.

The Frenchman flushed, and the officer did not wait for the translation, for he had caught the drift of the words. He impatiently gave some orders, and the Englishman was placed with his back against the gable end of a house, whilst eight men drew up in single rank at ten paces distance and shouldered their Lebel rifles.

A fierce impulse seized him to rush upon them and surrender his life in desperate barter, but the succeeding thought showed him that the nobler way to die was with the dignified demeanour of a soldier who gave all for his country.

Again the young interpreter approached.

"The excellent captain gives you a final chance," he explained. "There is no dishonour in giving information which will be easily obtained before to-morrow. Will you, for the last time, tell him what he has asked you? Why don't you lie, you fool?" he added quickly, in an undertone.

Briggs looked at him with the glistening eyes of a hunted animal, but his thoughts were far away amidst the pleasant lanes of Kent, where his wife and little ones lived in a creeper-covered cottage during the summer months.

Anon his memories strayed to the bar-parlour of the inn at Catford where his voice was the loudest and his laugh the heartiest during the nightly gathering.

"Will you not answer?" came the sharp query, whilst the Zouave left his side and the officer raised his sword.

"Yes," cried Briggs. "Tell him——" Then he remembered, perhaps, the translator would not gratify his wish.

"*Ecoutez-vous, soldats Français,*" he said in loud clear tones. "*La Hongletaire est la première nation de la monde!*"

There was an appreciable pause, and the firing-party stood at the ready.

Trees, sky, and houses began to dance madly before the Englishman's eyes, but he shouted again so vehemently that he was heard far down the village street: "*La Hongletaire est la première—*"

But he stopped, for out of the gathering mist in which all things were fast merging, there loomed in front of him the figure of the officer, who placed his hand upon his shoulder and spoke to him in kindly tones.

He turned with amazement to the young soldier who had previously addressed him, and the latter explained: "We Frenchmen do not commit murder," he said. "The officer but did try you to the end. He wishes you to rejoin your army."

And the officer himself, shaking Briggs vigorously by the hand, exclaimed:

"*Vous êtes brav' homme, m'sieur. Votre chemin est par là,*" and he pointed along the road to Vernon.

(To be continued.)

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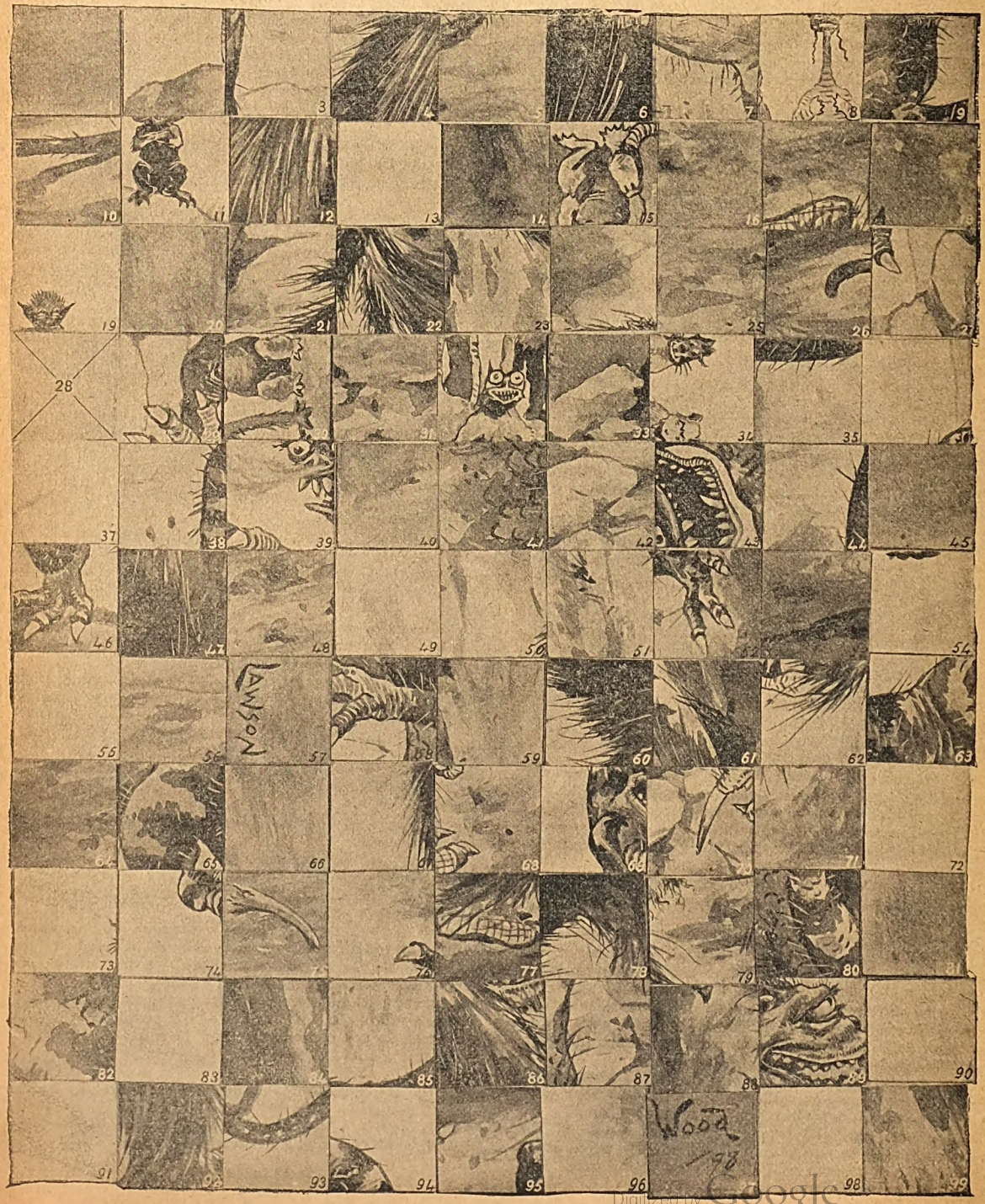
MIXED PICTURE COMPETITION.

Cut out each of the following squares and paste them up on a sheet of paper to form a picture. Then copy out the figures in the re-arranged order, and send them to us in an envelope marked PICTURE. The squares are turned various ways, and that marked 28 is a blank. £2 2s. will be sent to the reader whose attempt is correct, or most nearly correct, and a copy of Annis Lennoy's book, "In a Chinese Garden," to each of the next twenty-five. In the event of a tie, the prizes will go to those whose solutions arrive first. Date of closing, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20th.



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A Plunge for a Wife.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

By CATHERINE ADAMS.

"Well, Miss Vanfontein, and how shall we celebrate Christmas?" asked the Captain.

He was apparently addressing the heiress—possibly he thought she ought to be deferred to occasionally—but his eye sought Mrs. Pilcardy, a vivacious grass-widow.

"I really don't know," said Miss Vanfontein at length. She was rather scarce of ideas as a rule, and was not vivacious like Mrs. Pilcardy.

The heiress had been to the Cape to see some of her dead father's relatives, and she was now returning home by the liner *Silenus*. She lived at Tunbridge Wells with her maiden aunt, and was the absolute mistress of some £12,000 a year. But with all her wealth she was a very unassuming little person, rather insipid some people thought, but those who knew her well could testify that she was thoroughly to be depended on. As to her person, she was small, decidedly not pretty, and had pale blue eyes and dark brown hair.

Mrs. Pilcardy waited for a minute, tactfully giving Miss Vanfontein time to evolve a suggestion, then as none seemed forthcoming she prepared for action.

She was a handsome brunette with very expressive brown eyes.

There was a slight pause in the general conversation, and Mrs. Pilcardy adroitly attracted attention by firing off her small gun during the lull.

"I have an idea," she said demurely.

Seeing the inquiring look on the faces turned towards his end of the table, Captain Simmons explained that he was open to receive suggestions anent the forthcoming celebration of Christmas on board the *Silenus*.

"Mrs. Pilcardy is going to suggest something," he said.

"Oh, *please*," said the lady, "I do not feel equal to so much attention. It quite overcomes me."

"By jove! does she not, though?" whispered one man to his neighbour.

"And really, Captain Simmons, I am sorry that *I* spoke. My idea is not novel, not original, indeed it is so old that I feel quite ashamed to put it forward."

"Oh, come, Mrs. Pilcardy, we won't be hard on you," said someone reassuringly.

"Well, I suggest that we form a Christmas Festivity Committee, and arrange to have tableaux and theatricals on Christmas Eve, a series of old-fashioned games and forfeits on the evening of Christmas day, and on Boxing Day, a grand entertainment by way of bringing things to a successful climax. I propose that some of the gentlemen form a Sports Committee, which shall arrange something very unique in the way of sports for the morning or afternoon, and then in the evening wind up the festivities with a grand Masque Ball, prizes to be awarded to the wearers of the most effective and original costumes."

"Rather a big order!" said some gentleman.

"Quite a formidable programme," said another.

"I am quite sure that it can be carried through," said the Captain, thankful to find the task of suggestion and execution taken off his own shoulders.

As it only wanted a week to Christmas the ensuing days were full of the bustle of preparations. Possibly the members of the "Silenus Dramatic Society," bore the brunt of the work, for a vast amount of time was devoted to rehearsals.

The stage manager was a veritable *gourmand* for work, and he whipped up the lukewarm members of his company with commendable perseverance. As for the ladies, they were indefatigable; no amount of rehearsing or trying on of costumes seemed too much for their energies.

The Sports Committee contributed their quota to the work in hand very comfortably. They met for the most part in the smoking saloon, and as their labours tended to an unusual consumption of cigars and drinks, it is to be supposed that a great deal of oratory and energy was expended on the "programme of good, old-fashioned English sports" before it was finally drawn up and approved.

Though Miss Vanfontein had begged her hardest to be excused from taking part in the performance for Christmas Eve, she had at length been persuaded to help in one of the tableaux.

"Ridiculous!" said the florid Miss Chattaway to her sister in the privacy of their state-room, "why they

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want such a colourless bit of goods in the tableau, I can't imagine!"

"So vapid, too," replied her sister, "she does not seem to have an opinion on anything. I should not be at all surprised if she were to die an old maid for lack of not being able to make up her mind."

"It will not be for want of chances, then. Such a golden bait as she can hold out ought to make the fish rise fast enough."

"Indeed, yes," sighed the other, as she remembered the futility of her own long and persistent angling. "Men of to-day like well-gilded pills when they are forced to swallow matrimony."

Strangely enough, the subject of their remarks was also dwelling on the possibility of marriage.

She had had many offers, but she had refused them all from a morbid dread of being chosen for her wealth and not for herself.

"I shall be twenty-seven next month," she soliloquised as she brushed out her long hair. "Really, it is, as Aunt Martha says, quite time for me to choose a husband if I intend to marry."

She looked at her reflection in the glass, and by the bright glare of the electric light she espied two short white hairs standing up assertively among the curls of her fringe. She pulled them out quite viciously.

"Good Heavens! I shall look forty soon. Yes it is really time!" and then she sighed. All that night her dreams were disturbed by the attempt to rightly appraise the different qualities of two gentlemen who chanced to be voyaging to the old country on the *Silenus*.

During the past autumn she had seen a great deal of Major Ffoulkes and Mr. Baynes, and had received marked attentions from both. The major was rather a notable, and he was now on his way home to receive the coveted V.C.

Women love heroes, and as Major Ffoulkes was a very good-looking one, he came in for plenty of adulation. Minnie Vanfontein was a little creature, with plenty of latent love in her nature waiting to be stirred by the mighty god.

The Major's advances were not repelled, and she would have been quite ready to fall at his feet and worship him if her tendency to distrust all admirers had not held her in check. To-night something had happened to accelerate that distrust, for she had overheard a little conversation between Major Ffoulkes and one of his friends, and she was almost certain that it had referred to herself.

The ladies had all left the deck and gone below for the night, when Miss Vanfontein suddenly remembered that she had left her writing-pad on her deck-chair. Hurrying back to recover it, she had been arrested when half-way up the companion by the sound of voices.

"Well," said one with a boastful accent, "things look fairly promising. What will you bet me that I don't bring it off before we sight land?"

The voice was unmistakably that of the Major.

"I couldn't possibly lay anything on such a certainty as that," replied another voice. "I suppose that you will cut the service when you marry?"

"Rather!" the major had replied.

And then Miss Vanfontein crept away. Had Major Ffoulkes been alluding to herself? If so it was abominable, infamous! And so this was why the poor little soul pondered and worried and drew comparisons between the Major and her other admirer, John Baynes.

"Mr. Baynes is very nice, only not nearly so distinguished as the Major, and not nearly so good-looking. Neither is his family so good. Not that that matters. I only want someone to be good to me and love me for myself. How I wish I could see into their hearts and find out if they are really in earnest."

It was a pity she could not, for whereas she would soon have discovered that the Major's feeling for her was a selfish one, born of his desire to improve the impoverished estates he expected to succeed to, that of John Baynes was a pure and unselfish one.

Baynes was possessed of very fair private means, and he held a lucrative appointment under a celebrated firm of engineers, altogether he was in a position to support a wife very comfortably indeed. But he was a diffident man, and, as yet, was very far from sure that he had the remotest chance with the heiress. "For," he thought, "however could I make her believe that I had no ulterior view in asking her to be my wife?"

"Ffoulkes is pressing on pretty hard now, is he not?" asked his great friend, Clifford, one night.

Clifford was the first mate of the *Silenus*. He and Baynes had been apprentices together, in those days when John had thought a sea life the only life possible.

"I should think we might hear a bit of news before we land," said the mate, as his companion vouchsafed no reply.

"Oh, you do, do you?" then fiercely, "confound the Major!"

"Amen to that sentiment! I hate the fellow with his airs and graces. If a man has done a plucky thing, he should be all the more modest. Pooh! he has not done half so much as some poor beggars at sea have to do in dirty weather."

"But it is just where he scores off a fellow like myself," said Baynes ruefully. "I have no chance of showing my pluck, so Minnie—I mean Miss Vanfontein—doesn't know that I have any. But I have, and I only wish I could do something to show that I care for her and not her beastly fortune."

"Don't rile at the bawbees, my boy, you may be glad of them some day."

"Never!" said the other, "I'd marry her if she hadn't a penny. But I can't tell her so. She has refused a heap of fellows because she believes they want her money. I'd do anything to win her, I'd jump overboard, or I would——"

"By Jove! I have it!" said Clifford, and he jumped up and was gone in a flash.

Before Baynes could recover from his surprise, the mate was back again, with a bundle of papers and magazines.

"Look here; I hunted these up, thinking they might help the ladies with an idea for a tableau. And now, great Scott! if you and I, Jack, don't prepare the best tableau of the lot!"

"You have got a touch of the sun," put in Baynes.

"You'll live to thank me yet," said the mate, ignoring his friend's remark. "Look at this."

He opened the illustrated pages of an old Christmas number, and pointed to the picture depicting the dilemma of a young lady who was voyaging on a steamer, and who, in order to help her selection of a husband from the crowd of admirers on board, hit upon the peculiar expedient of jumping overboard and choosing the man who first came to her rescue.

"I'll keep this number back," said Clifford, "and I'll find an opportunity to give it to Miss Vanfontein when she is alone. I shall take care to draw her attention to the picture which possibly may lead her to do likewise, and then——"

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"Good Heavens! do you mean to advise *her* to go overboard?"

"Why not? It would be a splendid chance for you to rush to the rescue, and I promise you to be on the alert and do all I can to minimise the fear of danger."

"Danger! I would not have an hair of her head injured."

"Baynes, I give you my word of honour that there is no danger. If she cottons to the idea, I will gently hint to her what would be the best time of day, also what part of the vessel would be safest to take her header from," said this Machiavellian seaman.

Finally he overbore the other's remonstrances, and next day he found a chance of presenting the magazine to Miss Vanfontein.

"I thought you might get an idea for your ball costume, Miss Vanfontein," and then, adroitly turning the leaves and the conversation at the same time, he showed her the pictorial story of the young lady who had such difficulty in selecting a husband.

Miss Vanfontein looked long and silently at the pictures and read the letter-press attentively.

"Rather a strange mode of getting out of a difficulty, and somewhat dangerous, I should think."

"Not at all if she went well for'ard and took off from the side. No danger at all if she chose a calm day and took care to see that the right people were at hand to rescue her.

"There!" he chuckled, when he left her to digest the picture and his remarks, "I could not have done better if I had graduated in a school of diplomacy. It's all right," he told Baynes, "I believe she means business, I took care to inform her that the afternoon would be best for such a performance, and of course that's my watch then."

Mr. Baynes turned quite pale.

"Clifford, I can't allow it, I feel it my duty to warn her——"

"Stuff and nonsense! Can't you be thankful for what the gods send you? By-the-bye, she is a splendid swimmer."

"Oh! is she?" said Baynes, half convinced.

All the same he was in a state of great mental excitement for the next few days, and he frequented the fore deck on each afternoon, dreading, he hardly knew what.

But nothing happened. And at last, Christmas Eve, with all its exciting concomitants of tableaux and dramatic performances, arrived.

Miss Vanfontein did not often hazard a remark at meals unless first addressed, so there was a little thrill of interest occasioned when she asked the Captain, with a nervous tremour in her voice, if there were any sharks about.

"Sharks, Miss Vanfontein? Not in these waters. We shan't catch sight of the beasts until we are nearer land. Wait till we sight Cape Verd; possibly there may be a few to be seen then."

"And when will that be?"

"In a few days' time. Possibly next Wednesday," and the Captain went on with his dinner.

A look of relief passed over the heiress's face, but a feeling of horror nearly overcame John Baynes as he reflected that there *might* be a stray shark about.

When the passengers went up on deck and the members of the "Silenus Dramatic Society" disappeared to prepare for the performance, Clifford came up to John Baynes with a "I told you so!" look on his face.

"Heard that about the sharks, old man? I believe she will do it to-morrow!"

Owing to his anxiety regarding Miss Vanfontein's intentions, poor Baynes did not much enjoy the dramatic treat provided by his fellow voyagers; and he forbore to make the most of the opportunity he had of making himself pleasant to the heiress when she came and sat among the audience after performing her part in the tableaux.

"Well," she said with her shy smile, "how did you like it? Did I tremble much? How did it go off?"

"Oh, yes, yes; very nice, very nice indeed," he said hastily.

"Poor Andromeda!" she said, softly. "Perseus saved her from a terrible fate, did he not?"

"She might have been eaten by sharks," he replied.

Miss Vanfontein stared at him aghast.

"Oh, really!" she protested, "I never heard that, I always understood she was threatened by some terrible sea-monster, but not sharks, Mr. Baynes."

"Oh, well," he said recovering himself quickly, "mythology is mythical, always, and it might have been a shark."

Mr. Baynes showed no delight in the really creditable performance of the musical dialogue acted by two vivacious young ladies, nor did he evince emotion, when, in the final scene of "The Truant Prince," Mrs. Pilcaby appeared with her hair all down her back and visible tears streaming down her cheeks. Neither did he laugh when they distinctly overheard a lady behind let out the secrets of the dressing-room, and tell her neighbour that the tears were streaks of vaseline and the hair—"Well, a good bit of it pinned on, my dear, only you must not tell!"

While the others were in shrieks of laughter at the extravaganza that concluded the entertainment, the muscles of Mr. Baynes' face never relaxed once. Miss Vanfontein felt disappointed, she had always thought him very easily amused, and he was always ready to smile at her own little jokes. But perhaps, there was a reason for that, and at the thought she shrank up into her shell again, vexed to think she had been so amiable to him.

"What's the matter with Baynes? He looks as if he had been crossed in love," said Major Ffoulkes, taking the seat lately vacated by Baynes.

"I should say that he had," said a pert girl sitting on the other side of the heiress, and shooting a quizzical glance in her direction.

Miss Vanfontein blushed.

"I should say it was the heat," she said severely, "did I not overhear someone remarking that he cordially echoed Sydney Smith's wish to be able to 'sit in his bones,' and that he would like them to be packed away in the chef's refrigerator?"

"I believe I did say something of the sort," owned the Major, "and I think I had just cause, we are not very far off from the line, now."

But Miss Vanfontein was angry with herself for the blush, and vexed with her neighbours for causing it. So, what should have proved a most enjoyable evening was, as far as two of the audience were concerned, very disappointing.

Christmas Day was ushered in by a comical attempt to imitate the old English custom of carol-singing. A few sturdy sailors with sonorous voices, helped by a few musical *esprits* from the steerage passengers, promenaded the decks very early, singing "While shepherds watched," and "Hark! the herald angels sing." Lack of rehearsals and a proficient bâton caused the rendering to be somewhat wanting in precision and tune, and there

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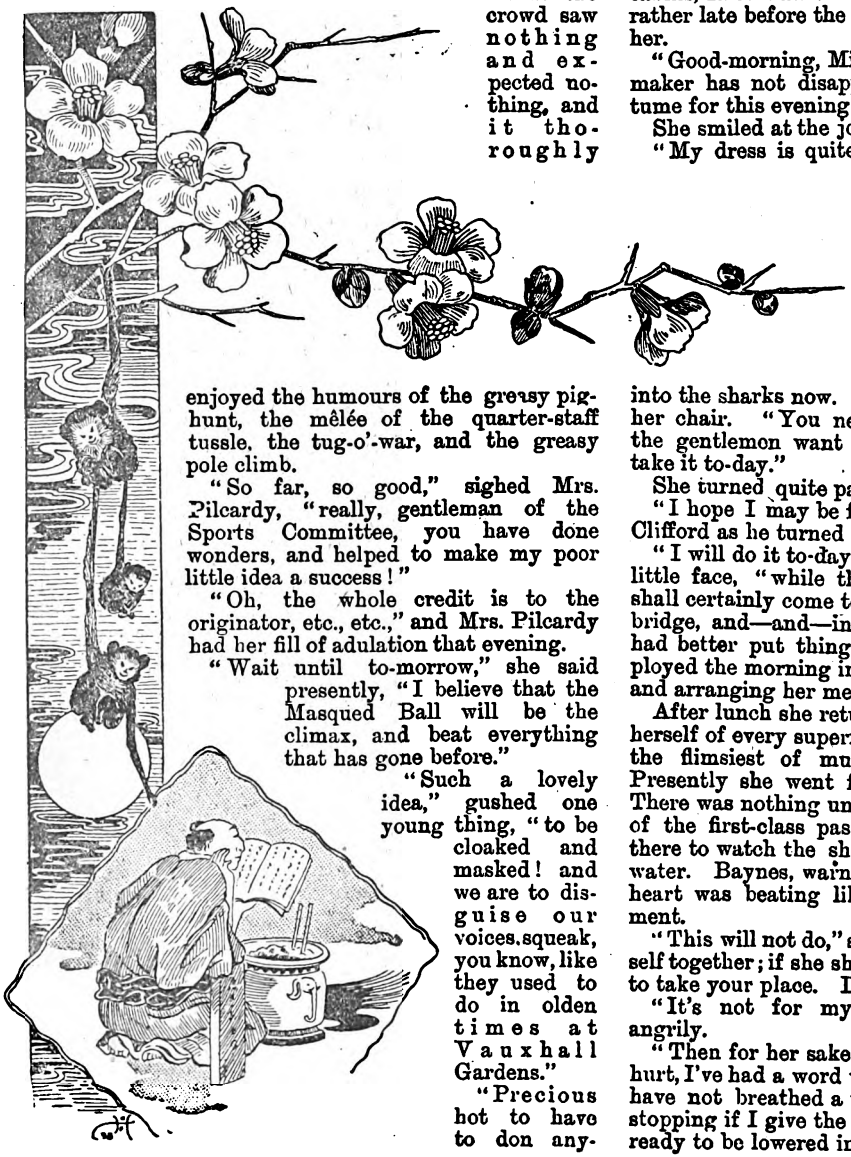
was a superabundance of bass; still the voices made up in gusto and abandon what they failed in artistic training, and the morning opened auspiciously.

After service and luncheon they all repaired to the promenade deck to witness the "Unrivalled Fête and Exhibition of Old English Sports."

Mr. Baynes kept an anxious eye upon the movements of the heiress. He was quite sure that if she made the attempt to jump overboard, it would be in the afternoon, during Clifford's watch.

It was a very calm day, the sea scarcely heaved, and the only movement was caused by the screw of the great steamer as she ploughed her way northward.

Once or twice Baynes caught Miss Vanfontein looking fixedly out to sea with a peculiarly intent gaze. He wished most heartily that Clifford had not shown that picture to the heiress, for the suspense was awful.



But the crowd saw nothing and expected nothing, and it thoroughly enjoyed the humours of the greasy pig-hunt, the mêlée of the quarter-staff tussle, the tug-o'-war, and the greasy pole climb.

"So far, so good," sighed Mrs. Pilcardy, "really, gentleman of the Sports Committee, you have done wonders, and helped to make my poor little idea a success!"

"Oh, the whole credit is to the originator, etc., etc.," and Mrs. Pilcardy had her fill of adulation that evening.

"Wait until to-morrow," she said presently, "I believe that the Masqued Ball will be the climax, and beat everything that has gone before."

"Such a lovely idea," gushed one young thing, "to be cloaked and masked! and we are to disguise our voices, squeak, you know, like they used to do in olden times at Vauxhall Gardens."

"Precious hot to have to don anything extra this weather," grumbled one portly gentleman.

"Ah, but you need not overdo it underneath," advised the ship's doctor, who needless to say was an Irishman.

"Clifford," said Baynes, when dinner was over, and the company, with a very good grace, had partaken of hot roast beef and hot plum pudding with the thermometer at 103deg. in the shade, "I can't stand this any longer, it's wearing me quite out."

"Umph!" said Clifford, "you do look rather chippy. But it is wearing, I admit. I've been on the look-out all this blessed afternoon. I'll give her a hint to-morrow morning."

On Boxing Day most of the ladies did not rise very early, wisely electing to reserve their strength for the ball. A great many had their breakfasts served in their cabins, Miss Vanfontein among the number, so it was rather late before the mate had a chance of speaking to her.

"Good-morning, Miss Vanfontein, I hope the dressmaker has not disappointed you regarding your costume for this evening?"

She smiled at the joke.

"My dress is quite ready, but I shall give you no further information, for no one knows what anyone else is to wear!"

"Well, I suppose we shall have queerer company soon than what we shall see to-night," he said.

"Oh!" and she looked her mystification.

"We shall soon be running into the sharks now. Oh!" for she had jumped up from her chair. "You need not be alarmed, but if any of the gentlemen want a swim I should advise them to take it to-day."

She turned quite pale.

"I hope I may be forgiven for such lies," thought Clifford as he turned away.

"I will do it to-day," she said with a set, determined little face, "while that nice Mr. Clifford is about, I shall certainly come to no harm if he is near or on the bridge, and—and—in case anything *should* happen I had better put things in order a little." So she employed the morning in writing directions for her maid, and arranging her memoranda and letters.

After lunch she returned to her cabin, and divesting herself of every superfluous bit of clothing, she put on the flimsiest of muslins and then went on deck. Presently she went forward and on to the fore-deck. There was nothing unusual in such an action, as some of the first-class passengers were very fond of going there to watch the ship cleaving her way through the water. Baynes, warned by Clifford, followed her. His heart was beating like a sledge-hammer with excitement.

"This will not do," said the mate, "you must pull yourself together; if she should bring it off now, I shall have to take your place. Don't lose heart now."

"It's not for myself, it's for *her*," said Baynes angrily.

"Then for her sake pull yourself together. She can't hurt, I've had a word with the chief engineer—no, no! I have not breathed a word, the engines won't be long in stopping if I give the word—and there's a boat close by ready to be lowered immediately I give the signal. And

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by George! Do you see? She has changed her dress. She means business this afternoon. Here comes the Major, now keep your weather-eye open."

Miss Vanfontein sauntered to the side of the vessel with a seemingly nonchalant air. In reality her excitement and nervousness were infinitely more pronounced than that of John Baynes.

She looked with awe into the green depths below, then she looked towards the stern where the screw had left a white track which spread far behind, showing the course of the vessel. No, it would not do to be caught in the great wash which surged up and down in the wake of the *Silenus*. She must jump well off the side and from her present position on the fore-deck.

She shivered a little, though the sun poured down with fierce rays. Presently, she gave a little glance round. Yes, the Major and Mr. Baynes were both in her vicinity and the mate was on the bridge. Only a few steerage passengers were between her and the two men whose courage she wished to test.

She made ready to spring—but at the vital moment her courage failed her. She caught up her Dachsund, Fido, and flung him far out into the waves. Then, with a shriek, she shrank from view and cowered down behind a pile of empty fish baskets.

It happened so suddenly that the people near, hearing the splash and missing Miss Vanfontein at the same moment, concluded that it was she who had gone overboard.

"Man overboard!" they shouted in chorus.

Clifford was the only person who saw what really happened. He rang the electric bells to the engine-room, giving the signal to stop, and he shouted an order for the boat to be lowered, then he came rushing along to the fore-deck to Baynes and the Major.

"Good Heavens! It's Miss Vanfontein! She's gone over!"

"Where!" cried Baynes, rushing to the side.

"Where!" shouted the Major.

"There! yonder she goes," cried the mate, pointing to a dark object bobbing up and down in the water, and which the speed of the vessel had left some distance behind.

It is to be hoped that the recording angel was not very hard upon the mate of the *Silenus* at this particular juncture of his career.

At this moment the great engines stopped in what Captain Simmons afterwards thought to be an unprecedented minimum of time, and as he came up to order a boat to be lowered he found the men already busy with it.

And he again congratulated himself on the exceeding smartness of his officers and men.

But John Baynes had already plunged in to the rescue. He had not seen the accident, but at the first word from the mate he had rushed aft, and flinging off his coat, he had taken a header into the waves.

Major Foulkes did not stir from where the boat was being launched.

"Can't you swim? Are you not going to try for her?" said the mate cynically.

"Yes, I can swim. But one fool need not make many. If a woman likes to be so stupid as to jump or fall overboard when the ship's going at full speed, she must take her chance."

And Miss Vanfontein heard every word he said.

She came forward at once.

"Thank you!" she said, flashing a glance at him that would have credited a Bernhardt.

The Captain came up.

"Who the dickens is overboard then?" he said, staring angrily at the heiress.

"My dog is," said she calmly.

Then the Captain turned about, and he swore for the space of half-a-minute in the best, double-distilled, seagoing vernacular.

He apologised afterwards, but it must be admitted that he was hard pressed when he found his vessel had been stopped all for the sake of a poor little whippersnapper of a—but there! what he said about that dog is not worth repeating.

"And now there's the deuce to pay," said Clifford mendaciously, "for poor Baynes, thinking that it was Miss Vanfontein gone overboard, dashed like a maniac to the rescue, and," he lowered his voice for dramatic effect, "he's a very poor swimmer."

"Oh!" shrieked the heiress, and she wrung her hands desperately.

"Oh!" roared the Captain, "what a consummate ass! What a fool!"

"Sir!" Miss Vanfontein turned on him like a fury. Could it be possible that such a meek and mild little person could be so transformed? "Sir," she repeated, "Mr. Baynes is neither an ass, nor a fool!" She nearly choked over the words. "He is a gentleman and a very brave one. He is not the only person who made the mistake of thinking that it was I who had fallen over. There are others, but they did not think fit to move."

Though she spoke in the plural number she turned a withering glance in the Major's direction.

"Oh, Mr. Clifford, can't you do something?" she appealed to the mate. "Oh, do please save him!" Then she broke down completely and sobbed hysterically.

"Take her below—take her below!" said the Captain testily. Some ladies who had been attracted from their siestas by the commotion, kindly took charge of the heiress and, in spite of her protestations, dragged her to her cabin, where they administered smelling-salts and such consolation as they could.

"Oh! he will be drowned!" she cried between her sobs.

"We must hope for the best," one told her, "and oh! there goes the boat." She was looking through the porthole as she spoke. "The engines were stopped so quickly, Mr. Baynes can't be very far off."

Meanwhile, Baynes had struck out vigorously towards a black object which he could see floating in the distance. But though he was swimming fast he wondered why he could not get near. The fact was that poor doggie was doing his best to keep afloat, only he was going away from the steamer. Baynes began to feel rather exhausted by the time he succeeded in getting to close quarters. He was short sighted and had no idea that the object he was endeavouring to reach was other than the dark head of the heiress. He looked round to see if the boat were coming.

"Boat ahoy!" he called faintly. He began to have his doubt of holding out much longer.

"This way!" he called, "Miss Vanfontein, you are going away from the ship. There's a boat coming along."

Then as he got still nearer, he wondered if his senses were leaving him. What was it, and where was the heiress?

The splash of oars sounded close.

"All right," called the third mate. "We'll soon hand you in, and then we'll take in the little dog."

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"Miss Vanfontein?" gasped Baynes.

"Is safe on board. 'Twas the little dog that fell over."

Baynes groaned aloud. Then all his arduous work had been in vain! He ground his teeth and reviled the interfering Clifford. The sailors thought he was done up as they lifted him in and he sank in a heap at the bottom of the boat.

"I should like to peg out after this," he thought, "I'll sham unconsciousness, I really could not stand any chaff just yet." He lay very still and with closed eyes.

"Case for the doctor," said the third mate, "go it, men, pull your hardest."

"Oh!" shrieked one of the ladies ministering to Miss Vanfontein, "here is the boat coming back! There is your dog, Miss Vanfontein, *he* is all right, shaking himself, but oh! *poor* Mr. Baynes, he is lying at the bottom of the boat, and oh! my dear, my dear, I think you must prepare for the worst!"

They were kind-hearted souls, and they wept in company with the distracted heiress.

When the boat came alongside it took some minutes to haul up the apparently lifeless body of Mr. Baynes. The people on deck were waved back without ceremony, a stretcher was brought and Baynes was conveyed to the doctor's quarters. Clifford, entirely taken back by this unexpected turn of events, followed anxiously.

"He was swimming well and strongly," he thought, "what can have turned him like that?"

The doctor gave his orders and made his preparations quickly enough. He had been having a nap and had heard nothing of the incident until the boat was returning. He thought it a case for resuscitation from drowning.

"Look here! doctor," whispered Clifford anxiously, "I think he his only exhausted. Send the others away."

The doctor cleared the room, and then proceeded to felt his patient's pulse.

"Why!" he ejaculated.

The lifeless body sat up erect.

"Look here, doctor. I am all right, only I don't want to come round just yet, see?"

The doctor thought he did.

"Oh! you scoundrel!" cried Baynes, shaking his fist at Clifford.

"Don't call me names," said the mate.

"I think it would be only right to inform the lady who was the cause of your immersion of your recovery, for I hear she is in a great way," said the doctor.

"Oh, is she?" said Baynes, colouring up to his ears.

"Umph! I suppose it is a case of love me, love my dog?" said the doctor with a grin.

"Perhaps it is," said Baynes.

"I think I will go and allay Miss Vanfontein's anxiety," said the astute mate.

But he only allayed her fears a little.

He thought it just as well to pile on the agony for a little longer.

"There is just a chance for the poor fellow," he said, "but I don't think I'd build on it too much. The doctor is doing his level best, but it may be some time yet before he recovers—if he does," he added significantly.

And so Mr. Baynes' recovery was kept dark for a little longer, but at tea-time the mate had pity on the distress of Miss Vanfontein.

"He is coming round," he told her. "In fact, I should not be surprised if he turns up at the ball tonight, and if he does—he has been through something, Miss Vanfontein—you will be nice to him, won't you? and thank him for what he has done?"

"Oh, I will, I will!" she cried with shining eyes, and clasping her hands nervously.

"That is all right," chuckled the mate as he retired.

When the Masque Ball was at its brightest and merriest, a tall figure, wearing the regulation mask and domino, came on deck rather late.

Miss Vanfontein had purposely abstained from dancing, and she had been busy trying to identify some of the gentlemen. She was certain that the late comer was Baynes. The electric light made the ship as bright as at noontide, and she could see quite plainly the little gold snake ring which he always wore on his little finger.

Rendered brave by her disguise, she went boldly up to him.

"Come," she said, touching him on the arm, "I wish to speak to you."

He followed her without a word on to the fore-deck, where there was comparative solitude. "Is it Mr. Baynes?" she asked, as they moved to the side of the vessel.

There was a full moon, the night was cloudless, the sea glimmered in the silver radiance, and as they turned to seaward, the light fell on Miss Vanfontein's quivering face as she removed her mask.

"Will you take yours off?" she said sharply, "I want to be quite sure of you."

He did as she requested and she saw John Baynes' face, pale and earnest, in the moonbeams.

"How ever am I to thank you?" she asked. "I know that you thought that it was I who had gone overboard I think you are one of the bravest of men. How can I thank you?"

His eyes were pregnant with a great emotion, but he never spoke.

Was it possible? she thought. Did this man love her self and not her wretched fortune?

"If," he said, after a long pause, and in unsteady tones, "if you were a penniless girl, I would tell you how you might thank me."

"Tell me," she said softly. "Just imagine that I am a penniless girl, and—tell me."

Then he told her.

Johnson: "Some people are continually wanting to know the why and wherefore of everything. They are not content to accept facts as they find them."

Jackson: "Yes, you're right. I wonder why it is?"

Jacob: "How was it I didn't see you at the Oppenheimer wedding, Ikey?"

Isaac: "It cost me too much, Jakey, to send a present. So I just ask how such a nice young man could marry into such a family, and I gets no invitation."

"What's the matter with my darling?" asked the fond mother as she came upon her little one, crushed in a heap in the middle of the floor and kicking the air with her stockinged feet. "Where's her pretty new shoes?"

"I wo—won't have 'em, na—nas—nasty old things! Ne—Nellie's squeaks like ev—ev'ryfing and mine don't squeak a bi—bi—bit."

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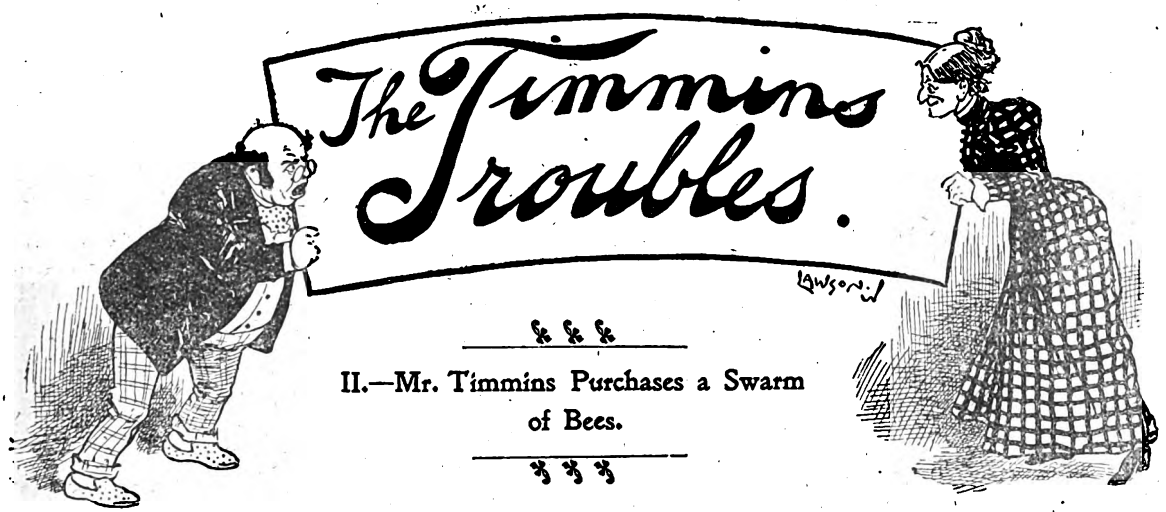

II.—Mr. Timmins Purchases a Swarm of Bees.

"I HAVE been reading up on the culture of bees for the past month, and have come to the conclusion that it would be economical to keep a few, rather than continue to buy our honey," said Mr. Timmins as he laid aside his paper.

"That would be perfectly grand. Can you buy some?" Mrs. Timmins inquired.

"Yes, Anna, I have already bought a swarm, and they will be delivered to-night."

"Where will you put them?" she asked.

"Under the tree in the back yard, my dear."

"Can't you put them in the shed, Henry? I am afraid they will sting if you put them so close to the house."

"Put them in the shed," he exclaimed, sneeringly. "Well, I'll be quartered. Mrs. Timmins, you are at the head of the class in the bee business. Wouldn't it be a good scheme to put them in a barrel and head it up? Or do you have an idea that they drive them in the shed at night, and tie them up as you do cows?"

"No, I don't think any such thing; but I don't want to be chased into the house every time I step out of doors by a lot of ugly bees," she replied.

"This stinging business is all fudge. The honey bee is constituted very much the same as domestic animals; they want to know their master. If you show any sign of fear, they will jump on you; but if you walk firmly up and cuff one, he will hurry into the hive and behave himself. It requires a little nerve, Mrs. Timmins—a little nerve, that's all."

The next morning they went out to see how the bees were getting on. There were a cluster of bees on the front of the hive, and Mrs. Timmins remarked that she did not believe they were satisfied with their location, or they would go into the hive.

"I know what is the trouble," said Timmins, "The man I bought them of told me that when they hung out in that way the boxes were filled with honey, and I must replace them with empty ones."

"Will you send for him to show you how?" she inquired.

"Mrs. Timmins, I don't ask anyone's advice about how to handle a bee."

"I thought perhaps you had not had them long enough to be acquainted with them," she soothingly remarked.

"It is not necessary to have an introduction and shake hands with a bee to know him, or he to know you, Mrs. Timmins. If you go sneaking round his place of business in a half-scared way, you are liable to come in contact with the sportive part of his disposition. While, on the other hand, if you walk up to the hive with an air of ownership and authority, he will step to one side and look on. I will take these six boxes and put them in the place of the ones filled with honey."

He walked up behind the tree, reached round, and removed the top of the hive. About a pint of bees came dashing out, and one of them alighted on his neck, which caused him to drop his boxes and claw him off.

"There, my fine fellow, I think you will mind your own affairs next time," he remarked.

The next instant one struck him under the eye, while another was trying to drive his harpoon through his ear, and a third was drilling a shaft through his cheek.

"Look out for yourself," he yelled to Mrs. Timmins, at the same time striking at the bees with his fist and hat.

"Oh, Moses!" he ejaculated, as he slapped his thigh. "Take that, you humming, howling maniac!" he roared "Great guns! They are crawling up inside my trouser legs! Bring me the broom! make a fire! set the house on fire! I must have some smoke, or I am a dead man," he cried.

He slapped his legs with his hand, and pounded his head with his hat, and in that way he fought his way from the hive to the kitchen door, when Bridget came out, and a bee stung her on the nose. She grasped her nose with both hands and ran, yelling.

"Did any of them sting you, Henry?" asked Mrs. Timmins, as she put her head in at the kitchen door.

He rose to his feet and faced her. His left eye was entirely closed, and his right ear hung down almost to his shoulder, while his face and neck were covered with various sized protuberances.

"Why, Timmins, what a sight you are! Sit down in this chair while I bathe your face in salt and water."

"This is another of your ingenious jobs, Mrs. Timmins. If you never eat any honey until I gather it for you, it will taste good when you get it," he groaned, as he sat down in the chair.

"You did not impress the bees with your air of ownership and authority, Henry," she said, as she patted his swollen eye with the wet cloth.

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A drop of the brine splattered into the eye that was open. He groaned as he pushed his wife on one side, and rubbed his eye with his shirt-sleeve.

"That's right, Mrs. Timmins, put the other eye out; then you can run me into any of your traps! As a blind man my days would be numbered," he growled.

Bridget came downstairs with a nose that strongly resembled a vegetable marrow, with the stem fastened on her face. Squaring herself before Timmins, and pointing towards her nose, she said:

"Do ye see that, ye imp of consate and villainy? Do you notice the shape ye've got on me illigant nose—the pride of Mike's heart? Do you see it? And it's his night to call, so it is! Och, murther, I'm undone! But if the shape of that nose breaks off the match between us, I'll have the law on ye before the sun goes down to-morrow! Do ye moind that?"

A ghastly smile crept over Mr. Timmins' irregular features, and he tried to give an expression to his crippled eye, but did not succeed.

"Yes, Bridget," he replied, "I can see it: and, although my eyesight is very much impaired, I think, with the sky for a background, I could see that nose nine hundred miles away. In other words it is a prominent feature, and denotes great strength of character; and when you lay it across Mike's shoulder, while you whisper your vows of eternal constancy in his ear, he will see mirrored in its glossy surface the future happiness of your wedded life; and then he will bless the little bee that in a sportive moment toyed with your dainty nose."

"If it wasn't for the blindness av ye, I would break yer head with the fire-shovel, you long-eared murtherer. Sure, if I had an ear like that on me head, I could hear the chirp of a cricket two miles off." And she indignantly swept out of the room.

"Anna, I forgive you for getting me into this scrape. I am amply avenged. The sight of that nose repays me for all my suffering," said Timmins, as he rose from his chair and tottered to the bedroom to lie down.

"And your husband fell from the Eiffel Tower?"
"Yes. How I wish it had been taller!"
"Monster! You rejoice at his death?"
"Sir, you insult me! I wanted him to live longer."

"The doctor would like to see you inside," said the maid to the caller in the reception room.

"Not if I know it," said the startled patient. "He can't try an X-ray on me."

"There is some comfort in being the father of twins," said the unhappy-looking passenger, to which the fat passenger, being there for that purpose, inquired, "What?"

"They keep each other awake of nights as well as my wife and me."

Mrs. Wicklins: "You and your husband and Mr. and Mrs. Caddsley seem to be good friends."

Mrs. Dimpleton: "Yes. You see, Mr. Caddsley and I used to be engaged."

Mrs. Wicklins: "But I don't understand why that fact should make you enjoy each other's society now?"

Mrs. Dimpleton: "Well, of course, I can't speak for him, but he married a woman who is at least five years older than I am and not half as good looking, if I do say it myself. You don't know what a comfortable feeling takes possession of me when we are together and I see him glancing first in her direction and then in mine."

£100 OFFERED THIS WEEK. £100

This week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses 100 envelopes to 100 people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD

and address it to the Editor under the following conditions: Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

One hundred names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

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All applications for No. 12 distribution must reach us by December 27th, addressed to The 12th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of Distribution No. 9.

Four of the fifty sovereigns offered have this week been claimed by:

G. T. Hill, 12 Medlicott Road, Sparkbrook, Birmingham.

William Wallace. 1 Ferguson Place, Burntisland.

W. H. Westlake, 2 Rownham Place, Clifton, Bristol.

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The unclaimed sovereigns were addressed to:

J. T. McBride, Lift Attendant, Central Buildings, Liverpool; Mrs. F. Fenning, 75 Lady Margaret Road, N.W.; G. Stokes, 36 Fitzroy Square, W.; J. Young, 24 Marshall Place, Perth; W. L. Lemon, Uffculme, Devon; G. F. Matthews, 20 West Street, Chichester; W. A. Smith, 33 York Terrace, Leigh, Lancashire; J. D. Lister, 105 Noel Street, Nottingham; H. Owen, 32 High Street, Wimbledon; F. Jones, Sutton Weaves, near Warrington; Miss B. G. Jeffrey, 4 Albert Terrace, St. Edmund's, Church Street, Salisbury; J. M. Bradley, Church Street, Wulmslow, Cheshire; H. Larkin, 7 St. Jone Street, Lichfield; J. Jonas, 1 Mill Street, Hanley; W. H. Cleaver, 19 Garfield Street, Kettering; A. F. Smith, Pear Tree, Newchurch, Isle of Wight; A. Nash, Confectioner, Milford, Surrey; W. Kinch, Worthington Lodge, Worthington, Wigan; R. Jenkins, John Street, Porthcawl; E. Lawrence, 4 Mount Pleasant, Chepstow; James Walker, Selkirk Street, Hamilton; J. Rance, Queen's Road, Great Marlow; Mrs. Downing, Fair View, Pedmore, Worcestershire; Mrs. Robson, Grove Hill, Kelso; J. W. Vickers, Wentworth House, Craven Road, Newbury, Berks; W. J. Nagle, 17 North Street, Skibbereen; R. J. Ussher. J.P., Cappagh, Lismore R.S.O., Co. Waterford; James O'Brien, New Street, Church Gresley; Alfred Lygo, 6 Gold Street, Leicester; James Marshall, Ferndale, Cherry Hinton; James Grice, Leicester Villas, Sheringham, Norfolk; Mrs. Hatch, Ranmark House, Ranelagh Road, Felixstowe; W. Treble, East Street, Okehampton, Devon; H. Phillips, Castle Street, Liskeard; Chas. Santer, The Bridge, Cranbrook, Kent; J. S. Rattenbury, 4 Dockyard Terrace, Sheerness; H. T. Winter, Brockhampton, Herefordshire; Mrs. Valentine, 41 Broad Street, Ludlow; J. A. York, Horse Market, Barnard Castle; F. Park, Gloster View, Warkworth; E. Unrah, 3 Petterill Street, Carlisle; J. Thompson, Station Road, Kirkby Stephen; W. King, Linwood Road, Market Rasen; A. M. Macgregor, 7 Westbourne Terrace Road, W.; A. F. Woodward, 54 Mill Street, Liverpool; Mrs. Gifford, 41 Hockliffe Road, Leighton Buzzard.

JUMBLE STORY.] # BE LACK OF IT. [FOR CONDITIONS SEE PAGE 864.

I was seated by my fireside one afternoon, just as Fritz was crouching in the opposite corner, his intended enjoyment of the evening.

I do not mind confessing that had I not known that about his private affairs, but he had not mentioned about the telephone and various others of our everybody?"

I turned with a shudder and saw him with a long thoroughfare in the German city of Leipzig. He forgot, momentarily, my fear in the contemplation of evening. It was very cold and windy; snowflakes muttering wild words in a disjointed fashion. I felt that he would use violence if I persisted and he consequently did not reveal anything; had he really ——"

"Yes, suddenly, three hours ago," he went on feverglaring at the figure of Elsie; I felt that Fritz was written in his own language the word "friend" came from my dry throat.

He gripped my arm so vigorously that he hurt me. I envied my friend his good fortune—a bewitching tube and a mouthpiece; at the end of the tube was eyes fixed upon the form on the couch.

"But, my dear fellow, the thing is an utter friend of his. The letter was written in English—feverishly busy; then I saw—*did* I see it?—the impossibility!" I exclaimed in amazement.

"Yes," he continued—more to himself than to me, the young lady was betrothed, I should have fallen if I could, and he would introduce me to a particular wife, Fräulein Elsie Giessen."

Three months passed away and, although I saw him I shrank instinctively from him. "I cannot!" he usually wrote to me in my own tongue—and there came another ring more impatient than the strange ideas that in my own mind I looked upon again. I secretly believed that he had made the strange light, there were traces of tears on his hands.

"I am quite prepared to hear that," he retorted. As I look back on what followed, I shudder. I do it to you now. I hope to improve upon my process in that case? Why not do this—this—I don't know that there *might* be something in it."

I will let her go from me like that? But I cannot say, half-a-dozen hours from the moment that the daylight was fading, staring into the fire and arose and glanced round me. The form of Elsie was a doctor with a good practice; we had known gas which he had made according to a method dis-ishly. "I am going to try it. Come with me, I was a long way behind my friend. He had such cheeks. He entered the hall and shut the door to hundreds of miles away—to give only one instance?"

"Ugh!" I groaned, as there came a violent pull at first. I went to the door and opened it. I started day appliances," he remarked coolly. "Why should I hold advanced notions on scientific subjects, but I would not stay!"

"Yet, I certainly did half expect that you—who believe the theory to be perfectly practicable."

"Dead!" I echoed.

I did my best to conceal my surprise, for this announcement was unexpected; Fritz told me much and a feeling of depression was upon me.

We were seated in my friend's study in a prominent wondering whether I should be called out that room. "Allow me to introduce you to my affianced charming woman that I have ever met. I secretly lay on the couch; but the position was different! "Come in, Horace!" he cried, shaking me heartily shortly afterwards.

"Fritz," I cried, "what is wrong?"

"That is what our grandmothers would have said not exactly know what really did occur. I was deathly pale, his eyes were staring and filled with a no second glance to tell me that she was dead. I uttered a shriek of fear and fell senseless.

"I brought you back," he muttered. "But you have such advanced views concerning the capabilities of science—would at least have admitted each other for about seven years—that is, when he did, I put on my hat and overcoat and followed him. "How can I? The thing is——" I stopped.

"You must—you shall!" he hissed. "Do you think what your process is—before the breath leaves the bosom heave regularly. It was too much! I want your assistance!"

Only those words, over and over again. He was in love with her myself; for she was the most present, having got over my fit of envy very quickly; because I did not wish to intrude upon his happiness.

"Nonsense!" he returned quietly. "I say again, *I* came to London to finish his studies—for he was a wife and a splendid practice—and I missed the test and failed.

One day I received a note from Fritz, asking me to a ball of rubber which, I concluded, contained the German, whereas I am English.

My housekeeper did not answer the summons and the bell, "It sounds urgent."

"Quick, help me with this!"

When I came to myself, I heard the voice of Fritz some day so that it will be as effective as you say. back in dismay.

"Oh, but your notion is altogether absurd. I call and spend an hour or so with him that evening, covered by himself. I held the ball with trembling keep out the wind and snow ere he replied.

Yes, she lay motionless on the couch and it needed very frequently, the subject was never broached but I kept away from his home as much as possible My friend stood in the doorway. His face was do it alone and you are the only one who can help him as a "crank."

But I shall test my theory at the first opportunity." me!"

"I believe it to be quite possible to restore a dead her beauty. I was recalled to myself by Fritz.

"She is dead—Elsie!" he said hoarsely.

"But," I objected, "why should a person die at all by the hand as the servant ushered me into a cosy was far stronger than I. Scarce knowing what I would have prepared me for what was coming.

The conversation was then changed, and I left him my idea be more impossible than speaking to people were being driven this way and that by fierce squalls, person to life, if the case be taken in hand within, person expires."

"Because it is necessary. I shall not stop to explain this.

The marriage took place a month later and I was mad!

L. E. GIGNEN.

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Sandy Carmichael.

By CUTCLIFFE HYNE.
Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc.

BOOK I.

CONCERNING THE FLIGHT - - - - - - FROM CULLODEN MOOR.

CHAPTER I.

How two Englishmen came to Lochaber: and how they stole and ate black-faced mutton.

THE modern road which leads from Fort William in Inverness-shire to the only two land-tracks which can take one south, runs for the first seven miles or so of its length within stone's-throw of the rocky margin of Loch Aber, or, as it is sometimes called, Upper Loch Linnhe. It is easy to see that pains have been taken to build this road. In some places it is delved from the hill-side; in others, it is laboriously built up, stone upon stone, from the waters of the salt-water fjord below. The road is moderately well kept—that is, small stones are placed in the ruts and holes when they appear, and in the course of time the traffic rolls them down to the normal level; and though "level" is a word hardly applicable to a track which is undulating as a stretch of stormy ocean, level it is on the whole, for none of its many gradients mount to more than twenty yards in height. In fact, it is a road which is very creditable to the region it passes through, considering the very slender amount of traffic which patronises it.

Now this road is distinctly modern. Our ancestors could engineer their roads equally well if they tried—as witness that quaint zigzag yclept, the Devil's Staircase, which connects Glencoe with Kinloch, in the same neighbourhood. But they did not often take these pains over their thoroughfares, and even when the pathway was in any degree elaborate, one trait connected it with the more slenderly kempt tracks. In one and all there was a contempt shown for gradient that was little short of the superb. Wherever there is a hillock, the road is bound to go over it. One would think that the original tracers of the Scotch mountain roads absolutely gloried in crowding them with as many steep places as possible.

It was not till long after "the '45," and the old patriarchal style of clan government had died out, that English money began to flow in and recruit the country's supplies, and the old barbaric civilisation began to be replaced by a civilisation which, if a trifle more effeminate, was at the same time vastly more replete with bodily comfort both for man and beast.

This being so, it need not surprise one to learn that in the year of grace 1745, the south road from Fort William led in an arbitrarily crooked line across the hills, and joined the present one just before one comes to Cuilchenna.

To an eye trained in the niceties of Macadam, the term road would have appeared to be merely a courtesy title. There had been no pick and shovel work done upon it; no powder had been applied to the many outcrops of mother-rock which thrust their sturdy shoulders through the surface; no hammer had attacked even the larger of the boulders. The prevailing shape of the stones upon the road was more or less spherical; and if any showed traces of having been cubes, it was evident that the angles were being rapidly rubbed off them. In fact, a track had originally been made first by men, and then by men and horses, crossing the hills on the same route. Their treadings had worn away grass, heather, and gorse. The peat below became loosened. The constant drizzles and the frequent rains had washed away the loose surface soil. And so, by a simple subtraction, it is easy to see that in time little else but loose and semi-rounded stones would be left.

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Thus it appeared when, on April 20th, 1745, a couple of travellers topped the last rise, and advanced slowly downwards. One, the elder, sat, or rather crouched, upon a jaded horse, which stumbled laboriously amongst the boulders. The other, a big-framed man of about four-and-twenty, with a three days' growth of black beard over his face, led the horse with one hand, and supported his companion in the saddle with the other. He seemed wearied almost to death, and his high riding-boots and lace-bedizened red coat were stained and splashed till the original colour of each was scarcely anywhere visible. But he was to all appearance still sound in wind and limb. The rider, on the other hand, was obviously wounded; for though no outward bandage caught the spectator's eye, the paleness and limpness of the man told of a grievous hurt somewhere.

A small puff of wind came as they passed the entrance of a tiny gully, and the rider's hat rolled off to the ground, and its owner showed a disposition to follow it. His left knee bent, and his body swayed heavily to the off-side. The younger man caught him by the belt, and steadying him back into the saddle, said, in a voice that had in it a pitiful attempt at cheeriness:

"Now, Major, pull yourself together. We haven't much further to go. The way should be tolerably safe. They are all Lochiel's people hereabouts, and won't lay a finger on us when they know who we are."

The wounded man answered with painful effort:

"You're a good lad — the — the best. But it's no use. I'm smashed all to pieces—inside me. That spill, when my horse came down this morning, made it worse. The ribs are sticking into me like hot skewers: and I'm bleeding, lad, bleeding internally; I can feel it stream out every time I catch a breath—so."

"Don't you scare yourself, Major. You're worth a dozen dead men yet. Of course, you are hurt. Who wouldn't be, after having had a horse pounded into his ribs by a cannon-ball? But remember that, thanks to that butcher Cumberland, you've had a hundred-mile ride at smart pace. Why, I'm pretty nearly as done up as you are, myself; and I haven't got a scratch on me."

"I tell you, Sneyd, I shall be a dead man in twelve hours or less. Remember I've been hurt before, and, one way and another, have learnt enough surgery to know that what I say is true. I don't mind dying. The Cause is lost now—muddled away—ruined because twenty leaders wouldn't pocket their pride and name a chief. I'd be outlawed if I went back to Cheshire, and kick up a host of trouble. But, if they don't see me again, they'll maybe let the poor wife and children alone to enjoy what I have provided for them. So I'd rather die here. The torture of moving is getting more than a man can bear. I should be easier sitting on that heather."

The younger man caught him by the belt.

"I'll help you down if you like, Major," replied Sneyd half sullenly, "but may I be hanged if I leave you!"

"You'll be hanged if you don't go on," retorted the other, with a feeble smile. "They shot every one they could lay their hands on at Culloden Moor, but even Cumberland couldn't make them savages enough to do that now. No, you'll be taken away and tried, and hanged like a sheep-stealer by the common executioner, as an edifying example to your neighbours. Not much delay either. There are certain to be some of 'em close on our heels."

"Then," said Sneyd doggedly, "I'll swing. Wait a minute, Major, till there's some of this heather stuff cut, and then I'll help you off the horse. He, poor beast, looks as sorry as either of us, but he'll be in better plight in the long run, for he's certain to be turned into an officer's stable. I'm glad of it. He's carried me bravely ever since I joined the Prince's colours at Manchester, on that Saturday morning when you presented me to the first Royal person I'd ever seen."

"I'm afraid it's an ill turn I did you then, lad. Had I known as much as I do now, we'd both of us be snugly at home. However, that can't be mended, and, as it was, you did your duty as the son of a soldier like your father should do it. Still, I am superior officer yet, and you must obey orders. Leave me here, and go and save your own ski..."

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"I've obeyed every order yet, Major, but I'm going to mutiny now. Leave you I won't, and that flat."

"Then, Sneyd, I shall just go on till I tumble."

"Major, look here, we'll compromise matters. D'ye see that little glen over the shoulder yonder? If you can sit the horse till we get there, I'll set you down, and build some sort of a shelter over you. We shall be out of sight of the road there, and when you've rested a bit, we'll make further up into the hills, for you to recruit thoroughly."

Sneyd wheeled the tired horse off the road to the right, and led it across the rough moorland. The going was bad enough, and sometimes the poor beast got bogged almost up to the girths. The heather was rank and strong; the bog-myrtle bushes were many of them four feet high: the peat-hogs were plentiful; the ground was treacherous in the extreme; but Sneyd strode stolidly along, noticing not the black game nor the grouse that he flushed; seeing nothing, hearing nothing, being intent only on bringing his charges to the goal he had pointed out.

When at last they reached it, the gully showed itself deeper than had been anticipated. The elder man had almost lost consciousness. To carry him further would be to kill him. Nothing but an iron will had sustained him thus far. Besides, Sneyd's horse, which his companion was riding, had hardly a leg to stand on, and was holding down its head in most sorry fashion. And so, although the bleak north-easter was cutting up the gully with remorseless chill, and though everything gleamed and glistened with the wet, there was nothing for it but to camp where they were and make the best of it.

Accordingly, the cornet cut a few armfuls of heather, and after laying his companion down on it as comfortably as he was able, set about building a wall on either side of him.

There were stones in plenty, for the small burn which ran down the gully was a most efficient quarryman, and though they were not squared with a mason's niceness, Sneyd's nimble hands puzzled them into position. He built three walls this fashion: and then, raftering them with a few leafless branches of mountain birch, roofed in his hut with heather, turf, and stones.

Night had far advanced before this labour was completed, and, judging that no enemy would be moving about in the darkness, he ventured to get out his flint and steel and light a fire with the branches of a dead birch close at hand. The Major had been dozing for some time; and so, despite his great weariness, Sneyd went off without remark to forage for a meal. He was conscious of having seen fair-sized birds on the hillside, and though, being a south country Englishman, he did not know them to be grouse and black game, he supposed, from their short flight, that they would be easily caught after nightfall. Birds he did indeed find in plenty, for the country abounded with them then more than it does now; but not so much as a feather of one of them could he touch. It is a curious fact that the grouse, although they will not stir for sheep or cattle during the night, are immediately aware of the presence of a man, and call to one another warnings that every poacher knows full well.

His utter weariness prevented Sneyd's quest being a long one. His knees began to totter under him, and he felt that before many more minutes had passed, his legs would refuse their duties altogether. And so he was wending his way slowly back towards the hut, when of a sudden he stumbled upon a sheep sleeping amongst the heather. The animal started to its fore knees, and ducked its head to rise; but Sneyd was too quick for it. He fell across its fleecy back, and forcing it to the ground, opened his clasp-knife, and performed the office of executioner. From sheer inexperience, he did this clumsily; but at last the animal's struggles ceased, and its captor summoned up his remaining powers to drag or carry it to the hut.

The task proved overmuch for him. The ground was too uneven to trail any considerable weight over, and being ignorant of the knack, he could not in his then state progress with the carcass on his shoulders. So, sitting down once more, he took out his pocket-knife again, and started to hack off a leg.

The moon peeped down occasionally at him through a cranny in the tearing clouds overhead, but darkness for the most part prevailed, and his work got on but slowly. The thick fleece, which it had not dawned upon him to skin away, impeded his efforts; and his blunt weapon made but little impression on the mountain sheep's thews and sinews. He had never been a butcher before, and, being city bred, had but little knowledge of butchery. Hence the bone impeded his efforts vastly, for the locality of a joint was unknown to him. So he satisfied himself with cutting off as many lumps of flesh as seemed sufficient to him, and then, staggering to his feet again, all covered with blood, and filthy with brown bog-earth, he made for the hut.

The fire, ill-made, had burnt itself well-nigh out, and after satisfying himself that the wounded man was still dozing, Sneyd set to work coaxing it into a blaze again.

The wood was damp, and as the Scotch mist drizzled heavily, the flame did not spring up rapidly; but at last it spurted out here and there, and he set to cooking his mutton. Being his first essay of the kind, he had small notion of how to set to work; and after toasting the raw flesh on a pointed stick for some time without arriving at any result, he threw the whole bodily on the embers.

Conceiving after a time that, by the look of it, his roast was cooked, he woke the Major, and giving him a lump of the mutton, took another himself. The elder man uttered his thanks, and attempted to eat, but could contrive to swallow very little. The meal was certainly not tempting. It consisted of smoky charred meat and smoky raw meat, with scarcely so much as a trace of the intermediate stage between the two. But Sneyd ate a couple of pounds voraciously, and then, having satisfied himself that his companion's couch was as comfortable as circumstances permitted of, laid himself down and fell fast asleep.

Without, the rain drove down and hissed on the fire; a melancholy wild cat howled; and the high falls of the Ree burn, heavy with spate water, boomed in the near distance. The ground they lay on was spongy with moisture; their clothes were soaked through and through with mud and water; but exhaustion claimed her own, and the young and sound soldier, and the old and wounded one, slept on till the sun had risen high above snow-capped Ben Nevis, and the April morning had warmed to almost summer's heat.

CHAPTER II.

How two fugitives kept house in Lochaber; how Murtagh O'Neill appeared and was received; how the household was again reduced to two; and how these two were evicted by a troop of heavy cavalry.

The morning of the twenty-first of April was, as I have said, well advanced when Sneyd awoke. He found the Major lying beside him in a fitful doze, and noted that his wound had brought on a pretty tolerable fever. Like himself, the invalid must be soaked through to the bone. The rain had turned the floor of their hut into a spongy morass. A hand pressed upon it was covered almost instantly with muddy brown water. An old campaigner would have anticipated this, and have taken measures to avoid it; but Sneyd was young, and had to purchase his experience. However, he was blessed with a goodly store of common-sense, and so, lifting the Major up in his sturdy arms, he carried him outside, and laid him on a springy bed of dry heather in the warm sunshine. Then, returning, he floored the dwelling with stones, and carpeted it with a thick layer of heather. Moss and mud filled the chinks in the hastily-built walls, and by midday the habitation was tolerably snug.

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Another meal was the next consideration, and how to obtain this he did not exactly know. If any of the troops of his angry majesty, King George II. met him on the prowl for provisions, he was quite aware that they would shoot him down with as little compunction as a keeper would slaughter a stoat or a weasel. The lesson of Culloden Moor, so thought the English king's advisers, could not be burnt too deeply home. And, even had he been prepared to encounter the risk himself, a glance at his helpless companion determined him to be wary. Still, food they must have, for starvation was quite as remorseless a foe as George of Brunswick. Away amongst the hills he would, of course, be safe. One might wander on them for weeks without meeting a living soul. But then, unfortunately, they were more or less barren ground for foraging purposes. They produced no bread, nor potatoes, nor even oatcake; and of the game that lived on them—the red deer and the roebuck, the grouse and the black game, the blue hare and the rabbit—he had as much notion of capturing as he had of catching elephants. With his pistols he could scarcely hit a man at half-a-dozen yards, and a snare was utterly beyond his ingenuity. Add to this, he was feeling knocked up. He woke up tired, and grew more weary as the day wore on; he had a bad cold in the head, and a painful sore throat. Indeed, had he been at home, he would have gone to bed straight away.

But here there was no such thing as bed, or even lying down to rest, to be thought of. Aching bones can receive but little consideration when an empty stomach and a trembling neck claim any marked attention.

So Lawrence Sneyd pondered on the victualling question anew.

Wild fruit he could not expect to meet with at that time of year—even if wild fruit ever grew in the neighbourhood, which he doubted; for the cold, inclement spring air had given him a poor opinion of Scotland as a producer of any of the plants he knew in England. At last, however, he remembered the sheep of overnight. It would not do to take—or, to put it more bluntly, steal—sheep as a regular thing, for sheep usually have an owner, and the said owner is not, as a rule, favourably disposed towards sheep-lifters, whether biped or quadruped. But the particular sheep in question was dead, and to bring home the remains of the mangled carcass would not add to the risk he had already run. So he set off cautiously enough towards the site of the midnight execution, and finding it after some trouble—for it is not given to a raw Englishman to trace his tracks over a Scotch hill without many futile essays—by the omen of a dozen grey-backed carrion crows rising leisurely from a spot that was exactly a gunshot away from him.

He walked up, and saw before him a spectacle that was the reverse of savoury. In the midst of a small patch of open ground, which was trampled into a slough of blood and brown peat slime, lay the draggled remains of the sheep. The feathered scavengers had made the most of their opportunity. Fully one half of what Sneyd had left was carried off. And the much mangled remainder looked far from tempting. But desperate men cannot afford to be dainty or fastidious; and, getting out his knife again, he skinned the carcass this time, eviscerated it, and wrapping what was left in the pelt, shouldered his bundle, and carried it back.

He set off cautiously enough towards the site of the midnight execution.

When he returned, his companion was awake.

"Can I do anything for you?" Sneyd asked.

"Thanks, good lad, no. With this fever on me, water is all I want; and water is close to hand. You've got some more mutton there, I see. Are you going to light another fire?"

"Too dangerous now, Major. We're close to the road, and I saw a patrol pass down it not an hour since."

"But you are very hungry?"

"Dreadfully."

"Then eat the meat raw."

Sneyd shuddered, and pulled a wry face.

"Nonsense; don't be squeamish. It won't poison you. And, besides, saving for the cinders outside, that stuff last night was much as this is. Anyway, eat you must, or you'll break down."

So Sneyd happened to get half-a-dozen morsels of the raw flesh down his smarting throat, and felt and looked all the better for the dose.

The Major refused a share, saying that the fever from his wound prevented him from swallowing a mouthful of anything. After the other had finished his repast, he asked him:

"And what are your plans for the future?"

"Wait till you get on your legs again, Major, and then we'll see. I shall get an adept at this kind of savage's life in a day or two, and shall be able to look after you better. Then, when you've a little strength, we'll move further up into the hills to recruit fully. By that time any pursuit they may have set up will have slackened, and we can move more at our leisure."

The wounded man smiled sadly. "Don't try to deceive yourself or me," he said. "I shall not get over this. All the doctors in the universe could not pull me through. The comforts of my own home could not prolong my life by more than a few hours. The pain is not nearly so acute as it was——"

"There!" exclaimed Sneyd, "you are feeling better already. What else can it mean?"

"Mortification, lad, mortification. Nothing else would deaden it. Now listen. We have ridden right athwart Scotland, by Loch Ness, Loch Oich, and Loch Lochy, because I judged that, being the most unlikely way for fugitives to take, the Elector's men would not guard it with any very scrupulous care. However, the bad luck that

He held him by the throat with one hand, and drew a long, murderous-looking dirk with the other.

banned the Cause, seemed to have stuck to its unfortunate supporters. Four scrimmages did we have on the road, from each escaping by the bare skin of the teeth through your strength and courage; for, as a weak and wounded man, I was able to raise but a nerveless hand in our mutual defence.

"Now, mind, ours was no wild-goose retreat—or flight, if you choose to call it by its proper name. There was a runner current in the army that the Prince's ship *La Doubtelle* was still lying in one of these narrow lochs; and I satisfied myself that the rumour was not without foundation. He landed close here, from Loch-na-Nuagh in the Hebrides, with Sir Thomas Sheridan, the Marquis of Tullibardine, and the rest of them; and the privateer hoisted in her boats and left them, nominally sailing back for France. But she is said not to have gone. If she is still at her anchor near at hand you will be able to find out the exact locality and join her. The fishermen hereabouts are all well affected to our cause, and will aid you by every means in their power. If, on the other hand, she has left these seas, why, then you must get aboard some other craft. France would be a safe haven for you—France, or almost any part of the continent; and there is always some war going on, where a good sword is well paid for. Or, if you don't like the idea of becoming a soldier of fortune, well, try your luck in the colonies across the Atlantic. Once there, no questions are asked. You pitch upon a plot of land—so I've been told—plant your tobacco, or whatever it may be, have slaves to wait on you, do a little fighting with the Indians every now and then, and on the whole live like a gentleman. There, now, give me another drink of water, and let me have a doze."

That the Major was dying, Sneyd could no longer disguise from himself. The old soldier's once round and ruddy face was white and shrunken, his arm was weak and nerveless, his voice was low and tremulous. His mind alone seemed unimpaired; and, between the intervals of rest, he gave the younger man much shrewd advice for his future guidance.

With such talk as this, during his waking intervals, the elder man spent the day; and the younger, very sick at heart, tended him with every available care, but added little to the conversation. Sneyd was fond of his companion. He had been his "father in arms," and his close friend and comrade throughout the short campaign. Death he was not unaccustomed to. It had been brought closely under his notice in more than one of its always grim forms; he had seen the camp-fire comrade, the billet companion, of one night, lying stark and stiff in his boots the next morning; but to watch this close friend passing away by inches before his very eyes, was a new and bitter experience to him: and he liked it little enough.

Night fell, and when the hours had passed on till no one was likely to be on the road, Sneyd lit a fire once more, and made a more scientific essay at cooking. The result was by no means perfect, but it was better than his last attempt. Still, it was not sufficiently alluring to tempt the Major. He was out of pain now; he had little sensation in any part of his body; and, though retaining all his mental faculties, was so weak that he could scarcely give his thoughts and wishes utterance. Clearly, the end was not far off now. Sneyd saw this, and asked as delicately as he could for any last message or commission.

"I may perchance get through, Major," he said; "and if I do, I'll manage to communicate with your folks at home, if it's possible to do so."

"You are a kind, good lad, but there is no need for you to burden yourself. I left all my affairs in order before I set off. It can do my poor wife and chicks no good to hear when or how I shuffled off this mortal coil; and, if the news got spread abroad, it might do them an immensity of harm. If nothing is said to bring my name into prominent notice, the Elector's people may deem it policy to let matters alone, and stir up no more bad blood. But if, on the other hand, our tale of the last few days was published, they might well style me rebel, attaint me of high treason, confiscate the estate, and turn widow and orphans adrift on a world which would have no sympathy with their misfortunes. So credit yourself with a generous thought and offer, and leave ill alone."

The night wore on, and the wounded man sank by visible degrees. The fire kept burning low, too, as if in harmony with his thread of life; and Sneyd, utterly careless now of who the blaze might bring to their hiding-place, heaped on fuel till the rude hovel was filled with a glare of tawny light. Wood was not abundant. The nearest copse was across the burn, a mile and a half away. But there were stunted half-dead birches sprouting up here and there through the heather, and from these the watcher culled an armful of branches as he wanted them.

On one of these expeditions for fuel, having exhausted the supply in the immediate neighbourhood, he wandered further afield, passing over a spur of the hill, and gaining a hollow that was out of sight of the hut. Black clouds were driving across the sky, and night was so dark that one could just see, and no more. The scene was wild and stormy, and suited to his feelings. He plunged on through the old heather bushes and other rank growth of the moor, slopped through slimy peat-hags, splashed through icy burns, pressing on at a jog-trot, and now and again tripping and falling headlong. The hard exertion tended to deaden his thought.

He discovered one sapling, wrenched branches from it, and was moving towards another close at hand, when his feet stumbled against something soft, lying prone amongst the heather, and he was within an ace of coming down again. For the moment he supposed it was a sheep he had encountered; but when a pair of arms grasped his booted legs, and dashed him rudely to the ground, his senses awoke to the situation.

To grapple with the man was the natural instinct of the moment; and the two of them rolled over and over, crashing this way and that amongst the heather. Sneyd himself was muscular far beyond the average strong man, but his antagonist seemed to possess thews of iron and muscles of copper. Neither spoke, but their breaths came in hot, hissing gasps into each other's faces, and they strove and wrestled for the mastery with the fierceness of desperate men, who think either to kill or be killed.

For long they writhed and struggled, neither gaining more than a momentary advantage; and then Sneyd made a mistake. He loosened one hand, and, drawing it back, drove his clenched fist with full force into his adversary's

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face. He might as well have hit at a boulder of granite. The skin slid from his knuckles, but the man did not so much as wince. Instead, he threw Sneyd with a mighty effort back downwards on the ground. Then, kneeling upon his chest, he held him by the throat with one hand, and drew a long, murderous-looking dirk with the other.

"Cumberland's butcher," he said.

"Cumberland's butcher yourself," retorted the Englishman.

"Ye're English, ye dog! Don't be afther denying it!" cried he who held the upper hand.

"English I am."

"And in the Elector's service?"

"I am Cornet Laurence Sneyd, of Sheridan's Horse."

"Ach!" said the other, "then, if that's the case, I'm sorry for maltreating yez. But for why didn't yez speak out before?"

"You didn't give me a chance," replied Sneyd, scrambling to his feet as the other released him. "And who, may I ask, are you?"

"Murtagh O'Neill, at yer honour's sarvice. Fled from that murtherin' place near Inverness, an' making for County Fermanagh like a cock in the autumn. I've thramped it ivery bit of the way, an' 'tis mortial tired of the game I am. Savin' for a dummy* bhoy that gave me a drink of potcheen fornenst the ould castle yonder, there isn't a sowl that's spoke a civil word to me since lavin' the army. Av it's a dhrop of the hard stuff yer honour's got handy, 'tis proud I'd be to dhrink yer honour's health."

The poor fellow was so unaffectedly glad to meet a friend that, although his flippant talk jarred, Sneyd had not the heart to stop him at once; but, as they walked back to the hut, laden with a goodly store of firewood, he told him how matters lay.

"The poor gentleman!" exclaimed the Irishman. "'Tis cruel hard for him to pass away in this haythen country, with divvle a praste or a bit o' candle to help him on his journey. Sure, it's a powerful bastely place, and sorra a bit of comfort is there to get him anywhere."

By this time they had reached the hovel, and, after replenishing their fire, went inside. The wounded man was lying on his back, with closed eyes. Sneyd signed his companion to silence, and the pair of them sat down with their backs against the opposite wall. The fire without crackled and spluttered, as the warmth from glowing embers below acted upon the fresh dew-drenched fuel above; but by degrees, as these began to heat up and char into flame, the fitful yellow tongues of light became more constant, and the hut began to glow with a tawny radiance. With a constantly eclipsing source of luminance, it is not possible to distinguish objects with any degree of accuracy. The sudden flashes are dazzling, and when darkness supervenes, the eye is not attuned to it: but with a steady light, however feeble, one can, when accustomed to it, see a good deal.

And so when the birch-stick fire was beginning to flare up, Sneyd, whose gaze was fixed upon the Major's recumbent form, commenced to get very uneasy. The Irishman gave certainty to his fears. With a mournful cry, he exclaimed, "Oh Lor', 'tis a corpse we're sitting with!" And then, going across the hut and laying a hand on the dead man's brow, he continued, "The poor gentleman, rest his sowl, is as cowld as a trout. He's been dead this hour."

There was no gainsaying the fact, and though Sneyd had surely expected such an event, the sudden shock of it almost stunned him. He got up and looked at the calm dead face,

The cornet turned away, and the other completed the obsequies by filling in the soil.

* Deaf and dumb man.

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and then, returning to his place against the further wall, sat moodily silent.

For a while the Irishman respected his trouble, and made no attempt to intrude upon it; but then, after fidgeting uneasily for a minute or so, he inquired—

"Might I ask av yer honour knows that the soldiers are out hereaway?"

Sneyd nodded wearily.

"There's a sthrong pathrol that passed me on the road the evening back; me lyin' in a turf-quag; an' 'tis likely that some of them will be after beatin' up our quarters by daybreak. Bonfires like this ain't lighted by the grouse."

"Then we shall have to clear out."

"Of course, yer honour, an' march widout tuck of dhrum. But it's the poor Major there I was thinking of. By the blessing of God, we'll bury him dacently before we go."

"You're right," said Sneyd, waking out of his mental doze, "we can do no more for him now than that. Come and let us commence at once."

They went out into the open, and choosing the centre of a little mound which lay in the circle of firelight, and seemed the driest spot in the intermediate neighbourhood, they set to work without further delay. The soil, loosened by sword-blade and dirk, yielded readily to shovelling fingers and gouging stone; and, by dint of working with might and main, in an hour's time a six-foot grave gaped before them. Then, reverently wrapping the dead man in his military cloak, they carried the body out, and lowered it down for its last sentry-go.

It was a weird sight—the two stalwart, draggled soldiers, one English, one Irish; the unsightly heap of stones, and soil, and uprooted bushes, round the black, jagged hole; the dark, mysterious moor above, and the flickering yellow fire, that cast grotesque shadows of the whole group into the waste of darkness beyond; and unconsciously its influence made itself felt upon the mourners. Neither spoke. When the body had been lowered down Sneyd muttered a scrap of silent prayer, and the Irishman crossed himself devoutly; the cornet turned away, and the other, without bidding, completed the obsequies by filling in the soil, and piling up stones as a cairn to mark the burial-place.

When all was finished, the bleak grey dawn was beginning to lighten the rugged crests of the eastern ranges. It was the coldest part of the night, and Sneyd, who had been warming himself with exercise, felt the chill intensely. He moved away to the fire, and crouched beside it. Every bone in his body ached. His head seemed ready to split. His throat was intolerably sore. His clothes were sodden through and through. The Major's death depressed him beyond words. He felt dully indifferent to life.

The Irishman was in better plight. Used to exposure from his infancy, the constant damp of the Scotch hills affected him little. The Major's death had been no especial shock to him; and the natural buoyancy of his disposition triumphed over the depressing effect of present hardship. He roasted a goodly supply of the mutton with skilful hand, ate heartily himself, and forced his companion to do likewise.

"I know yez have no heart for grub just now, yer honour, but yez should make yer stomach swallow it against its liking. We should clear out of this soon, an' it isn't me that knows where we'll get our next bite."

So Sneyd forced himself to eat; and then, at his companion's desire, lay down and slept.

O'Neill stamped out the fire, pulled out a pipe and some cake tobacco, and started smoking. The April day was fully alight now, but was cold and cheerless. Every now and again a sleet squall whistled past the opening of the hut, blotting out the landscape; and when the ground around did come into view again it was inhospitable in the extreme. The outlook, both moral and physical, so the Irishman thought, was about as gloomy as ever he had seen it. But, taking this as an additional reason for not allowing his own spirits to drop, he puffed away contentedly, and thanked his stars that at least he had tobacco.

O'Neill urged his companion to increase the pace.

His own vigil had been a long one. Few hours' sleep had visited his eyelids since that hurried flight from the fatal moor above Inverness. But the cornet of horse, in the heavy slumber of utter exhaustion on the damp heather-bed beside him, had more real need of repose, as young men always have; and so Murtagh O'Neill stolidly kept at his voluntary watch without calling for relief.

The hours stole on, and the day grew wilder. The wind hissed passed the hut like a stream of falling grain, boomed in the doorway, and screaming through the crannies, kept the moss that stuffed them in a constant tremulous flutter. Sleet gave place to snow. It was a dusky twilight by twelve o'clock. The Elector's soldiers would never go man-hunting amongst the hills in such foul weather as this. Surely there was no need to sentinel the hiding-place any longer.

O'Neill's drowsy lids strongly seconded the motion. His head drooped further and further upon his chest, erecting itself every now and again, but each time with feebler effort. His pipe still hung loosely from his teeth; but it had been stone-cold for an hour or more. In fact, the poor fellow was more than three-parts asleep.

Suddenly he sat up and knuckled his eyes into broad wakefulness. What had alarmed him he could not tell; but it was something that had sprung every sense into full action. He pocketed his pipe, and then, leaning forward on hands and knees, drew his head to the entrance of the hut. Before him was a trooper leading his horse down by the side of the burn, and looking curiously at the hut. Sleet and snow had effectually quenched the embers of the fire, and from without no one could see what lay inside the dark doorway. Besides, although the snow was melting almost as fast as it fell, as luck would have it, there was a tidy sprinkling of feathery flakes on a heather-bush that lay immediately across the threshold.

The soldier stopped and looked at the scene before him,

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and then, setting his horse in motion again, moved down the gully, and wheeling round a shoulder to the right, moved off out of sight, but apparently towards the road.

O'Neill turned towards his companion, intending to rouse him, but found he was already awake.

"Yer honour saw that blayguard?"

"Yes."

"Then we must march, widout stoppin' to say good-bye to the girls."

"Why move? He didn't see us."

"Axin' yer honour's pardon, but he did. I caught the eyes of him when he tuk a squint this way, an' am sartin he had a flying glimpse of me. But he didn't let on to that same. He's an old soldier, he is, an's not the one to shove his sconce into a wasp's nest, where's there's no honey and plenty of stings, av he knows it. He's gone back to his mates on the road. Whist! There, yez can hear the jangling of their accutriments. Howly wars! There's a throop of them at the laste, an' we'll be havin' the whole rookery about our ears in another minute. Where's yer honour's horse?"

"I haven't seen him since we came here."

"Ach, sure, he'll be down after his victuals on the lower ground. But, faith, we're best without him. We can fut it over the bog faster than a horse can thravel. Come along, yer honour, up we go. It's meself now that 'ud like to see the evictin' party, when they find the tenants have flitted, widout lavin' so much as a turf-creel to raise a trauneen of rent upon."

Moving rapidly up the gully, they had gained the head of it by this time, and were on the point of bearing up the hill to the eastward, when a shout from below told them that O'Neill's prediction had come true. The soldiers had returned in force, and one of their number had just espied the fugitives up near the sky-line.

Half-a-dozen troopers immediately unstrung their carbines and commenced a desultory fire; but the range was long and the aim was bad, and the bullets for the most part whistled past on either side or buried themselves in the flank of the hill. The officer in command saw this, and probably knowing the inaccuracy of his men's shooting of old, bade them cease firing and follow up as fast as they could.

Meanwhile the quarry of these military sportsmen had been increasing the distance rapidly. Sneyd's riding-boots, which reached to mid-thigh, were not adapted to running, and O'Neill, who was shod in shoes, could have out-distanced him easily. But the Irishman adapted his pace to the slower rate, and the two of them pressed forward at a good round trot together.

Whilst they were in the bed of the gully, where the going was only moderately bad, the horsemen gained rapidly; but when they had topped the rise, and got upon ground whose bottom of mingled morass and angular boulder was masked by a rank growth of almost primæval moor foliage, the pace of the pursuers slackened considerably. Two horses fell, and one of them rose with a badly sprung wither; and then another slipped into a peat-hag, and got bogged up to the girths. So their commander gave the order to dismount, and leaving a dozen men, under the command of a sergeant, to guard the horses, followed up the chase with the remainder of his force on foot.

"Yer honour must put yer best foot foremost," said O'Neill, casting a Parthian glance over his shoulder.

"I'm doing all I can," gasped Sneyd. "Are they gaining?"

"They're afther us a-fut, an' the odds is some of the troop will be as fleet as we are. However, a stern chase is a long one, as we used to find at say, an' they're not aboard us yet."

"Have you pistols?" Sneyd asked, after a pause.

"Divvle a wan. No weapon at all, in fact, savin' for this long knife—dirk, I think yez call it—that I thried to drive into yer honour's gizzard overnight. Are them wee barkers in yer belt charged?"

"Yes, but the wet has got at them, I fear!"

"Bad cess to the rain. No wonder these Highlandmen like their whisky nate, when there's such a power of water about. Well, yer honour has a sword, an' we must be content wid that an' the dirk if it comes to a scrimmage."

The soldiers behind had straggled out into a long string with their round-paunched sergeant puffing and blowing in the rear. Save for a half-dozen who were well ahead of their fellows, none of them seemed adepts at running; which was not much to their discredit, seeing that they were trained to fight on legs other than their own. But these six, who were perhaps less bibulous than their fellows—for the trooper of those days was usually a perambulating barrel for potent liquid—these six, I say, hung pertinaciously on the fugitives' track, and, by slow and dogged degrees, gained somewhat.

O'Neill saw this, and urged his companion to increase the pace. "If we can draw away from them for a mile or so," he said, "we shall shake them off for good."

Sneyd was nearly speechless. "Can't—go—an atom—faster," he gasped. "Can't—keep this up—much longer—nearly cooked."

The Irishman, who was trotting along with easy stride, looked glum at this, and a glance at his companion's face showed him that the words were no exaggeration. The cornet was game enough, game to his fingers' ends; but he was out of condition; fatigue had left its trace upon him; his costume ill befitted his present case; and, besides, he was no good runner at the best ofdtimes. Some men aren't; even those who are otherwise goo all-round athletes.

O'Neill's own heels were nimble enough, and, by trusting to them, he could have outpaced the whole crew, and, for the time being at any rate, have got off scot-free. But this did not suit him. He was not the man to desert a comrade at an awkward moment like the present. With him it was sink both or swim both. And so, having decided that speed would not save them, he puzzled his brain as to what strategy would do.

(To be continued.)

Ten Twenty-five Pound Notes Offered Every Week.

As our readers are already aware, PEARSON'S WEEKLY has for some time been offering £5 notes every week. This scheme has proved such a colossal success that the amount has been increased to ten £25 notes.

The conditions, however, are somewhat different, consequently it is necessary for you to read them before applying, as no application will be considered unless it is in strict accordance with the rules and regulations which govern the Distribution Scheme.

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The Story of a Cosmic Experiment.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

Author of "The Last King of Atlantis," "Behind the Barrier," "The Winning of Gunhild," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"Give Me Twenty-four Hours."

"That is a project to which I have already given attention, and though I have reason to believe that it is possible, I am not in a position to-night to answer without doubt. Give me twenty-four hours, gentlemen, and I will give you my answer—yes or no. For the sake of science I consent to my friend's terms. Here, to-morrow night, I will tell you—yes or no."

A wave of surprise, of incredulity, of half-pity, swept over the faces of the members of the Röntgen Club in conclave assembled, on the evening of February 26th, 1915. Bishop Hearty, who had been breaking a metaphorical lance with the speaker, smiled in conscious condescension. The American stretched out his hand to the scientist and cried:

"Agreed!"

"But understand me," continued Everett, "I accept this preposterous wager only for the sake of science, and in order to silence, once and for all, those antiquated persons who are always holding forth on man's littleness. For myself, I have no care for the 100,000 dollars which our friend Killiker is ready to risk so rashly, and in the event of winning it I shall be happy to hand it over to any charity which the Röntgen Club may decide to be most worthy."

In the event of winning it, indeed! Well might Austin Everett preface his intention with an if, for surely never before was wager suggested on such an issue.

The Röntgen Club, of which I was then a member, was a rather large society, having as its nominal object the investigation and furtherance of the well-known invisible photography, but it had already gathered to itself some of the most unconventional and daring spirits of the ultra-scientific world, and the cathode rays occupied very little of our time.

Everything was discussed in its excellently-appointed lecture room; everything was upheld, criticised, and exploded by turns, and the skeleton shadowgraphs of its members, ranged in a grim, gaunt line round the walls, frowned with changeless stolidity upon the propounding of the most extreme materialistic theories that have ever emanated from the mind of man.

Yet the club was very polyglot, and the ecclesiastic majority of mankind was fairly represented amongst its members; and between these and the compact group of anti-dogmatists, a wordy war was always being waged, which, however, was conducted with invariable good temper.

In the Röntgen Club toleration was an adamant rule, and transgression was the sure precursor of expulsion.

Austin Everett, D. Sc., was the most outspoken and unflinching of the small knot of absolute materialists we had amongst us, and as might be expected, he very often came in conflict with Hearty, our senior churchman. The two were good friends privately, but clubically—if I may coin the word—they were at daggers' point.

This evening, Everett had been showing us some wonderful experiments with a new explosive, (at least, I called it so then for want of a better term) and in his somewhat didactic manner had been holding forth on the support the experiments gave to his theory of the infinite divisibility of matter.

The object-lessons, I admit, were startling in the extreme, though at the time I did not attach to them the significance that came with later knowledge. His crowning illustration for the night was the destruction of a solid sphere of granite inside a large, hermetically-sealed glass tube from which the air was exhausted by a Sprengel mercury pump.

The granite globe was handed round before being sealed in the glass (and as Everett's friend, I know there was no deception in the trick), yet when a tiny puncture was made in the tube with a small drill, and a drop of light blue fluid, almost microscopic in its minuteness, was introduced from the pierced centre of the drill, the solid ball of rock vanished in a streak of dazzling white flame.

When the flame was gone there was no trace of any-

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thing whatever in the tube, and almost immediately the glass itself melted away and lay in small round beads on the table.

Acknowledging the cleverness of the demonstration, the Bishop had joined issue with Everett, reiterating the time-worn truism that no matter how extensive our knowledge of Nature, a greater Unknown always remains behind. Austin replied to this with, for him, unusual warmth, challenging the Bishop to a statement of the limits of scientific research, and Hearty very confidently instanced the century-old dream of inter-planetary communication.

"Science has not yet made a blade of grass, nor an acorn, nor a wild rose," he said, "but I suppose you will answer that it is only a question of time and patient perseverance; human skill, in my belief, has never yet created life, though your faith in Bastian's experiments leads you to think otherwise, but one thing I can confidently say, your boasted intellect—born, you assert, of inevitable atom-movements—has never done nor ever will. No man has ever yet been able to escape from the trammels of the earth upon which he was born; no man has ever yet been able to communicate in any way with any of the other worlds, and I think no man ever will."

"Well done, Hearty," said Ademas J. Killiker, our rich American, noted for his periods of quiet study and alternative searches after sensation. "I'll back you up in that. I aint much of a Sunday frock-coater myself, as they say in Texas, but I've a heap deep respect for the ancient verities, and I'll wager our friend here 100,000 dollars in good Yankee securities that this problem of interplanetary communication is beyond his power to solve. 100,000 dollars to nothing, gentlemen, and *if* I'm beaten I'll pay up like a man, without a groan."

We were all more or less excited by this time, though some of us were laughing, but Everett was cool and confident.

"Give me twenty-four hours, gentlemen, and I will give you my answer," fell upon us like a thunderbolt out of the blue.

We crowded round him with eager questions, mixed with a little chaff, but he was invincible to our importunities.

"'Till to-morrow, friends," he said. "'Till to-morrow."

He and I left the club together, and having promised to show him the proofs of an article I had written, in which scientific nomenclature was unsparingly used for the sake of effect, I took the opportunity of going home with him. My curiosity was roused, and for the sake of his daughter Ellen, if for no other reason, I was determined to know whether he had any ground for the acceptance of so wild a challenge, or whether—as I half feared—it was the first sign of a splendid intellect breaking down under the stress of its own abnormal activity. A few words here respecting my friend, will make what follows clearer, and explain my apprehensions.

CHAPTER II.

A Modern Materialist.

Austin Everett was one of the most fascinating people I have met—the most fascinating man with whom I have come in contact. There was a something magnetic, mesmeric in his very presence and bearing, and what the magic of his straight, medium figure, with its head of black hair, and keen brown eyes, failed to gain of your admiration or envy, the brilliancy of his mental powers compelled.

He was, it is true, outside the pale of orthodox science—his frankly untrammelled theories and his denial of the fundamental axioms of the exact school, excited the ire of that circle—but speaking impartially, I can say that his is the master-mind of the world.

His splendid discoveries and marvellous experiments in untrodden paths were shown only to a select few or to the members of the Röntgen, and being one of his most intimate acquaintances I came so thoroughly under the awe-impelling influence of his mind, that mine, notwithstanding a sub-current of weak protest, was moulded much in the fashion of his own, and I professed, at the Club and elsewhere, to be a materialist like himself, or, at the least, to believe that no other theory of the universe so well conforms to the facts of existence as they appear to the trained eye of a logical intelligence.

I say under protest, for constitutionally I am a religious being, clinging to old faiths, old laws, old hopes and fears, and nothing but Everett's semi-hypnotic charm could have held my inclinations in check. Sometimes I would argue with him, bringing forward in turn all the stock theological contents and the latest special pleading of the Christian scientists, sometimes falling back on Pantheism; but I was invariably worsted and beaten on my own ground.

She played one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder*.

"If you accept Spinoza and Wordsworth, and synonymise God with Nature," he would say, "I cannot contradict you. You simply endow Nature with another name. Call the universe what you will, with that I have no concern. The universe as a fact is unaltered thereby. But when you speak to me of Spirit, Being, Power, Deity, and the like, I must confess that you are using terms which do not correspond to anything within the widest range of my conceptions or inductions. You are using words which you cannot even explain to me yourself—which no one has explained—and I decline to admit such terms into any calculations of mine.

"Religion is an heirloom from the ignorant Past, a souvenir of the ape-like barbarians who projected their own feelings into rocks and trees and sea and sky, and

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with religion, science has nothing to do. Science is of the Future, her glories are yet to come, her truths have yet to be fully established. I repeat, there is no avenue by which knowledge can come to man save through the channels of his senses, and through these comes no knowledge of anything other than immortal Nature—eternal matter.

"Therefore I decline to consider the baseless hypotheses of religion, exactly as I decline to regard the fourth dimension as anything more than a web of sophistry spun out of the cocoons of ill-formed minds."

From that position I could not move him, and that position was characteristic of the man. If in my heart of hearts I knew him to be wrong, I could not deny that on the surface he seemed invincibly correct.

Apart from his notoriety as an exponent of extreme disbelief, he was well known as a painstaking investigator in theoretical chemistry, and as a master of clear English. His "Refutation of Idealism" is itself a supreme masterpiece of analysis, and of his other works, "A Monograph of the Thought Nerves," has given him an international reputation.

His daughter Ellen, a tall, fair girl of twenty-five, was his one human tie. He adored her and she almost worshipped him. Under his training she had grown up in his ideas, though she expressed them differently—more gently, and with some tinge of sentiment infused into their dry bones.

At home, with Ellen occupying the place at table that her mother had once filled, Austin Everett unbent from his stern rationalism, and became as humane as any villa-dweller in St. John's Wood, and it was then I liked him best. It was thus I saw Ellen at her best, too—if she ever had a better mood than her usual brightness—and I think her winsome face had something to do with the frequency of my visits.

Such was Austin Everett—a genius of unparalleled order, whose daring stopped at nothing, who had no thought for Heaven, no care for consequences, in furtherance of his ceaseless inquiries into the how and why of phenomena.

As for myself—I was simply a bachelor of thirty, struggling, with the help of a small annuity left by my deceased parents, to gain a footing in the overcrowded literary world. I had few friends and fewer relatives, and had joined the Röntgen Club solely for the purpose of picking up a smattering of science to embellish my "copy."

The ruse was a success, and my knowledge of technical terms was already becoming commented upon in the reviews.

CHAPTER III.

"My Answer—Yes."

Almost immediately on reaching home that evening, Everett retired to his private study to make some important calculations, and left with Ellen, I had to suppress my impatience and beguile the time with turning over the leaves while she played one of Mendelssohn's *Lieder* with a soulful touch that thrilled me through.

I did not think the time ill-spent, and must confess that I was rather disappointed when Everett stepped into the room flourishing a paper covered with algebraic signs and equations, and said:

"So far I can see my way clear. I only want to know one more factor in the problem now. Will you mind sending a telegram for me, Millington? It is about this club affair, and very important."

Of course I would oblige, and rose to go.

"Shall you be at the Röntgen to morrow, Miss Everett?" I asked in the hall.

"Yes, Ellen will be there," said her father, putting his hand tenderly on her shoulder. "If, as I believe, I can drive another nail into the coffin of superstitious awe, she will like to be present at the operation."

I took the telegram and saw it clicked off to Neath, Glamorganshire, South Wales, to a Mr. H. Jones. It was very short and threw no light on my mental darkness.

Send me depth of deposit of white ore in vicinity. Forgotten figures. Everett.

I waited for the prepaid answer. It read thus:

Too late to measure borings to-night. Will wire full particulars in morning. H. Jones.

This left me no wiser than before, so there was nothing to do but wait till night.

The club-room was well filled when Everett came in with Ellen, and when he mounted the lecture platform, there was an attentive silence.

The Church party were in full force, I saw, and I noticed near the door some leading spiritualists and a noted Theosophist. I took a chair near Ellen and asked her if she knew what her father's answer would be.

"Yes, I know," she said, "but I should like you to hear it from himself. He is going to speak now."

Grasping the rail of the reading desk with the gesture so familiar to us, Everett stood a moment with his gaze on the Bishop and the American—who sat together—then straightened his well-set figure and plunged at once into the matter in hand, speaking as calmly as though he were dealing with quite an ordinary subject.

"For the benefit of those who were not here last night," he began slowly. "I will run over the incident that then occurred. I gave some of my new experiments, which show conclusively that all substances known to us can be utterly destroyed in a very small fragment of time, and I took occasion at the close to point out how irresistibly the conclusion was forced upon us that everything in Nature is mutable and subject to incessant change, and that only the substratum of which all things are built up is infinite and eternal.

"I then indulged, as at the Röntgen I have allowed myself to do, in a tilt at the various theistic theories of Nature that have come down to us from the darkness of the primeval and the middle ages. Our worthy Bishop took up the cudgels for his faith, and Mr. Killiker capped the climax by offering 100,000 dollars to nothing that I could not solve the problem of inter-planetary communication. I asked for twenty-four hours to consider the challenge, and I am here to-night to answer it."

There was a stir amongst the audience, and we listened breathlessly for his next words.

"Since last night, gentlemen," he went on, "I have worked out my figures and received the information I then lacked, and I have the unalloyed pleasure of telling you that the problem is solved. The puerile theory that the intellect is bound to this planet alone is dissolved into thin air, and to the question whether I can bridge the gulf of space, you have my answer—yes."

There was dead silence for a moment, as he paused. Then he continued:

"But I will be frank with you. At present the scope of my power is limited. I can promise you speedy transit from the earth to any of the planets nearer the sun, but I cannot—yet—go further outwards. I have hopes of accomplishing that result eventually, but an

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unknown factor in my calculations has so far baffled my skill. Still, to reach Venus, Mercury, Vulcan, or the moon, will, I think, enrich the charities most munificently. Am I not right, Mr. Killiker?"

"Yes," said the Yankee, with a less confident smile than he had worn the night before. "I am ready to plank down the moment you prove to me, by actual experiment, that what you say is possible."

"I shall not only prove it to your satisfaction, Mr. Killiker," said Everett calmly, "not only to the satisfaction of the Bishop and all the members of the Röntgen Club, but to the satisfaction of the world. I have thought this matter out thoroughly, and I am prepared to stake my scientific reputation upon the promise that within twelve months from this date the civilised world will know that I have spoken truth.

"The abyss of space need no longer set bounds to man's genius. The worlds need no longer roll on in isolation through the pulsing ether. Gravitation, like its brother, electricity, shall yet be harnessed to the service of man. And in a year—in less than a year—from to-day, I shall have made this promise into a possibility. I need say no more. You have my answer, Mr. Killiker and Bishop Hearty—my answer to your challenge—yes."

No prophet of old ever impressed his followers with the sense of his sincerity and truthfulness more than Everett impressed us that night. A spell, real and powerful, no matter how transitory, fell upon us as he ceased speaking, and the uneasy fear I had felt for his sanity vanished like morning dew before the sun. I *felt* that he would be able to do what he said.

"Isn't he splendid to-night?" whispered Ellen, her face flushing with pleasure.

But after the first shock of the announcement questions were asked from all parts of the room, and such a babel of voices arose that the bell had to be rung violently for silence. Bets were being offered and taken freely on the result, and a score of impromptu discussions were being waged between the various sects.

"You wish to know the precise nature of the cosmic experiment I propose to make?" said Everett, when order was restored. "That I cannot tell you, except so far as to say that it will alter the Solar System and possibly change the coast lines of the world. To be exact it will occur in eleven months, six days and five hours from midnight to-night. More than this I shall not divulge until such time as I choose. And, gentlemen, that is all I have to say."

To add that the Röntgen Club broke up in unusual excitement, and went to its homes in a highly strung state of mind that rendered sleep fragmentary, would surely be superfluous.

"The papers will be worth reading to-morrow," I remarked, as I said good-night to Ellen and her father. "I noticed some influential pressmen present."

"Yes, and more especially the so-called religious and advanced journals a week later!" laughed Austin, in his quiet way. "But come up after breakfast, and we will look them over together."

Ellen's eyes said "come" unmistakably, and I promised. As I turned away, and the motor-cab rolled off through the slush of the winter's night, I noticed standing unaccountably near to me, a well-groomed Frenchman, who had only recently joined the Club. He bowed hurriedly and walked away, turning up his overcoat collar as he went as though to hide a passing confusion. I thought his conduct strange at the time, but the impression had worn off before I reached my rooms in Upper Sloane Street.

CHAPTER IV.

A Storm of Ridicule.

The papers certainly were worth reading next morning, and we three spent quite a pleasant hour commenting upon them. The social and literary standing of some of our members secured us recognition and column reports in the leading periodicals, and there were editorial paragraphs at our expense by the score. The patronising tone of the daily press came out in all its strength.

Said the ponderous *Times*:

Hitherto we have found little to deprecate in the doings of the erratic members of the misnamed Röntgen Club, but after the proceedings of last night—which are reported elsewhere—we cannot refrain from asking whether their brilliant genius is of that order which is so nearly allied to madness as to be indistinguishable from it.

The *Daily Telegraph* was even better.

The arrogance of the modern sceptic (said the paper) grows greater with the growth of science, not because science countenances disbelief, but because, in the face of science's *non-possumus* regarding the Unknown, materialism has to cry with a louder and more dogmatic voice to make itself heard. Mr. Austin Everett will surely become a very formidable rival to the revivalists if he can draw public attention to his cult by sensationalism every whit as devoid of good taste as that of the Salvation army.

"That is good; decidedly good," laughed Ellen.

The *Daily News* was astonished, the *Mail* righteously indignant, the *Chronicle* jocose, the *Post* sarcastic. Even the provincial sheets took up the refrain and joined in the chorus of condemnation veiled in satirical regret.

When we were through with them my host smiled good-naturedly.

"It is just what I expected," he said. "It is amusing. But did I not know and allow for the influence of heredity and environment, it would almost make me despair of the ultimate triumph of Truth."

"But the environment is changing, father," put in Ellen, with the flush of enthusiasm. "And in proportion to our power, we can mould its changes to the new ideas, and a step once gained is never lost. Science must prevail in the end."

"It cannot fail," said Everett. "And now I will leave you two to amuse yourselves till luncheon. This experiment will occupy a good deal of my time, and I must get one or two other things settled to-day."

Ellen gathered the papers together with my help, and we arranged them neatly on the bamboo stand in the tree-shaded window. Our hands touched in the process, our heads came near together, and I think that was when I first owned to myself that I was in love with her. I know that the winter sun seemed to have a brighter glow than it had the day before. Suddenly she looked up and asked me quickly—breaking the thread of my thoughts:

"Are you with father in this? Do you really believe he can redeem his promise?"

"You do," I answered. "and why ask me? Two days ago I should have laughed at the idea; now I feel sure that it can and will be done. And so, I think, feel most of the members of the club."

"I am glad of that," she said, regarding me with an interest that was very flattering. "Do you know, Mr. Millington, I sometimes feel very friendless when he is immersed in his calculations. I sit and think how few we unbelievers seem in the world in the crusade against ignorance. It would be so easy to go with the crowd, instead of always fighting Error and using one's time and labour to convince the thankless multitude that

Science is their only hope—that the things they love and worship are as truly idols as any images of wood or stone. It would be so easy."

Everett's influence was very strong upon me then, and I felt it was my duty to comfort her for the sense of weariness and loss that, in spite of all, will come at times to those who cast aside the spiritual and try to live by intellect alone, so I said:

"It would be easier, no doubt, but would it be as well? The path of duty is often thorny."

Her face brightened wonderfully.

"Thorny, yes; but the right path after all. You have driven away the cloud."

I do not care to put down more of what we said that morning. I can only say that the hours passed very pleasantly and very quickly, and that an invisible bond seemed to have been woven around us then, binding our destinies together, whose strength nor time nor circumstance has yet impaired.

I was a frequent visitor at the house now, but saw little of Everett for several days, so busily was he engaged in his abstruse studies. Then came the weekly papers and one or two reviews, and the doings of the Röntgen formed food for more weighty disapprobation and hysterical regret. The religious papers, with few exceptions, described the "vaunting declaration" of my friend as being little short of "presumptious," and all deplored the fact that in the nineteenth century a company of otherwise sensible men should have listened to such "balderdash," as the *Methodist Times* elegantly phrased it; whilst that organ of dissent, the *Inquirer*, was more severe in its strictures than the *Rock*. Even "Saladin," that prolific writer of sledge-hammer logic and exquisite verse, declared in his paper, the *Agnostic Journal*, that:

> The acceptance of such a wager is the sign of an ill-balanced mind. It is only braggart boasting. Though boasting of this kind seems peculiar to that crude of thought yclept "scientific materialism," whose science is only pseudo-science, and whose materialism is only a longer name for that blatant species of atheism so rampant in the eighteenth century, and which has long ago been weighed in the balance of reason and found wanting.

Everett read them all, then leant back in his chair and laughed grimly.

"For all your modern progress," he said scornfully, "your modern man is a very stupid animal. But these good people have done me a service unintentionally. They have given my promised experiment just the publicity it needs to make its success a lever in my hands in the future."

"Don't you think," I remarked, "that it would be well for you to send a letter to the papers shortly, answering your critics?"

"I will write," he replied, after a moment's thought. "The change I shall make is so momentous that the public had better be prepared for it in some measure. A hint I threw out at the Club ought to have led some to guess the nature of my scheme."

"And the experiment is—?" I asked.

"Another time, my friend," said he, putting up his hand, "another time."

With that I had to be content, and filled the next few weeks with utilising to the full the wave of curiosity regarding Everett to tide me still higher on the literary shore. I wrote up an interview with him—with his consent—rushed several articles dealing with novels having inter-planetary travel as their *motif*, and, for the first time in my career, got into the *Spectator*.

Ellen said that I was very smart; and even Killiker praised my cuteness—which was praise indeed.

CHAPTER V.

The Paragraph of Promise.

The publishing of Everett's reply evoked another outburst of press ridicule and supercilious doubt even worse than the first, so much worse, in fact, that my scientific friend evinced some irritation and declared that henceforward he would argue with modern stupidity no more.

Yet the letter he sent out through the Press Agency was free from the least suspicion of boasting or insincerity, and it influenced many who read it to believe in the man's ability to carry out his stupendous project. And an inkling of the nature of that project now began to get abroad. I will not give his letter in full, but only its salient parts and closing sentences.

"The time for placing limits to the advance of Science," he wrote, after recapitulating the situation, "is long since past. It is too late in the world's history now to say to the seekers after knowledge, 'thus far shall you go and no further.' It is only childish to stand on the shore of Infinity and bid the rising tide of Science come no higher. Science—which is trained intellect—will stop for no edict of prince, no canon of the church, no mandate of an ignorant mob. No one has ever yet devised means to hold science in check for long; no one ever will.

* * * * *

"I have been asked to re-consider my resolution, if it be a real one; to confess that I have perpetrated a gigantic hoax, if that be true. Confess the latter I cannot, because every word I have spoken in this matter is as earnestly and seriously meant to be taken as true as anything I have uttered in my life. Nor can I alter my decision. Religion and Mediocricy have challenged Science on the physical plane—the plane on which she has won her greatest triumphs—and Science accepts the challenge. My word is given, my reputation is at stake, my mind is firm and I cannot retract. The experiment will be made.

"At last, tardily, some critics have noted that the time I gave as the time of the proof of my statement, was coincident with the date of the next total eclipse of the sun visible in this country, and they have come to the conclusion that I propose, in some way or other, to establish communication of some kind with the moon. That conclusion is correct.

"On the date I have mentioned the world will know that the problem of inter-planetary transit has been partially solved. On that date a large sphere of white metal—equal in bulk to a sphere of iron weighing many tons—will reach the moon from the earth, and the phenomena attending its arrival at its destination will dispel the last doubt that may then be lingering in the minds of the most sceptical. It will be the greatest experiment of modern times; the precursor, I trust, of many more on a larger scale.

"On that date all curiosity will be at an end; till then the most inquisitive must curb their craving for knowledge as best they may. I absolutely refuse to grant another interview, to pen another line for the press, to give another lecture on the subject. Henceforth, I and those friends who are my friends will be as mute as the giant Sphinx that glowers over the hot Egyptian sands.

* * * * *

"But one thing would I say here to those who fear the advance of Science, or hold that her advance should keep pace only with the halting footsteps of the time-worn creeds. To you who have this fear, I say, cast it

out, banish it utterly from your minds. There is nothing nobler than the sacrifice of old faiths and cherished ideas for the sake of Truth. It is the climax of altruism. There is no danger in Honesty, in Knowledge, in Truth.

"Man's track through the past is shrouded in darkness, scattered with the skeletons of those slain in the wars of the creeds; his path through the future opens out before us an ever-broadening footway, made pleasant and fruitful by the Sun of Science and the spirit of Truth. Take this ideal to your hearts, then, this noble ideal of unflinching trust in truth, however distasteful at first it may be, and it will grow upon you and enthrall you, and you will find in it, through all your life, a comfort and a hope.

"Have no fear of the ultimate triumph of Intellect. The glory of Nature will not be thereby dimmed, the sacredness of Right will not be thereby weakened.

"Rather will these things be intensified and sanctified beyond measure, for we shall find that in securing the triumph of the human and material over the Heavenly and spiritual that we have laid the foundation of a surer and more unselfish Hope and Faith; a Hope that those who come after us will live in better days and by the light of reason only, and a Faith in Man to realise in himself all those noble and spiritual qualities with which his imagination has crowned its creatures.

"This Hope and Faith it is that has spurred me on to discoveries hitherto passed by, that is my life's incentive, and this experiment I am about to make I regard merely as one effort to bring Hope and Faith before the notice of a scoffing world."

That was his peroration. No wonder the orthodox were disturbed and the second storm of ridicule was worse than the first! Seldom has a champion of such advanced thought obtained so great an amount of public attention.

Our clique at the Röntgen, was, of course, delighted, but one or two members resigned, and there were not wanting people who declared, vindictively, that the whole affair was simply a skilfully planned plot to gain for infidelity that notoriety it ever covets but so seldom receives. At times, I, too, felt dubious, but the bright enthusiasm of Ellen was always potent to lead my mind captive when Everett's mesmeric influence failed.

For a week or two the public interest lasted, and Everett was the man who bulked largest in the public eye, then the excitement cooled down, and before a month was out the affair was nearly forgotten. The unsavoury details of a great divorce suit monopolised the attention of society, and life became more bearable with us thereafter.

I was now a daily visitor at the pretty house in St. John's Wood, enjoying Ellen's smiles of welcome the while I patiently waited to be initiated into her father's secret.

I had not long to wait.

CHAPTER VI.

"I Put You Upon Your Honour."

It had been one of those bright, warm days that sometimes break stern winter's sameness for us, and Ellen and I had strolled down the path to the green arched gate. Under the holly boughs we turned back to the house. On the way Helen suddenly stopped, cutting geometrical figures on the gravel with her cane.

"We are great friends, are we not, Mr. Millington?" she asked, *apropos* of nothing.

"We are more than friends I hope, Ellen—Miss Everett."

Her question had startled me, and the words were out almost before I knew. She was not offended in the least, nor affected surprise, as so many modern girls foolishly do, but simply looked me in the face and said:

"More than friends, *I* hope; but still we *are* great friends, are we not?"

"Yes," I replied hastily, encouraged by her frank confession, and still more by the light that shone in her dear brown eyes. "Friends who have fallen in love, Ellen. You and I were made for each other, dear, why should we live apart?"

As I spoke I seized her hands and drew her to me—we were under the shade of a little avenue of evergreens—and I finished the question with a kiss. She made no resistance, returning it willingly, but it was a pure caress like the kiss of an angel. Then she gently but firmly disengaged herself from my arms and stood apart.

"There is no design in Nature, Dick," she said laughing, "so how could we two be made for each other? Call our mutual liking a coincidence, if you will. No—I have not answered you yet! Give me a little time, Dick, before I say whether I will be your wife or not. Marriage is a contract not to be entered on lightly, on

"We are great friends, are we not, Mr. Millington?"

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the impulse of a moment, even on the strength of love. There are many things to be considered—age, temperament, health, financial position, etc.—and I should consider myself unworthy of my principles did I not test these matters by the test of cold reason. Give me a little time, Dick—and don't ask me until I let you—and I will tell you my decision. You know my inclination already. Yes, you may kiss me again, Dick; but no more until I give you leave!"

Her logic was unanswerable, and what could I do but obey?

I gave the required promise.

"But still we are great friends, Dick," she persisted. "And that being granted, I want to ask you as my friend to join with father in this scheme, to help him, in fact. That was what I meant to say when you put me off."

"For your sake I will do anything," I said rashly, "but to help Mr. Everett I shall have to know his secret."

"You will know it to-night. He is waiting in the laboratory now, to tell you. Once more for my sake, will you help him with it to the end?"

"If he intends to set the moon on fire, I will help him!" I cried, "if you wish it. Shall I tell him anything of what we have just said?"

"No, sir! I am old enough and intelligent enough, surely, to decide my destiny for myself. I should not be my father's daughter otherwise."

We went into the house together, and going straight to Everett's den, I knocked softly on the door. Even his most intimate friends were not allowed in there without permission.

"Come in," he said, and I went in and picked out an old chair and sat down amidst as strange an assortment of retorts and batteries and electric motors and mechanical appliances and chemical vessels and apparatus as ever I have seen.

There was no order in the room, and while some things were bright and clean with constant use, others were thickly covered with parti-coloured dust of unknown age.

Some of the implements I knew the name and use of, but more were unlike anything else in the world. What attracted my attention was a thick glass box upon a trestle table, in which a small ball of brilliant white metal was slowly rolling.

It was rolling along the *under side* of the top sheet of glass, very slowly, and as indicated by a compass near, *towards the west*. By the time I had noticed this it had reached the end of the box and rolled out with a click into one of the upper corners, and there remained suspended.

"A perfect demonstration, just in time!" cried Everett enthusiastically, "you have wanted to know the nature of my discovery—you see it now!"

"But I do not understand," I said, "what has this queer silver ball to do with getting to the moon?"

"Cannot you see?" he asked. "Will this help?"

And he slid the end of the glass box out so as to let the metal ball escape. It went straight across the room and struck the west wall with a sharp noise, and there remained, poised on nothing. The effect was uncanny.

"Still I must confess my ignorance."

"Which shows, I am afraid, Millington, that your scientific knowledge is of a literary kind only—very superficial. You have seen this white ball—which is not silver, by the way—pass through space in utter defiance of the earth's gravitation. You have noticed that it moves to the west only. You have seen that it gathers speed as it proceeds. Cannot you piece the facts together?"

"The sun is very near setting in the west," I said. "You have discovered some means of making this white

He folded his arms and stood before me.

metal responsive to the sun's attraction only. Still, can't see how that affects the lunar question."

Everett smiled gravely, stroking his iron-grey beard.

"Have you forgotten the date of my promise?" he said.

"The total eclipse?" I cried. "Then you propose——"

"To take an advantage of the fact that the sun and earth and moon are then in a direct line," he said, finishing the sentence for me. "However, I had better be more explicit.

"This white metal, hitherto unknown, and which I have named electrion is, as you surmise, subject to the sun's attraction only, or to be exact, to the total attraction of the large quantity of electrion which is a constituent of the sun's mass. As every schoolboy knows, magnetism is a specialised attraction distinct from gravitation; the affinity of electrion is a specialised form of magnetism. It is a something as distinct from normal attraction as the Röntgen rays are from the ordinary ether-tremors we call daylight. Given the knowledge, then, that this attraction of the sun is strong enough to move a mass of electrion here—as you have just seen—it is only a matter of accurate calculation and seizure of opportunity to transmit something from here to the moon at a total eclipse."

"But how have you discovered this electrion? And how do you know it exists in the sun? And how prove, that if sent, it will reach our satellite? And how keep this electrion on the earth at all if it is so strongly attracted upwards?"

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I paused for want of further coherence in my curiosity. Everett walked across the room and placed the white ball in his pocket.

"One question at a time, my friend. I found this metal—at least the ore of it—in a secluded valley in South Wales some months ago. It has taken me nearly all that time to smelt it down and secure the pure element. It is a somewhat difficult process, unique in chemical research, I flatter myself. Its indifference to gravitation, I, of course, could not help discovering when I had once got electrion absolutely unalloyed. There is no credit attaching to me for that. As a little reflection will show you a mass of pure electrion, unless held back by sufficient weights, will rise directly upwards at mid-day, rise in a slanting direction in the evening, and at midnight will have a tendency *downwards*. The uniformity of these phenomena soon suggested a possible explanation to me, a spectrum analysis put certainty in the place of hypothesis.

"Then you know, by spectrum analysis, as well as by deduction, that electrion exists in the sun?" I cried excitedly.

"I will show you. Come with me."

We went together into the domed shed at the back, where Everett's fine meridian circle telescope pursued the courses of the stars, and he placed before me a photograph of the solar spectrum. Upon this, a medium-sized band of faint colour, crossed by a number of almost indistinguishable dark lines, was indicated by an arrow and the letter E.

"Those are the electrion lines," said Everett, "observed in the spectrum of *A Cygni* and other stars as well as in that of the sun, and marked 'unknown' on all previous charts. Now see this."

He adjusted a small spectroscope over a tiny electric heating apparatus in which he had placed a few scrapings from the white ball, and presently, as the metal glowed red and dull, and then a brighter white, and became liquid, and finally rose and drifted west in a curling vapour, a definite spectrum was thrown on the receiver.

And exactly in the same position in the spectrum band as the marked lines in the photograph, was the group of dim dark bars of density. The demonstration was complete. I had no doubt now of his ability to "send a sphere of white metal, weighing several tons, from the earth to the moon."

"But how," I asked, remembering that speech at the Club, "shall you prove that this electrion has reached its destination? You surely cannot send a mass large enough for even our best telescopes to make visible on its way through space, or when hidden in some recess of a lunar crater."

He looked at me closely, half hesitating. Then he said, with sudden resolution:

"That, too, is easy now; but before I tell you I must put you upon your honour not to let the knowledge escape you nor attempt to thwart my purpose."

I thought of Ellen and gave my word.

CHAPTER VII.

Proof Positive.

Everett paced the dimly-lighted room once or twice before he spoke. Then he folded his arms and stood before me.

"I shall destroy the moon," he said.

"Destroy the moon?" I cried, horror-stricken. "Impossible! Incredible!"

"Both possible and credible."

"But it is too large," I said, "for any explosive known to man; and too far off. And the consequences?"

"If you will cast your thoughts back to my experiment at the Club on the night of the wager, you will remember that I then showed the working of a solvent powerful enough, if present in sufficient quantity and in vacuum, to destroy the sun himself. The moon is devoid of atmosphere. And have I not just proved that distance is no hindrance?"

"But the consequences?" I persisted. "Will not the destruction of one member of the Solar System disturb the equilibriums which, according to Leverrier, alone prevents the whole from falling together and rushing headlong to ruin?"

"The mere observance of the result will be a scientific treat of rare value," answered Everett thoughtfully, "but I do not think the result Leverrier predicted will follow. To begin with, the balance which he pretended to discover does not exist, his calculations being based upon the utterly false hypothesis that the sun and all the planets are rigid bodies. Still, the sudden displacement of a planet or satellite might precipitate a general wreck of our system."

"And yet you propose to risk that awful possibility?"

"I think not. What I propose is destruction—not *displacement*. The solvent with which I destroyed a granite ball in vacuum that night I can make in sufficient quantity to dissolve or reduce the whole mass of the moon back again, not merely to its atoms, not merely to the ether, but to the inconceivably minute particles of which the very ether-units themselves are built up. That being so, it is only a matter of smelting enough electrion in a spherical form, inclosing enough of this solvent within it, and setting it free at the right time."

"And when will that be?" I asked.

"The average speed of the electrion sphere on its journey will be very nearly one-fortieth the speed of light," he said, "though, of course, at the moment of impact, it will be much greater. A little figuring, which would only weary you, will show that it must be freed from control exactly nineteen and a half minutes previous to the instant of complete eclipse. At that instant it will strike the moon with inexpressible velocity and be shattered by the shock. The solvent will be dispersed from its air-filled chamber and have full play in the vacuum of space, and the moon, as visible and gravitational matter, will cease to be, will be blotted out of the universe for ever."

I stared aghast at the mental picture, a thousand strange thoughts passing through my mind; a thousand perplexities besetting me. Surely no one but this extraordinary being, heedless alike of God and man in his pursuit of knowledge, could have proposed so stupendous an experiment! Surely no one but himself could have convinced me of his seriousness and sanity in proposing it!

"And this terrible solvent of yours—this destructive liquid?" I asked. "How does it act, and how can you keep it stored in safety?"

"I cannot explain its action thoroughly to you," said Everett, standing with his hand on the door, which had blown ajar, "because I do not fully understand it myself, but know enough for all practical purposes. In my researches into the validity of Dalton's atomic theory—researches which led me eventually to accept the age-old idea of infinite divisibility instead—I penetrated some way into the secret of gravitation, the origin of force, the causes of electric manifestations, and this enabled me to make this atom-destroying compound."

"Its action is instantaneous, like the application of a flame to gunpowder, and in less time than it would take to explode a powder factory, all attractions—gravitational, molecular, chemical and etheric—which hold matter together, can be destroyed. The keeping of the solvent is very easy. It will not act in an admixture of oxygen and nitrogen—such as the atmosphere—and it is only necessary to inclose sufficient air with it in a closed vessel to render it innocuous. Besides being difficult to mix and requiring a long time for preparation, its range of danger on the earth is limited by reason of the air which envelopes us.

"Were any quantity, however, to be placed in a strong vessel and the air to be exhausted afterwards, enough energy would be loosened to work immense damage before the atmosphere could stop its course. A coal-mine, a town—London itself—might be dissolved into pre-etheric substance if enough of the solvent could be buried beneath in airless receptacles. So you see I had good reason for requiring your word of honour."

"A good reason indeed!" I said, shuddering. "It is a terrible knowledge to possess."

"Terrible in some hands, perhaps," he returned. "Useful in mine because useful to Science. But shall I give you a proof of my assertion that I have learnt the nature of that world-mystery, gravitation?"

"By all means," said I. "I do not doubt you, but I must confess to the average man's liking for 'signs and wonders.'"

I noticed something white gleaming behind a holly bush

As I spoke I stepped towards the doorway, which Everett was just passing through, and noticed something white gleaming behind a holly-bush in my line of vision. I looked closer, and for an instant, in the moonlight, I had full view of a human face, with an eager, demoniacal expression fixed upon it, like the glare of a wild beast. I was on the point of calling out to my companion when a cloud sailed under the moon and the face was gone. Everett pooh-poohed the idea of a trespasser in his garden, and though we very carefully went round the holly bush and along the base of the glass-set wall, we found no trace of anyone. He put my impression down to a passing fancy, but though I did not argue the matter out I was convinced that someone had been listening to our conversation with an evil intent, and that that someone was someone whom I knew but whose identity I could not then recall.

Everett went into the house and returned with Ellen.

"I must see this weird experiment," she laughingly said, as I adjusted the wrap more closely round her shoulders. "even if I get a cold in consequence! It is something so much beyond anything father has yet attempted. He is trying to navigate the ocean of interstellar space!"

"And I shall succeed," said he quietly. "It is only a matter of time, though at present I cannot see my way clear to such a happy consummation. I have told you I know the secret of gravitation. It is something like this.

"It is caused by the constant bombardment of all bodies in the ether by the finitesimally small ether particles which fill space. This bombardment, (for want of a better word, I use this term) comes equally from all directions, resulting in the radiation, from each body, of an infinite number of concentric spheres of force, of varying sizes and speeds, whose resistance to the progress of bodies through space is naturally greater as the bodies are far apart and less as they are nearer—'in inverse ratio to the square of the distance,' as Newton said.

"The size and age and form of these great force-spheres—and their consequent energy—must, in the case of every star or body in space, be different, since in Nature there are no two things alike, so that, if we could only trace these subtle ether-thrills to their sources, and construct bodies with surfaces responsive only to some particular thrill, we could send them to or from the star or other source, at our will, irrespective of any other attraction whatever. This I have partially accomplished.

"This roughened sphere I hold is responsive only to the earth-waves of rebounding force, and if I cast it upwards—so—it will travel away from us for ever."

The small thing he threw upwards vanished slowly into the night.

"This other sphere," he went on, "is responsive to some star-wave that I cannot yet localise, but if I cast it away—thus—it will take an oblique direction, inclining to the north. It is travelling now straight to the source of the ether-thrill to which alone it is sensitive."

The tiny object sailed out of sight with tantalising tardiness, rising but slowly as it went. I think that at that moment Everett's strange influence over me was at its height.

"I am satisfied now," I cried. "I will help you in your studies and your experiments."

"And you will not attempt to save the moon from her fate?"

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"I have given my word," said I.

With that we turned to the house again, and soon after I was speeding to my lonely rooms in a motor-cab, excited and confused with what I had witnessed, but still grappling with the problem of the identity of that white face I had seen in the garden. It was a face, I knew, that had puzzled me before, but do what I would I could not find the link between the present and the past. By the cheery fire that blazed in the grate, I sat and smoked an hour, thinking hard, but memory for once refused to answer my call.

"That night, I recollect, I went to bed in disgust with my mental powers, and passed without regret into the glorious land of strange, wild dreams.

CHAPTER VIII.

Under the Old Oak Tree.

After all these didactic disquisitions and uncanny probings into Nature's inmost heart, a reaction came, and I gave way to the commoner interests of life. I frequented one or two of the non-serious clubs to which I belonged, and wrote "*fin-de-siècle*" stories and small articles. I took Ellen to the Cinematograph Theatre several times, and gradually shook off the uneasy feeling that the incidents of that night had given me.

Then I threw myself into the work of assisting Everett at his task, which, I soon saw, would occupy the greater part of the year. All the smelting and refining had to be done by him, alone, in his workshop adjoining the observatory. Fortunately, his house was detached, and the back premises surrounded by a high wall, so that the strange work went on with little or no notice from the neighbours.

The delicate chemical operations took all his time, and my duty was the attention to the excavating and conveyance of the white ore in undemonstrative quantities from Wales, the purchase and storing of sundry materials for making the solvent, and the casting of several huge weights to secure our great electrion sphere when completed until we were ready to bid it adieu. All this was new labour to me, but interesting and even romantic, for did not Ellen help me, and did I not see the love-light in her eyes? The time passed very quickly, and the early days of summer were upon us ere we were well aware.

One morning, having very little to do, most of the materials being collected and Everett being busy like an alchemist of yore amongst his fearful and wonderful potions, metals, and retorts, Ellen and I went down by a light auto-waggonette into the country, and ruralised for a few hours round a truly rustic farm.

The day was gloriously fine; one of those rare warm days when the blood courses the swifter in your veins and you are roused to fresh, bright, generous feelings. There was a cheering warmth and freshness in the very air, in the welcome brightness of the increasing sunlight; a pæan of praise in the carols of the birds.

On the short grass lay trees of swaying shadow, banks of white cloud lay peacefully across the blue, a damp haze filled the distant valleys. The bursting buds, the golden jessamine, the early primrose—while yet a few dry leaves lay on the ground—the fields ploughed ready for the sowing, the gardens trimmed and dug, the sunshine showing up the smooth, bare outlines of the unclothed trees, the transparent hedgerows, the few sheep on the hills; all these moved us to a sweet contentment, a blissful forgetfulness of the world of strife and thought we seemed to have left behind.

"It is beautiful here," said Ellen, as we stopped under the branches of a giant oak and looked down a wide and undulating valley. "One could almost forget, here, that evil exists in the world; that work is necessary;

A neat French maid ushered me into a well-furnished reception-room.

that there is disease to fight with, error to combat, death to meet."

"And one could easily think that love and laughter, fruit and song, were all that go to make up life!" I cried. "One could easily forget that wagers must be won, and moons destroyed, for the sake of stately science!"

So we wandered on, idling in earnest and enjoying it withal, despite the advocates of constant toil, and so the day drew to its close, as all days must, and we started back for home. But under the branches of that giant, aged oak we stopped again, and I put my arm round Ellen's waist and asked her for the answer which I divined could not be long delayed.

She looked up into my face archly, not resisting my boldness, and said:

"Is it so long since I promised you to consider my answer—yes or no?"

"It is long when one is waiting, Ellen," I said.

"It has not been long to me," she answered, smiling. "I have seen you most days, Dick, and we have been working in a common cause—and—the time has passed very pleasantly."

"Then you are going to say yes?"

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"Tell me what *you* think, Dick!"

"I think you are going to consent to be my wife, to share your life with me as I mine with you, 'until death us do part,' as the old service says. That is what I think, Ellen."

And I kissed her.

"Then you have told me my answer, dear," she said, laughing softly. "Yes, it is quite true. I cannot help say yes."

Then I kissed her again, and I believe—materialist as

A couple of men came in.

I professed to be—that in my inmost soul I thanked God for the joy of that day.

Tired, but content, we rode home through the cooling dusk, and going into the laboratory, where Everett was running a stream of his liquid solvent into a small vat, I put my hand on his shoulder and told him our wish.

He listened as gravely as though I was recounting the success of a scientific experiment of an uncommon order, and simply said, in answer to my query:

"Ellen is a good girl, Richard, and quite old enough to decide for herself. I could wish her no better choice. Let it be when you will, after we have once put this affair beyond doubt."

He turned away to his work in the glow of the red-running fluid, and I beckoned Ellen to come to us and watch the stream of vivid fire. I think that time was the only occasion I ever heard him call me anything more familiar than "Millington."

CHAPTER IX.

In the Clutches of the Anarchists.

It was, if I remember right, just two months before the eclipse that I received a note at my rooms one evening, asking me to meet the editor of a well-known society paper at an address not far from my own in Upper Sloane Street, and to bring the note with me. I thought the request strange, but as the editor was a personal friend of mine and had then some of my work under consideration, I put on my hat and went, not deeming it necessary to leave word where I was going. It was a large house which I had often noticed, and was kept in first-rate style.

A neat French maid ushered me into a well-furnished reception-room and left me. Presently she came again and said, "Would I come this way?" It seemed curious, but still I complied, and was shown into a rather dark, study-looking room at the end of a right-angled passage.

"It was here that M'sieur wishes to speak to you," said the maid, in rather poor English. "He will presently to you come."

The door closed behind her with a queer snap, and I thought I heard other footsteps outside, but soon all was still. M'sieur, whoever he was, seemed in no great hurry to appear, and I grew impatient. Five minutes, ten, fifteen, twenty, passed, and still no sign. I rang the bell, walked about the room, banged the table, knocked on the door, tried it, *found it locked*, kicked it rang the bell again, and all without response. Everything was silent; there was neither sound of voices nor footsteps. It might have been a deserted house, buried underground, for all I could hear. Even the roar of London's ceaseless traffic found no entrance into that silent room.

After another frantic shaking and kicking of the unresponsive door, I turned to the window. That, too, was secured and bade defiance to my egress. It was strongly rabbeted and its panes were small, iron bars girded it, and the sashes were screwed together *from the outside*. There was no escape that way. Nor was the outlook from it promising. By a curiosity in the building of the house, it looked out into a sort of deep stone well, reaching from roof to basement and void, so far as I could see, of any break in the stonework save the one I peered through. It was like the *oubliette* of an ancient castle.

Utterly perplexed at my treatment, I rang the bell violently a score of times, and then I sat down to consider my position. I did not know a single person who had any great grudge against me, anyone whom I could suspect—unless it was some editor whom I had pestered in season and out with doggerel rhymes in my early days—and I hoped that I was only the victim of an unpleasant practical joke.

Still, the uncommon message, the French maid, the locked door, the grated window—these were most suspicious.

I had got thus far in my cogitations when the door was quickly unlocked and thrown open, and a couple of men came in. One advanced to the table, the other closed the door and stood with his back to it.

Both had revolvers in their hands. The one at the door, a short, ugly-featured man, of a Teutonic cast of countenance, I had never seen before; but the other—who stood smiling cynically at me—ah, I had seen *him!* It was his face I had seen that brief instant in the moonlight in Everett's garden; it was him I had noticed listening when I said good-night to Ellen and her father

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after the acceptance of the wager. It was M. Marachele, member of the Röntgen Club! He saw that I recognised him, and enjoyed my dismay, showing a fine set of teeth with his broad French smile.

"If M'sieur is agreeable," he said sauvely, "we will proceed to discuss the matter to which I am indebted for the honour of his presence. I have, as he will see, taken infinite pains to prevent our interview being unduly interrupted. M'sieur has doubtless satisfied himself upon that point?"

"I know nothing of this nonsense!" I cried angrily "I only know that I have been decoyed here and entrapped in this dungeon. I demand to know the reason for this clumsy trick."

"M'sieur is scarcely complimentary," he coolly returned. "I was rather priding myself on the ruse by which I have secured this conversation. But will M'sieur be again seated? I will ring for wine and cigars if he wishes."

By this time I had taken the measure and character of the two men, and resolved not to precipitate any harm to myself that might be impending. The Frenchman, I felt, was one of these elegant gentlemen who would stick at nothing in his dealings with me, save to pink me off in the most approved fashion, while the stolid German by the door looked like a man who made up in seriousness and sureness for what he lacked in refinement and humour. I was completely in the power of these two men, and must needs be careful. I sat down.

"I will not trouble you to ring at present," I said, "but it would be well if you would tell me the motive you have for this unlawful detention. I have enough respect for my life not to attempt an escape under present conditions," and I glanced at the polished barrels.

"You are sensible," said the Frenchman, sitting down opposite to me; "you face an unknown danger with the true philosophy of a scientific unbeliever. In that I admire you, M. Millington, for I, too, am an enemy of Religion and a friend of Man."

He paused, but I was silent.

"M'sieur has nothing to say? Perhaps his scepticism is only skin-deep, like his science? However, if you will listen, M. Millington, I will tell you why you are here and what we demand as the price of your release. Come and sit here, Stutter, our bird is safely caged.

"It is very little we want, friend Millington," he went on. "Something you can give us without danger to yourself or to your somewhat slender bank-account. We simply want the recipe for making that wonderful and powerful solvent with which M. Everett proposes to destroy the moon."

"Which you will never get from me!" I said.

I sent the German reeling from his seat by a well-planted blow between the eyes.

"That has yet to be seen," he answered with a true Parisian grin as his fingers closed on the trigger of his revolver.

"These little implements are marvellous persuaders, although I have other means of enforcing my request."

"Before I will even consider the request," I said, "I must know for what purpose you require this information. I must know who you are."

"You force me to tell you, then. And once you know, your death becomes a matter of imperative necessity unless you divulge this secret formula. I am M. Marachele, the unsuspected leader of European Anarchism, and I want this solvent to destroy—not the moon, but London. By some means or other I shall eventually obtain it, but unlike many of my comrades, I am a man of peaceful methods, so far as they are possible until the day of the social revolution." This was said ironically.

"And you expect me to assist you in that diabolical purpose?" I cried. "Your pair of consummate villains! I will not tell you anything!"

And springing suddenly from the chair I sent the German reeling from his seat by a well-planted blow between the eyes, and had my hand on the key in the door before he could recover himself. But before I could shoot the lock, M. Marachele's grip was on my neck and the cold barrel of his revolver to my temple.

"One effort more, and I fire," he said.

My hand dropped and I went back to the table. Stutter was on his feet again now, but beyond regarding me

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with a most malignant stare, was as undemonstrative as before.

"One more such attempt, and M'sieur will certainly pass into utter annihilation," said the Frenchman; "at any rate more speedily than he would if he grants the knowledge we so earnestly require."

"Why try to get it through me?" I asked sullenly, trying to temporise. "How do you know that I possess it?"

"I know *that*, beyond a doubt," he answered, with his most exasperating smile. "I choose you because your life is of no consequence to Science, and will not stop the great experiment. As a lover of Science I have a great desire to see M. Everett's grand demonstration, and I should not like to be compelled to kill so useful a man. Anarchy is already in debt to Science; she will be yet more so in time. Come, M. Millington, let us have your answer after calm thought, for I have another incentive to your consent, of which I have not yet spoken."

"And that is——?"

"If M'sieur *will* press me," shrugging his shoulders carelessly. "It is this. You are in love with M. Everett's daughter. M. Everett's daughter is at the present moment in my power elsewhere as you are here. If you consent to my terms she will be set free. If you refuse—— I need scarcely say more."

CHAPTER X.

Fencing with Fate.

"You fiends incarnate!" I cried. "You miserable hounds! Your devilish ingenuity is well worthy of the Anarchy you profess; well worthy of the colossal crime you have conceived. But I dare you to do your worst. I refuse!"

I wished my imperturbable foe to lose his temper and do something rash, but it was useless. He simply twirled his waxed moustache and rose to go.

"You are agitated, and do not see the consequences of your decision clearly, M. Millington," he said. "I will not take such an advantage of you. Let me put the facts briefly and plainly before you again. You and your lady-love are thoroughly in my power, but you alone know the secret, and you alone know my true identity. Tell me the formula, and Mdlle. Everett shall be at once set free. Yourself—well, you will be liberated when once the mine is laid that will place London in shapeless ruin. To release you before would be suicidal folly. Refuse, and both yourself and Mdlle. Everett will pay the penalty of death. I can say no more, but I will give you time to consider, to think clearly. I will give you twelve hours. It is now ten o'clock; at ten o'clock to-morrow morning you must decide your fate. M'sieur, I bid you *au revoir*! Come, Stutter."

They went out, locking and barring the door after them, and I was left alone with my very unpleasant thoughts.

I sat helplessly, I should think for half-an-hour, then I rose and paced the room trying to concoct some scheme with which to defeat the infernal plot. Surely a man was never face to face with such fearful alternatives. If I gave him the required information I was practically delivering the lives of London's millions into his merciless hands; perhaps preparing the way for the ultimate triumph of Anarchy and all that that implies.

I pictured to myself the day of doom for the unsuspecting city—the sudden melting away of the earth beneath in a hundred places as the solvent acted, the houses with their tenants, the streets with their crowded traffic, the great halls and theatres with their audiences, all falling headlong into formless wreck and ruin and dissolving into sightless mist; the soaring tongues of white flame, the desolation, the world-wide panic—and I groaned and clenched my hands, and said that I could not bear the sin of *that* upon my soul.

Then I thought of Ellen, of myself, and said in my heart that I could not be the cause of Ellen's death, even though a hecatomb of three million lives must pay for her's. And even for myself I shrank from death, life—with Ellen as a central joy therein—was far too bright to cast away, even for that dreamless rest of eternal sleep beyond the grave. In my desperation I grew frantic, and vented my frenzy on the door, the window, the walls, the floor, seeking some means of escape in the grey darkness of that awful night.

But there came no response to my shoutings, no result to my efforts, no sound from the busy outer world, and I sank back, exhausted, despairing, in my chair, as the soft light of four shaded glow-lamps lit up the room with their clear brilliancy.

All through the night the light remained, and at last, worn-out with useless planning and brain-cudgelling, I think I fell asleep. Any-way, I have no recollection of the lamps being extinguished, yet when I noticed the first glow of the dawn creep down the dim *oubliette*, the tiny filaments within the bulbs were no longer luminous.

I glanced at my watch mechanically; it was half-past six. I set it on the table listlessly and watched the fingers circling round to half-past eight. At that time according to my usual custom, I wound it up, with grim reflection, as I placed it in my pocket, that I might be run down before it was.

Half-past nine. My mind was not yet made up, though a feeling of resignation to coming self-sacrifice was stealing over me. If only I could communicate with Everett!

The two of us could surely contrive some plan to thwart these scoundrels. As I thought of this, a faint hope arose in my mind, a very faint hope, indeed, but a hope nevertheless, and if ever a man put more hard thinking into thirty minutes than I did that morning—In the midst of my plotting the door opened, and my two "friends" of the previous night stepped in. Both carried revolvers again, and after securing the door, both drew chairs and sat down to the table. Stutter was silent as before; Marachele was, if anything, more voluble and affable than he had been at first.

"Ten o'clock, M'sieur!" he said gaily, consulting an elegant gold chronometer. "As you see, I am punctuality itself. I have not kept you waiting the fraction of a second. Yet you looked tired, M'sieur, and you are doubt'ess thoroughly prepared for *déjeuner*. I beg your pardon a thousand times for my inhospitality, but I feel compelled to get this great question settled without further delay. You will place me under an infinite obligation, M. Millington, if you will answer my question of last night."

I felt that if I was to take advantage of the small, very small loophole of escape that I thought I saw, I must be very careful in what I said. So I replied:

"Before I can tell you my decision, I must know three things more definitely."

"And those are, M'sieur——?"

"First, the precise way you will deal with Miss Everett and myself in the event of my refusal; next,

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some further guarantee that you have Miss Everett in your power than your mere word; and lastly, some guarantee of our liberation if I consent. I must know these, or I decline to answer at all."

"M'sieur, you remind me of the fly who threatened the spider whose web was round him! But I see no objection to satisfying your praiseworthy curiosity. The guarantee you have of the truth of my assertions is the best assurance that, under the circumstances you have. It is the bond of my honour, my word."

"*Your honour!*" I said derisively.

"Yes, M. Millington," he said, keeping his temper admirably. "*My* honour. You have yet to learn that the word of an Anarchist is his bond; that he recognises no other bond; and that that is why he is in an eternal state of rebellion against all other bonds and laws with which the arrogant majority seek to restrain him. The twin principles of Anarchy, my friend, are love and truth, and love and truth only."

"Chiefly love, as evidenced in this proposed crime of yours and the means you are using to accomplish it!" I cried scoffingly.

He did not notice the interruption.

"Then consider," he pursued, "what guarantee more than this can you demand? I tell you, and it must suffice, that I will keep my promise, that you can depend upon my word. If you tell me the secret of the solvent, Mdlle. shall be set free to-day, and yourself just as soon as the fate of London is so assured that your liberation cannot prevent it, nor lead to any detection. You must own, most obstinate one, that this is simply self-defence. As to the other alternative, that is a simple matter. My comrade here, whose only love, whose only religion, is the Cause, will merely present you with certain small spheres of lead that are at present in his revolver, and you will pass abruptly into that state of nothingness which, as M. Everett would tell you, is the common lot of all intelligence in the endless time to come. And with Mdlle. Everett—the same."

"Then I must tell you the secret," I said, with an air of utter dejection.

He elevated his eyebrows slightly and shrugged his shoulders. Stutter coughed, and a sudden gleam of triumph shone in his eyes.

"As M'sieur pleases. He knows the inevitable result of either choice. Here are pen and papers—you will write it down."

Most unfortunately the materials used for the solvent were simple and easily obtained, though costly owing to quantity, so I had to write them down and then hesitate over the means of manipulation.

"I can tell you all but one thing," I said, at length, knitting my brows.

"And that one particular, M. Millington?" queried the Frenchman sharply.

"That one particular is the most important," I said. "It is the exact order in which the bi-sulphates are added to the clear solution. Any other order than the right one would produce a terrific explosion, an occurrence which even an Anarchist would prefer at a distance."

"Is this true?" asked Marachele, riveting his eyes upon my face and abandoning his suave manner. "Will you repeat it, or are you fooling to gain time? Your answer, or I shall try the surer way of obtaining the formula from M. Everett."

"I swear that I have told you the truth!" I said, keeping my voice and eyes steady, though small beads of perspiration stood out on my forehead. "I cannot remember that one point. Neither can I see what it would profit me to waste time, I am so infernally hungry."

"And you propose——?"

"To write to Everett, asking him for the complete formula, telling him that my life and his daughter's depends upon it."

"You are clever, M. Millington, but scarcely so clever as you think. You would put our friend upon his guard. But I must believe you, and perhaps your way is best. You will write a note—at my dictation. You will write this:

"Dear friend.—I am in a position of danger where neither you nor the police can reach me, and the price of my life is the complete formula for your m tter-solvent, together with a small quantity of the pe fected fluid. You must send it by the bearer of this note, asking no questions, or my life will be at once forfeited and your own will be in equal danger.

"Richard Millington."

Having no help for it, I complied, and handed the missive to the sardonic foe. He grinned, passing it to Stutter, who immediately went out, locking the door behind him. I was alone with the most dangerous man in Europe. He took out an elaborately worked cigarette case and presented it to me.

"They are Latakia," he said coolly. "They will beguile the two hours I have given Stutter to bring the reply. He will observe certain cautions, which you will of course perceive to be absolutely necessary in the case for my sake. At present my identity is wholly unsuspected by the omniscients of Scotland Yard, and I prefer it to remain so. Shall I tell you something about myself and the plan I have in mind?"

Affecting a stoical bearing I was far from feeling, I selected a weed and nodded an ungracious assent to his suggestion.

CHAPTER XI.

Necessity has no Law.

Of a truth, necessity has no law, and impelled by that inflexible power, I was busily perfecting the details of what, under ordinary circumstances, would have been a horrible crime. The man whom my plottings were directed against, rattled on unsuspecting.

"As you have no doubt guessed, M. Millington," he said, settling himself easily in his chair, "my membership of the Röntgen Club was simply to add to my knowledge of advanced chemical discoveries. It also tended to support my assumed character of a wealthy man of scientific hobbies. And though I hold the secrets of half Europe's social undercurrents and the lives of scores of well-known men and women in my grasp, there are only nine living persons besides Stutter and yourself who know that I am in any way connected with Anarchy. I am the leader of yearly increasing thousands who have never seen me, never heard my name, never even heard of me at all except as a distant guiding hand, a central brain to the movement, unknown, and because unknown, safe from the most astute spies of the Governments."

"And these ten?" I asked, resolving to learn all I could.

"Each of the ten nationalities of Europe has a chief organiser," he said, "and to these alone my present name and address and disguise is known. M. Stutter is the Prussian organiser, for instance; M. Emile Recluse is the Belgian, the English leader is——"

He lowered his voice involuntarily, and I started at the

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name I caught. It was that of one of the best known and most popular members of the House, sitting on which side I will not say.

"And I am in no danger from these," he continued. "I have not a scrap of Anarchist literature or material of any kind in the house, or about myself, and have never put my signature to any paper in connection with it."

"And now, with your kind assistance, I shall strike my greatest blow at civilisation and democracy. At my instructions London will be placarded with the threat of a vague destruction and an urgent appeal to all Anarchists to leave the city at a given date, about a week previous to the great event. A sufficient number of cylinders, fitted with an exhausting apparatus and half-filled with the terrible solvent, will be buried at convenient places, and presto! the thing will be done. The greatest centre and stronghold of capitalism the world has ever seen will be sent to everlasting destruction."

"And after that?" I inquired, with a feeling of loathing for the man.

"After that, Monsieur. Surely the rest is easy. If London, why not Paris? And after Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Rome, Petersburg, and all and every abiding place of power and wealth that will refuse to yield to the summons of the Army of Freedom that will spring up from the ranks of the common folk. And after that? An end of all government, an end of all law, and the beginning of the era of universal Anarchy and brotherly love."

"Such as obtained *before* laws were made and governments originated, and men ate one another and none could say to them nay—such brotherly love as that!" I cried, revolting at the vista of wholesale murder he so lightly unfolded.

"You are caustic, M'sieur," he returned, with the utmost *sang-froid*. "You have no philosophy in your nature."

And he relapsed into silence, until, at half-past twelve, the key turned in the lock and Stutter entered, carrying a folded paper and a small package. And looking at his face, on which success was written, I no longer hesitated over the resolve I had formed. If Ellen was to be spared, if London and the world was to be saved from becoming the prey of these human wolves, I must kill them both. There was no other choice; no other sure way.

In a few gruff words Stutter told how he had disguised himself at a comrade's house and then presented my written request at Everett's door; how my friend, after a little futile questioning, had complied with it, begging for news of me and of his daughter, which, the wretch added, with a truly German grin, he had earnestly promised.

I examined the glass phial he had brought, and saw that it contained a mixture of the solvent and manufactured air. So far, so good. I then compared the recipe with the one I had written, and found serious discrepancies. Two entirely wrong substances were included, and the order of mixing was entirely reversed. I deliberately twisted up the paper I had written to relight my half-burnt cigarette, and as its black shreds fluttered to the floor, with the keen glances of the two men fixed upon me, I rapidly thought out my procedure.

It was plain to see why Everett had done that. He suspected more than Stutter thought, and did not mean to give up the precious information without a struggle. Perhaps he would follow Stutter and track him here. Sooner or later. M. Marachele, with his vast secret organisation at his back, would obtain possession of the secret, would take a terrible revenge upon us, even at the cost of a thousand lives.

This spider at the centre of the web of Anarchy must die and his Teutonic comrade with him. With the remembrance of his cold-blooded words fresh in my ears, and the thought of Ellen in my mind, I was absolutely remorseless in my judgment. They must die, these two, and none of their comrades must know by whose hand.

"Well, M. Millington," said the Frenchman, "are you prepared to test this sample in our presence? We are dying to assist."

"Without pleasure," I answered sullenly. "But I shall want a large clear bottle, tightly corked, something small and hard to place inside for the purpose of the experiment, an air-pump, and a small hypodermic syringe. I suppose you have these things?"

"Certainly," said Marachele, "you will have to fetch them, Stutter; the maid's notice expired last night, and she went home this morning. You will find them all in my study."

The German went out, locking the door again; he never relaxed his caution in the least. Marachele, however, thinking I was completely in their power, carelessly walked across to the window, with his hands in his pockets. This act of imprudence was what I was expecting, waiting for. With a bound I sprang upon him and gripped him round the waist from behind, throwing him to the floor. He fell with an oath and a loud cry for help, but my weight was upon his back and I held my grasp like a vice.

"Remember, friend," I said, "you have taken care to make this room sound-proof, and shouting is of no avail!"

He struggled terrifically, but I was more frantic, and any moment Stutter might return. I lifted him bodily from the floor about a foot and then dashed him down head lowermost, with all my force, almost cracking his skull.

"Curse you!" he cried, "you——" but the sentence was unfinished.

I seized him again and battered him on the floor with a madman's strength and fury, stunning him out of all consciousness. Then with a hurried movement I drew the revolver from his coat and overturned the heavy table across his back.

As I stepped to the door, it opened, and Stutter with an armful of articles came in. He saw the evidence of the mêlée, and was about to retreat, but I was too quick for him, and had pulled him into the room and snatched the key from his fingers and locked the door before he could disengage himself from his burden. And then I was ready for him.

"One movement, and I will shoot you like the dog you are," I said.

He growled some guttural Teutonic oath and sprang at me, his hand going to his pocket as he came. I fired point-blank, three bullets in quick succession, and he fell like a log, not killed, but badly hit, and swearing horribly.

"Now, my worthy friend!" I said sneeringly. "You will have to submit to the undignified operation of being bound. My Frenchman is coming to, I believe, and I cannot be troubled with attending to both of you at once."

In a few minutes I had him secured to a chair with the tablecloth, and then I turned to Marachele. He was stirring, though scarcely conscious yet. I moved the table from him and bound him also, then sat and waited

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his recovery. I had plenty of time now, and no fear of interruption, and before I made an end of the wretches must know where Ellen was imprisoned.

Presently Marachele opened his eyes, and their malignant gaze, travelling round the room, and taking in the import of the scene, rested at last upon myself.

"So you have turned the tables upon us?" he said bitterly. "You are cleverer than I thought, M'sieur.

Gripped him round the waist from behind.

Of course you will make an end of us now—even at the risk of a police inquiry and a coroner's inquest?"

"Under usual conditions I should be foolish to kill you," I said. "I should give you up to the law. But as things are, with your secret society at your back to destroy us before we could give our evidence against you, I should be more than foolish to let you live—especially when I have no fear of justice. Have you forgotten the properties of the solvent here? the experiment at the Röntgen with the granite ball? Would any coroner's inquest have discovered the causes of that globe's demise? Are your bodies less easy to dispose of than lumps of granite?"

He started, and his face turned a still paler shade than its present almost deathly hue.

"Malediction! You are a fiend. But get on with your killing and let it be over. At any rate oblivion will be better than this fearful pain in my head."

"I have something to know yet, M. Marachele," said I. "Where is Miss Everett?"

"That I shall never tell you."

"Then I must try Herr Stutter," I said. "I will give you five minutes, Herr, to tell me the address of Miss Everett and how I may rescue her."

The German scowled blackly, darted a swift glance at his chief, and remained silent.

"Come," I urged, looking at my watch, "unless you tell me I will put a bullet through you without scruple. If you will tell me, and other things I may ask you afterwards, I will re-consider your fate. In four minutes now."

"I know nothing of the Fräulein," he replied sullenly, after a pause.

"Three minutes," I remarked.

"I swear I am ignorant," he reiterated.

"Die, then!" I cried, and steadying my nerves, fired. His head fell on his chest. I had taken my first life.

When the smoke cleared away I turned to the Frenchman.

"Perhaps—now—you will tell me," I said. "I promise you the same time and conditions."

"Which you would never fulfil," he groaned scornfully, meeting my gaze with a defiant eye. "You dare not spare me, so make an end of this fooling."

"You refuse to tell me?"

"I absolutely refuse."

There was a gleam of spiteful gratification on his sallow features, and on the verge of my second crime I hesitated. If I gave him an hour's liberty, or even life, how could I be sure, that with his clever brain he would not invent some means of escape, some means of communication with his subordinates? And if he escaped—Anarchy. The fate of the world hung on my hesitation. Yet if I did not know where Ellen was, how long might I not be in finding her? I made one more effort.

"If you will tell me," I said, "and give me the names and addresses of the nine other organisers through whom you work, I will spare you."

He met my desperate ruse unflushingly.

"You dare not," he said. "Your promise is a lie. Again I refuse."

"Then Heaven have mercy on your soul," I cried. And taking aim at his heart with a coolness and precision I could scarcely credit myself with, I fired. He sprang up, lifting the chair with him, then fell back dead.

As the report died away in the awful stillness of that charnel room, there came a loud knocking and kicking at the door, and unlocking it with pistol in hand ready for the worst, I came face to face with—Austin Everett and his daughter Ellen!

CHAPTER XII.

An Appeal.

I made a weak attempt to push Ellen back, but she linked her arm in her father's and resolutely went in. Then, throwing the revolver down, I sank upon a chair and buried my face in my hands, exhausted by the mental strain of the last twelve hours. Presently a soft arm stole round my neck and a sweet voice, that I had scarce dared hope to hear again, whispered in my ear:

"Don't give way, dear. This is terrible but not so terrible as we feared. You are safe, at any rate, no matter what has happened to these two."

"But how have you got here?" I asked. "I thought you were violently detained elsewhere."

"I? I have never been away from home," she said. "What made you think that?"

I had been duped, that was all. I explained, and

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little by little told them the whole story, not extenuating my double murder in the least.

"You have done right, Millington," said Everett, with his usual imperturbable calmness. "Such minds as these are only blunders of Nature in her efforts towards the perfect type of man she will never produce. They are better dead for that reason alone, and when their lives stand between civilisation and chaos the killing of them becomes a duty of the highest order, a duty demanded on behalf of all that is best in humanity."

"And what say you, Ellen?" I asked.

"I say that you have done nobly, Dick," she answered. "I think the crime would have been in leaving these men alive. The law could not or would not touch them, have taken account of a scheme of which only ourselves know the possibility. I love and honour you all the more, dear, for what you have done, even while I regret that you have been compelled to do it."

Those brave words of hers dispelled my last qualm, and I recovered my self composure.

"We have now to obliterate the traces of what has been done, as I intended," I said, and unfolded my plan.

I need not go into further detail here as to how we exhausted the air in the room and then destroyed the bodies and all evidence of their existence by the use of that terrible solvent; how we convinced the landlord that his late tenant had been suddenly summoned abroad and left the house in our hands—which conviction we clenched by paying the quarter's rent and giving a quarter's notice; how we re-papered the room ourselves on the quiet, to hide the effects of the solvent, and how I removed from that dangerous neighbourhood and took better if more expensive apartments nearer to St. John's Wood.

For the rest, the very precautions Marachele had himself taken to hide his identity and isolate himself from all ties was itself in our favour, and after a month's harassing work and suspense, we felt secure. Nor did anything occur afterwards to shake our sense of safety. But I can honestly say that that night and morning of horror added a year to my age, and shook my nerves so badly that they have never been thoroughly sound since.

How did Ellen and her father discover my whereabouts? That is simple enough. They suspected foul play when Stutter brought the strange request, and unknown to that now deceased worthy, followed him as fast as they could, Everett luckily recognising him after he had taken off his disguise on the way back. Ellen would have communicated with the police, but her father determined to sift the matter to the bottom himself first, and after a little trouble with the locks, succeeded in getting into the house.

There was only a month now to the time of the great eclipse, and after New Year's day the snow lay thick and hard upon the ground. I would have liked to sleigh and skate with Ellen, but all our time was now taken up with preparations for the grand *coup*. As it drew nearer, while her interest and mine increased, Everett's seemed to lessen. He did the routine work in a mechanical way and seemed always in a brown study. He spoke but little at meals, and took long walks alone in the clear, frosty mornings, left Ellen and I much to ourselves, and was altogether too pre-occupied with some subject of which we were ignorant to be a cheerful companion.

But Ellen and I were inseparable. I loved her the more each day I saw her, and our chief topic of conversation, after the usual nonsense that all lovers must talk, to be in the fashion, was the great event. To my surprise, Ellen grew to dislike the idea of it, and all my old apprehensions, allayed at first by Everett's hypnotic spell, revived.

And the nearer the time came, the less we approved of the colossal experiment.

We thought of the complete cessation of the lunar tides, and all that would mean to shipping coasts, and harbours. No tides!—for the solar tides are scarcely perceptible—no rise and fall of the sea! And the storm, the great world wave that would be caused by the sudden stoppage—what of that? In fact so troubled we became that we rose in open rebellion, and appealed to Everett not to send any solvent in the electrion sphere.

He heard us patiently, though his thoughts were with some other subject, we could see, and he answered us gently, but he was firm.

"I have given my word to the world," he said, "and the world shall know that when I speak, I speak in earnest."

"But think of the awful effects of the abrupt stoppage of the great tidal wave," I said. "How it will ruin our harbours and seaside resorts, as well as produce such a storm as will likely wreck everything afloat."

"I have thought of all that," he said, with some asperity; "and I have so little fear of it that I have chartered a steam yacht to take us to the Bermudas as soon as the affair is over, as we were talking last night. The *Lady Ellen*—a coincidental name, isn't it?—is now being fitted up at Southampton, and I propose that you and Ellen be quietly married the day before the eclipse, and that you start with me for your wedding trip the day after."

"If the yacht is not smashed up by then!" I said. "I must still confess to a fear of the consequences of this rash cosmic venture. I was looking at this scrap of old newspaper yesterday, dated 1896, and this is the damage caused by a sea wave from a simple local earthquake in Japan on June 15 of that year:

"In the prefecture of Aomori, 346 lives lost, 213 people injured, 840 houses destroyed. In the prefecture of Iwate, 23,309 lives lost, 23,340 people injured, 5,920 houses destroyed. In the prefecture of Miyagi, 3,344 lives lost, 1,184 people injured, 715 houses destroyed!

"In place of a local earthquake like that, put a sudden shake of the whole earth and a universal sea-wave, and then think of the frightful death-roll that will follow."

"I do not think your apprehensions will be fulfilled," said Everett, "though, of course, there must of necessity be an unknown factor in a problem of this magnitude. The wave caused by the ceasing of the tides will be a very small one, I am convinced, and will scarcely reach above high-water mark, and then the sea will subside at most places to a point midway between high and low water. The effect I am most in fear of, though so far as my calculations go, it will be a very slight effect, is a probable alteration of the earth's orbit—a nearer approach to a circular path, and consequently climatic changes. But these are only speculations; the experiment must be made before we can reduce them to certainties."

"That will be bad enough," I said, "but still I think you have underrated my previous objection. Just hear what the late Sir R. Ball wrote—almost prophetically—in his *Story of the Heavens*, Chap. iii:

"If the moon were suddenly struck out of existence, we should be immediately apprised of the fact by a wail from every seaport in

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the kingdom. From London and from Liverpool we should hear the same story—the rise and fall of the tide had almost ceased. "The ships in dock could not get out; the ships outside could not get in, and the maritime commerce of the world would be thrown into dire confusion."

"I do not think matters will be quite so bad as that," said Everett, "but we shall know best when we have seen. The whole future progress of science in the right direction hangs on the success of my project, and the vindication of my theory of the infinite divisability of matter. The moon must be sacrificed for science. After all, it is only a dead world for the sake of a living one."

"But, father," put in Ellen—as a forlorn hope, she afterwards confessed to me—"the moon is not so dead as by common consent she is reputed to be. You know that recent researches at Lick, Paris, and Arequipa have detected a faint twilight on her surface, a kind of vapour in the deep valleys when being lit up by the sun. As long ago as 1876 Dr. Klein discovered a small crater of then recent origin in the plain of Mare Vaporum. And have not great patches of vegetation been observed in Mare Nectaria for years past? Surely, instead of a dead world, it is a world just waking into life."

"I do not care to contradict you, Ellen," said the man of science, smoothing her soft hair with his delicate hand, "but I must tell you that in spite of these discoveries, the moon is a dead world, and will so remain till February 4th, next. The much-debated discoveries of Dr. Klein are open to more than a passing doubt; the vapour seen in the valleys and craters has been conclusively shown to be merely fine steam raised by the sun in the long lunar days from the ice into which the coldness of the long lunar nights has frozen all the water that now remains on its surface. And Dr. Johnstone Stoney has conclusively shown us how and why the true atmosphere of the moon has long ago escaped into outer space. Let me hear no more of this folly, Ellen; science cannot stand aside for sentiment."

"Of course not, father," said she, and the subject dropped.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Eve of the Eclipse.

Surely the sun shone never so brightly in the clear and frosty air of a typical winter day as that morning Ellen and I drove to St. George's and were made man and wife. For that occasion even Everett waived his stern materialism and his reserved manner, and he came with us to the church and gave his daughter away in the most approved conventional style, as though disbelief was a thing unknown to him, and Science and Religion had ever been at peace. As for ourselves, we cared nothing for the error that lay at the back of that impressive ceremonial. The fact that we two stood there with joined hands, and looked into each other's eyes with love, and knew that none could come between us from that day, was enough for us.

We lunched together in town, and after a drive in the park and a farewell to the few friends we had invited to the quiet wedding, returned home.

Everett at once relapsed into his usual reverie whilst busy putting the finishing touches to the white globe of electrion that lay in the workshop at the back.

Its many wedge-shaped segments, cast and fitted with mathematical precision were, all save one, adjusted in their places, and their outer ends formed the periphery of the shining sphere. In the centre, to which access was gained where the remaining section would be placed, were two hermetically-sealed chambers, one almost a perfect vacuum and the other filled with a mixture of that awful solvent and ordinary air.

An air-pump, worked by spring clockwork, connected the two chambers, and, when set in motion, would gradually transfer the air from the solvent tank to the other, and was so timed as to complete its task in twenty-five minutes. Six minutes were thus allowed for sealing up the last section and nineteen for the transit from the earth to the moon. There was sufficient energy latent in that innocent-looking fluid, Everett told us, to dissolve into pre-etheric substance a mass of matter equal in density to one and a half moons.

Ellen's arm shivered in mine as she stood with me, watching the final preparations, but we made no further appeal. We were content in our own happiness, and now that to-morrow would see the greatest experiment that the world had ever witnessed, our curiosity and excitement got the better of our fears.

That night, at Everett's desire—for his money flowed freely for anything connected with his pursuits, although he made no social stir—I sent off a cable message to the principle scientific centres of the world, giving them a brief outline of his scheme, and expressing a hope that they would utilise the precious opportunity of the last solar eclipse in the history of the world to the full. I also sent a note of invitation to Ademas J. Killiker, Bishop Hearty, and about a dozen of our most intimate acquaintances of the Röntgen, to be present at our house the next morning in time for the event.

Then, after assisting Everett to place in position the ponderous lead weights that were needful to prevent the movement of the sun-attracted mass of electrion, we went into the house. Ellen was busy till late packing a few things of her own for our start next day, and it was to a very short and far from restful sleep that we all retired on the eve of the eclipse. The sense of that impending event, which might have momentous events not even Austin Everett could foresee or remedy, oppressed me more than I cared to say.

But Ellen had grown confident and enthusiastic again, and when the first flush of the dawn came, with a clear sky fulfilling our most exacting desires, I, too, fell in with her mood. As I strolled down the garden after our hasty breakfast, a couple of electric four-wheelers, whose drivers looked aggrieved at being abroad so early in such chilly weather, drew up at the gate. Our select party of spectators had arrived.

CHAPTER XIV.

External Contact.

"What do you think of our home-made aërolite, Mr. Killiker?" asked Ellen, as after the usual greetings and the congratulations bestowed upon myself, we adjourned to the garden. "How do you like the workmanship of this little world that is soon to be traversing the wilds of space?"

"I think it's a smart affair," said the American ambiguously, "but I'd own to be an all-fired maniac if I believed *that* will blow the moon to pieces, as your note suggested, Mr. Millington."

Ademas J. Killiker, I need scarcely say, was sometimes brusque to the verge of impoliteness.

"And you would be right Mr. Killiker," said Everett calmly, as, watch in hand, he stood by the shining globe. "This is simply the vehicle by which I shall convey the fluid that will reduce the moon to pre-etheric substance

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as easily as it destroyed the granite ball in the glass on the table of the Röntgen Club the night we arranged the terms of this wager of ours."

"To be frank with you, Mr. Everett," said Killiker, with a Yankee's inexpressible smile. "I had clean forgotten that little arrangement until last night! But I'm game all through, and I've brought the cheque with me. I have it here."

And he tapped the breast pocket of his coat.

"Then you really mean to say," said the Bishop, turning to my friend, and looking rather scared, I thought, "that you seriously propose to destroy the moon, to alter the order of Nature that God has ordained, to interfere in the workings of the Solar System?"

"Exactly so, my dear sir," said Everett, in a rather superior tone. "Science, on the ceaseless march of her progress, cannot stop for the sent mental considerations advanced on behalf of a worn-out theology. Continent after continent, domain after domain, has fallen under her beneficent sway, and the time has come when the barrier that has hitherto bound her experiments to the earth is to be overpassed. Created or evolved, ordained or grown together of circumstances, no arrangement in Nature shall henceforth be sacred from the moulding hand of science.

"To me has first fallen the power to penetrate the pall of ignorance that surrounds us, to break the isolation that has held us in its bonds of silence through the centuries, and to me shall fall the honour of using that power to its fullest extent. To-day, for the first time in the history of the world—nay, for the first time in the history of the solar system—the gulf of space shall be bridged, and a planet shall be struck from its path and dissolved into utter oblivion."

"Oh!" said the Bishop, rather meekly.

Everett glanced at his watch and made some mental calculations, then put his hand on the lever of the clockwork in the centre of the sphere.

"Yes," he said, as though repeating a lesson he had learnt by heart, "in precisely one hour and thirty-five minutes after external contact, I shall touch this lever and set the mechanism working. Six minutes later I shall release the sphere from its weights, and nineteen minutes after that, at the first moment of total eclipse, it will strike near the central peak of the crater of Copernicus with a velocity that will shatter its solid mass to fragments, setting free the solvent—cleared by then of the air now mixed with it—to do its almost instantaneous work. There will be a bright flash of white flame on the dark ball of the moon, then a denser, utter darkness, and then the sudden sunlight again. The moon will have ceased to exist, and the tides will be no more."

None of us spoke for a time. For myself, I must confess that, somehow, his words awoke no response in my mind, and though the Bishop seemed overwhelmed by the almost superhuman powers that Everett claimed, something in me whispered that neither the destruction of a world nor of the whole system was of any weight in the balance between the eternally conflicting theories of Religion and Science.

The suggestion of the infinite that his words contained dwarfed his great experiment into puny insignificance, and the strong bias of my nature towards the ancient truths, rose up anew within me. The work of his mesmeric intellect, weakened by his refusal to listen to my appeal, was undone at last.

The spell fell from me completely. Where the universe had seemed so plain to my philosophy before, it loomed out indistinct and vast again, though with a glimmering of light and purpose from somewhere far beyond my ken. Only when I turned and looked in Ellen's eyes, and saw therein the reflex of that earthly love, which, after all, alone makes life worth living, did calm grow out of mental chaos, and out of unrest, peace.

"What if some mishap occurs?" broke in Killiker's voice upon my reflections. "Supposing you set the clockwork going too soon, or supposing this awful stuff of yours began to act on the earth now, and dissolved it away?"

"Nothing of that sort will happen, Mr. Killiker," said Everett. "And if it did, what then? Surely we have all read Schopenhauer, and 'The Crack of Doom?' But had we not better be waiting for the beginning in the observatory?"

We crowded in as well as we could, and waited for the darkness to creep on the sun's edge. The focussed image of the luminary glowed awhile in almost spotless roundness on the black screen, and then at the exact moment predicted by the astronomers, the sweep of a dark circle appeared on the edge and slowly advanced upon the disc.

"External contact is now passed," said Everett absently.

The darkness and the silence of the little observatory grew oppressive after we had watched that circle of gloom swallowing up the light for half an hour.

"I say," remarked Killiker suddenly, tired of long stillness. "This destruction of the moon is all very well, but I don't see how it advances the possibility of transit between ourselves and the other planets. To send something to one of them seems possible; to convey passengers would be rather difficult, I guess."

"Not at all, my dear sir," replied Everett. "I should only need to weld a sufficient mass of metal, other than electrion, into my sphere, to reduce its speed to reasonable limits. I could make it hollow and fit it with all appliances for maintaining life for months; make it, in fact, a travelling observatory."

"And how get back to the earth if you arrived at Venus, for instance?" put in another of the party.

"If the atmosphere of Venus is breathable," said the man of illimitable resource, "I could transform my sphere into a body that would be responsive only to the earth's attraction and would carry me safely back."

"And if the atmosphere of Venus was not breathable?"

"In that eventuality," said Everett, "the adventurer would never return."

"Phew!" ejaculated the American; "I kinder guess that sphere will never start with Ademas J. Killiker inside."

"By the way," said one of the others, "I was talking of this affair to M. Marachele about six months ago, and while ridiculing the possibility of anything of the kind, he pointed out with great detail how disastrous the effect would be, particularly remarking how the cessation of the lunar tides would act on the length of the day. As everyone knows, the tides have been the cause of the length of the day being prolonged from four hours to twenty-four, and this process will be enormously slowed down when there is only the slight friction of the solar tides to continue it. He also said that the inevitable outcome of thus leaving the solar tides to operate alone would be the arrival of a time—of course, in the remote future—when the earth would always present one face to the sun as Mercury does; as the moon does to the earth."

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"By which time science will be able to control the movements of the solar system as easily as it controls the constituents of a gas or liquid," said Everett. "But we will go outside now. It will soon be time to start our globe on its journey."

"*Apropos* of this," said the other, as we filed through the doorway, out of the darkness into the grey half-light, "has anyone here heard anything of M. Marachele lately? He seems to have left us rather suddenly."

"I have not heard anything of our French friend for some time," replied Everett, looking at me the while with admirable calmness,

The rest confessed an equal ignorance, and neither Everett nor I felt inclined to volunteer further information regarding him.

CHAPTER XV.

The Spurt of White Flame.

The black rim of the moon, the serrations of its hills and valleys silhouetted on the sun, had now crept half-way on the fiery disc. An extra chill came in the air, a breeze sprang up, the light perceptibly paled.

Fortunately, the sky was very clear, only a few faint wisps of haze floating high in the south-east, like the straying tresses of some diaphanous spirit of the starry deep.

Slowly, as we gazed in silence, the dark curve grew, the luminous arc decreased, and out of the dulling sky shone one or two faint dots of light—the planets and the brighter stars. One hour and thirty minutes gone—one hour and thirty five.

"Time," said Everett.

The others crowded round as his fingers touched the delicate lever of the clock-work, and released the remaining section of the sphere from its weights and fitted it in its resting-place. A few turns of three stout screws and it was secure. A minute and a half was yet left to us. The Bishop stepped forward agitatedly, and laid a shaking grasp on my friend's arm.

"If it is not too late, friend, I beg you to yet think twice—to desist from this rash experiment!"

"It *is* too late!" said Everett, shaking off the grasp with more anger than I had ever seen him manifest before, "and I would not stay it if I could. Cut the ropes Millington, and all of you stand clear!"

As he spoke Ellen passed me the long-handled knife we had prepared for the purpose. Four swift, shearing strokes of its keen edge, and the cords that held the weights together fell asunder, letting them fall. A moment's pause, a gentle rolling motion of the globe, and then——

"She's off!" cried Killiker.

The shining sphere of white rose slanting from the ground, soaring majestically eastwards towards the darkening sun. A second it loomed there, indistinct and vast, betwixt us and the far-off orb, then its size diminished rapidly to a dark spot sunk in immeasurable distance, that passed from our sight with the speed of the swiftest thought. Out of the east, as it vanished, came down a whispered hiss, a prolonged sibilation in the air, like the distant wailing echo of a long-drawn scream of pain.

We looked at each other with faces ashen grey in the twilight of the eclipse.

"What is that?" cried several voices together.

"It is the noise made by the passage of our sphere through the upper layers of the atmosphere at the rate of several hundred miles an hour," said Everett, closing his chronometer with a snap, "and in eighteen minutes the last eclipse will be over."

Not one of us spoke, each waiting in straining suspense for the moment fraught with such tremendous possibilities.

Fifteen minutes more.

The moon was nearly central over the sun now, only a vivid semi-circle of light fringing its inner edge. From behind it the radiant filaments and sheets of the corona began to glow with a pearly light. Arcturus, swung high in the heavens, shone out, with the main stars of Boötes and the Northern Crown, and one or two in Cassiopea, the Lady's Chair.

Twelve minutes—ten minutes more.

The line of sun was thin and bright, like the sweep of a sharpened sickle half-circling the bulking moon. The stellate halo of the corona encompassed it with a growing distinctness and brilliancy, while through its sheets of hazy glow shot here and there long bright streamers of intenser gleam. At the north and south, close on the rim of the sun, the solar prominences blazed out in lurid redness. The sky took on a darker tinge. Venus appeared, more stars twinkled into sight in the Greater Bear and the misty band of the Milky Way, while on earth the silence and dimness of the passing night had something awful in its strangeness. The cocks in the neighbouring back gardens stopped crowing and went to roost, the sparrows ceased their morning twitterings, a canary of Ellen's in the house burst into a quavering song.

Five minutes—three, two.

Surely the eclipse was total now. The body of the moon appeared of an inky darkness, not flat, but like the great black ball she really was. The corona was brighter, the prominences more vivid. Those great red sprays of burning hydrogen leapt in flames a hundred thousand miles long from the sea of whirling gases in which they were born, flickered and sank, and rose again with truly appalling speed. Out of the hearts of fiery tempests that would engulf a world, those flaming prominences darted out, piercing the lighter vapours like tongues of blood; twisting, sinking, rising, at the rate of 200,000 miles an hour.

The sky was now sprinkled with faint dot indications of its constellations of splendour, the air grew icily cold, and somewhere in the distance a dog howled mournfully. "What if, after all, Everett's experiment should upset the balance of the system?" came the thought into my mind.

"In one minute more—in thirty seconds—ten seconds five, one!" counted Everett calmly.

And then——

An instant of utter darkness as the lunar shadow swept swiftly over us—the utter darkness of full eclipse.

Then with a spasm of feeling I cannot describe—a strange admixture of dread, suspense, curiosity, bravado—I saw a dazzling spurt of white flame burst suddenly out from the blackness of the moon's disc, about one third of the diameter from the edge.

Bright, clear, intense, it shone for a moment—a moment in which I could count my heart-beats, and Ellen's as she clung to me—then a dull glow shot out from it in all ways, enveloping the stricken orb. Then it paled, contracted, and was gone. Another moment, and the solar prominences and the fringing glory of the great corona vanished, swallowed into the darkness, and only the stars shone in the black heavens.

* * * * *

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Whilst I counted a score that awful darkness lasted —a darkness that could almost be felt and heard. Ellen clung closer still to me, and all of us reached out hands to each other in the gloom that had devoured alike both moon and sun.

"What has happened, Mr. Everett?" asked Killiker, in a hoarse whisper. "Is everything going to eternal smash?"

"Not yet, gentlemen," said the man whose genius had shattered a world, speaking in his most cool and confident tone. "This darkness is merely owing to the vast etheric disturbance that has taken place between the earth and the sun. Light being a wave motion of the ether, it is inevitable that such a cyclone of chaos as is now raging where the moon once was should confuse or intercept it on the way. At the same time——"

The sentence was never finished. A cry of relief burst involuntarily from our lips as the pall of the blackness was suddenly rent asunder and the glorious orb of day broke fully into view. The stars shrank back into the depths of heaven, the air grew warmer, the sparrows twittered joyfully again, and the sun, resplendent as a burnished silver shield, shone serenely in the clearness of a perfect winter's day.

"Thank Heaven!" said the Bishop fervently

"That's just my feeling!" cried Killiker.

And it was mine, too. The glamour of my Materialism had worn off in those throes of suspense, and I knew now, that however vaguely, I believed in a Creator behind creation—a something behind the veil.

But with that feeling came another, an undefinable sensation, as of something that was changed around me —something that had happened, but which I could not localise at all. We all felt this and commented upon it, but none of us could assign other reason than that of an intuitive knowledge of some subtle change that the destruction of our satellite had caused. And that the moon was destroyed was beyond a doubt, for there we were in the glare of broad daylight, when the eclipse should have lasted nearly two more hours.

"Well," said Ademas, fumbling in his coat with nervous fingers, "I've lost what I thought the surest thing in creation! Here's your cheque, Mr. Everett, and your hand on the affair."

"And your signed receipt," said Everett, taking a folded paper from his pocket and passing it to the American.

CHAPTER XVI.

To the Tideless Sea.

"Well," said Ellen, after our guests had taken their departure. "I suppose there is nothing more for us to do than to start for the Bermudas—if our yacht is not wrecked by this."

"Waiving that unpleasant contingency, I think we cannot do better than start as soon as possible," I said. "In fact, I ordered a cab from the Motor Depôt to be here at ten. I have thought this matter out, and I should not be in the least surprised, after the message I sent to the scientific world last night, and the events of this morning, if an attempt be made to mob us in our own house. A tremendous amount of damage will very likely have been done along the docks and warehouses of the Thames, and the evening papers will be sure to give full particulars of our share in the result. We had better be getting away."

"I am ready," said Ellen.

"As you wish," replied Everett indifferently, falling into his thoughtful mood again, and standing by the table with his hand on the edge of it, in an attitude so familiar with him at the rail of the lecture desk in the Röntgen clubroom. "As you wish, Millington. I am glad I have got rid of that cheque again to the members, for them to enrich the charities."

"Do you really think the people will be so infuriated, Dick?" asked my wife with some anxiety.

"I am afraid so, Ellie," I replied. "We must get away from England as quickly as we can. Where's my overcoat?"

And my forebodings were not ill-founded. As our luggage-laden auto-cab rattled down the road at ten-thirty, the driver putting on all the speed that it was worth under the impulse of a "fiver," we saw a large crowd surging up in the direction of our house, a typical, angry, London mob, ready for mischief, and evidently under the influence of great excitement. They passed us, however, and I felt relieved when at last we were safely *en route* on the rail, speeding to the south-west.

A couple of seamen came racing along the sand.

We spoke but little on the way, and I must confess that I felt rather ill at ease regarding the reception we might meet with at Southampton, if our identity were to become known. And in these days of lightning news and hourly editions and profuse illustrations, that was more than likely. However, I tried to re-assure Ellen that we should get through all right, and felt rather more settled when I had drawn from Everett the welcome information that, fearing something of the sort, he had bought the yacht in the name of Arrowsmith.

As the train rattled along, we became aware that an unusually heavy wind was against us. There are tides of the air as well as of the sea, and the sudden stoppage of the lunar aërial tides had provoked a gale. It tore in howling gusts past our windows, jarring the loose frames unpleasantly, drowning our voices with its deafening roar as we swept under bridges and through cuttings; it made the electric locomotive hum and throb laboriously in its efforts to keep headway; so violent, indeed, it grew, that the coaches rocked aud swayed with an appalling motion, every moment threatening to leave the flanged rails. No mishap occurred, however, and at last, with a hoarse shriek of defiance, we thundered into Southampton thirty-seven minutes late.

The platform was a seething mass of humanity, every individual of which seemed to be possessed of one absorbing motive—to secure the next train inland, anywhere. Here and there through the dense crowd the active newsboys wriggled, selling the morning editions of the local so-called "evening" sheets at fancy prices.

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shrill, high-pitched voices in our ears as we elbowed our way out of the crush and hired a motor-cab down to the shore. I tossed a shilling for a copy and hurriedly glanced over it as we went, Ellen looking over my shoulder.

Of course the news was only telegraphic and teleponic, and therefore fragmentary, but it was terrible enough to inflame the people against us.

From nearly every sea-port in Europe came the tidings that a colossal wave had smashed most of the shipping there, had wrecked sea-walls and forts and piers and docks, and in some cases had flooded and demolished whole streets, with loss of life in every case. Also a terrific hurricane of unusual extent had worked immense havoc, sweeping some districts with the fury of a cyclone, decimating villages, wreck-strewing towns.

At Southampton its force had been greatly moderated for some unaccountable reason, but there, nevertheless, its effects, combined with the sea wave, had been so destructive that thousands of visitors and people of independent means had taken flight inland as fast as the trains could carry them.

In London, over a hundred lives had been lost, and much shipping sunk or battered out of usefulness. A late telegram stated that a large crowd of excited dockers and others had smashed the windows of the Röntgen Club,—which happened to be deserted,—and had then gone on to the house of the man whose rash genius had enabled him to perpetrate this gigantic sin against humanity, with the avowed intention of treating him to lynch law.

"Fortunately for him, and for his daughter and her husband—his accomplices in this unprecedented crime—" commented the sapient journalist, "he had early taken flight, and the mob could only vent its excusable vengeance by looting and wrecking the house."

"Isn't it dreadful?" said Ellen, looking at me curiously. "I never thought it would come to this. Don't you wish we had never had anything to do with this scheme?"

"I do, honestly," I said. "But that's all over now. What we have to do is to get away with whole skins, not caring whether we ever come back or not. I daresay your father will have no regret on that score, and you will only leave your friends; but I," I added bitterly, "I leave behind me a lost reputation; a promising career cut short."

"I know, Dick," said she, "but *that* is all over now. In some other country, under another name, with me to help you on, you will win back all, and more than all, that you have lost. Have courage, dear."

And right before her father's face she kissed me.

"I have gained more than I have lost already," I said, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "in gaining you, sweet. But here we are at the shore—it is as desolate-looking a spot as I have ever seen."

Desolate, indeed. The sea was half-way out, and not rippling as its old time custom, but sullenly seething in slow currents and rapid eddies, and strewn with floating wreckage. The wind was blowing great guns out in the Channel, whilst upon the drained sands lay stranded scores of luckless craft, including several fine steamers of considerable tonnage. One of the hotels on the sea front was partially in ruins. Very few people were about the water's edge; kept away, doubtless, by the fear that the worst might not yet be over.

Of this I was glad, and learning by cautious inquiry from an old sailor that one of the few vessels we could see dotting the sea yonder, luckily escaped from the storm, was our own *Lady Ellen*, we at once walked down to the new shore line and engaged a boat to pull us out.

At the last moment, just as our man was about to push off far enough to float her, a couple of seamen came racing along the sand, shouting at the top of their voices. I had noticed them watching us some time, but had put it down to mere curiosity at seeing anyone venture seaward so soon. But it was not merely that. One of them waved a copy of the evening paper in his hand, and that was enough for me.

"Shove off!" I cried to our man. "We cannot wait! Take no notice of these fellows!"

"Stop her, mate!" cried the foremost. "Them's three of the biggest criminals alive! It's them wot's done all the damage! Stop her, and let's take 'em up the town. It's them, I tell yer, by their pictures here!"

"Take no notice of them!" I shouted in our man's ear. "They are a couple of liars. I will give you a fiver if you will take us out!"

"Times is hard, captin," he said, with a grin. "Make it ten, an' I'd take you out if you was Be-elzebub hisself."

"Ten it is then," I agreed. "Hands off, fellow!"

The nearer of the two sailors had dashed into the water up to his knees and seized the side of the boat. The other was close behind him, and, attracted by the shouting, people were running from all directions.

I seized an oar and struck the grasping hand a heavy blow, he loosened his hold and then renewed it, endeavouring to upset the boat. I struck again fiercely, once, twice, with all my force, and with a howl of pain he let go just as our man caught him with his fist behind the ear. He fell with an oath into the water, and the other, thinking better of his own skin, stopped to assist his comrade to his feet. We were afloat now, and our sailor sprang in and took the oars. We were safe.

No attempt at pursuit was made and, of course, as the crew of the yacht knew nothing of our identity, we were received with due deference and shown to our quarters as the screw began to spin and our prow was pointed for the Channel. I gave the boatman his promised ten pounds, and Everett, saying little, added another five, and he dropped astern very well pleased with his pull.

That night, as the *Lady Ellen* went spinning merrily down the tideless sea, under the sparkle of the starry sky, we three paced the deck in silence, wrapped in our own thoughts; two of us, at least, enfolded in a deep content. Suddenly Everett roused from his reverie and stopped, remarking with a sigh of relief as though speaking to himself:

"So that is settled."

"The dream of inter-planetary communication?" I asked.

"That is no longer a dream, but an established possibility," he answered slowly. "I have not given any thought to that since we disposed of M. Marachele. The problem which I have solved in my mind these last few weeks is the greater problem of inter-stellar travel. My next experiment will be a journey to one of the nearer stars."

I did not cast any doubt on his ability, nor challenge it with a wager. Nor do I now. I am willing to wait the course of events, leaving them to be guided by a greater Intelligence than his.

And meantime, I have a fresh career to make, and Ellen will be with me and will help me.

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2.—HNOTSYE SI HTE SETB PILCYO.
3.—TTEEBR TAEL HANT NRVEE.
4.—EEYRV LOUCD AHS A SELIVR NNIILG.

£60 amongst those who solve four. £30 amongst those who solve three. £15 amongst those who solve two. £10 amongst those who solve one

DIRECTIONS.—Re-arrange, to represent well-known proverbs, as many of the above lines as you can. Copy those you find out on a sheet of paper, placing the respective number to each, and post it, together with your order for our "Yule-tide" Parcel and P.O. or stamps for 1s. 9d. and a stamped addressed reply envelope for prize, etc., to *ALLAN WESTON & Co., Card Publishers, 188 Strand, London, W.C.*

Prizes of £30, £25, £20, £15, £10, £5, ten of £1, twenty of 10s. are also offered, full particulars of which will be sent with the parcel. These prizes are easy to win and well worth trying for. They will not be divided.

CONSOLATION PRIZES.—£10 will be distributed amongst any competitors who fail to secure a prize.

The Competitions will close on Saturday, December 31st, and orders from those participating should be sent in without delay.

The prizes will be despatched on Monday, January 2nd.

Orders will be sent out same day as received, together with a notice informing competitors how many of their solutions are correct.

Remember, every purchaser of our YULE-TIDE PARCEL must win a Prize.

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YOU AND I.

You will observe that this week I am offering a hundred sovereigns instead of the usual fifty. A sovereign will do much towards helping to cover the expenses incidental to Christmas. All you need do is to write your name and address on a post-card and direct it in the manner laid down in the conditions on page 830.

G. H.—The number of explosive compounds known to chemists at the present time exceeds one thousand. A quarter of a century ago there were less than fifty.

C. T.—Scarlet is the colour used for mourning at the burial of an unmarried woman in Brazil. The coffin, the hearse, the trappings of the horses and the livery of the drivers must be of that hue.

Ele.—The method of artificial respiration employed in drowning cases has proved effective in the resuscitation of several persons who have apparently been killed by electricity, especially in the familiar form of lightning.

A. T.—The air-tight compartment theory in the building of ships was copied from the nautilus. The shell of this creature has a number of cells or compartments into which air or water may be admitted, enabling the nautilus to float or sink at will.

Lena.—Gatwick racecourse was originally a dairy farm, the proprietor of which had an idea that he could pump the milk through pipes to London, and thus save the cost of carriage.

Arthur.—The Swiss post-office conveys anything from a post-card to barrels of wine, scythes, and bundles of old iron.

A.—I don't know of any more wonderful vegetable in the world than the truffle; it has neither roots, stem, leaves, flowers, nor seeds.

F. T.—You have won your bet. Female fish of all species are considerably more numerous than males, with two exceptions—the angler and the catfish.

H. P. P.—So far as I know the stamp duties paid by patent medicine makers show that four millions of pills are taken by the inhabitants of the United Kingdom every week. In France the quantity is about half. Only about one million are taken by the people of Russia. The Australians are the biggest pill-takers in the world.

F. L.—You are late with your invention. A German scientist has succeeded already in propagating sponges artifically. His original outlay was £1, cost of maintenance almost nothing, and a crop of 4,000 sponges as a result.

CONDITIONS OF JUMBLE STORY COMPETITION, SEE PAGE 831.

The lines in the story which will be found on page 831, have been all mixed up. Cut each one out and paste it up where you think it should go. Then write on a sheet of paper the numbers of the lines in their rearranged order. £2 2s. will be sent to the competitor who is correct or most nearly correct, and a copy of the Earl of Desart's "Raid of the Detrimental" to each of the next fifty. In the event of a tie, the prize will go to the first arrivals. Date of closing, Tuesday, December 27th. Mark your envelope "Jumble." The letters in the title and author's name are jumbled, and should be correctly given, and pasted on the paper containing the effort.

Jim. — The brain of man is more highly convoluted than that of any animal in the world. The lower the animal in the scale of intelligence, the smoother the brain.

Lisbon. — On the island of Lewchew grows a tree about the size of a common cherry tree, which possesses the peculiarity of changing the colour of its blossoms. At one time the flower assumes the tint of the lily, and again shortly after takes the colour of the rose.

Wee-wums.—The two astronomers to whom you refer were Chinamen. They were put to death by the Emperor for getting drunk on the night when an eclipse was due.

Peter.—A "size" in a coat is an inch; in underwear, two inches; in a sock, an inch; in trousers, an inch; in gloves, quarter of an inch; in hats, one-eighth of an inch; in a collar, half an inch; and in shoes, one-sixth of an inch.

Gladys.—A hundred tons of cats' tails were recently sold in one lot for the purpose of ornamenting ladies' wearing apparel. Assuming that an average cat's tail would weigh a couple of ounces, this would mean that no fewer than 1,792,000 pussies had been killed just to supply this one deal alone.

Egbert.—(1) A person who has totally lost the sense of hearing in one ear, although he may imagine the defect is of little consequence, cannot locate the direction of a sound to save his life, even when the centre of disturbance is quite near him. (2) I have never heard of flies coughing.

B. N.—The church of Naples, and most other old buildings in that city are infested with mice. The clerical authorities keep a large number of cats in the churches to make war on the rodents, and during the services these cats may be seen walking among the congregation or sitting in front of the altar.

Grace.—In Germany all employers are obliged to insure their workmen, even when the employment is temporary and unpaid.

Patent.—The number of applications for patents filed at the Patent Office every week averages 500 at the present time.

Choo.—A peculiarity of the blind that there is seldom one of them who smokes. Soldiers and sailors accustomed to smoking, and who have lost their sight in action, continue to smoke for a short while, but soon give up the habit. They say it gives them no pleasure when they cannot see the smoke.

Pat.—It is not Dublin but Belfast which is the great tea-drinking city of the United Kingdom. Everybody, high and low, drinks tea of the finest quality. The merits of different brands are a continual subject of discussion, and the stately mansions of tea-merchants, which are rising everywhere in the suburbs, testify to the prosperity of the trade.

G. K. asks: "Is there any instance of benefit resulting from an earthquake?"————The port of Ouzoun Ada furnishes one answer to your query. This port is on the Caspian, and the starting-point of the Trans-Caspian Railway to Samarkand. About three years ago it was visited by an earthquake, and it was afterwards found that the basin was much deeper, which rendered it possible for far larger vessels to enter than had previously been the case.

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Single column, per inch, per insertion	£0	10	0
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Eighth-page ,, ,, ...	1	5	0
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,, half	6	5	0

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100 BICYCLE PRIZES.

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Make up the best sentence you can out of Eight Words, the first letter of each word commencing with a letter of "NEW MODEL" in proper order, thus: "*N*ow *E*verybody *W*ill *M*ention *O*urs, *D*elightful, *E*asy, *L*uxurious."

This sentence is only given as a rough example of what you have to do."

ABSOLUTELY FREE.

We ask you to buy nothing before allowing you to participate in the Prizes. You pay nothing to enter, and even if you receive one of our regret notices—and we make no secret of the fact that hundreds are unsuccessful—you are only out of pocket for the cost of two penny stamps, which the Post Office gets the benefit of.

First Prize, £23 A.B. Safety, fitted with A.B. tyres.

A FEW FREE CYCLE WINNERS, each of whom has signed a Solemn Declaration that he or she is in no way connected, either directly or indirectly, with this Firm: Mr. Geo. A. Haynes, 9 Windsor Street, Barrow-in-Furness; Miss Mary Page-Henderson, 8 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, W.; Mr. A. Merrilees, Harvay, Orkney; Mr. Arthur J. Woolnough, 29 Thomson Street, Govan, Glasgow; Mrs. Maria Fraser, Haglefort, Shinrone, Ireland; Mr. Robert Hughes, Llanidan, Anglesey, North Wales; Mr. L. Horne, 101 London Road, Oldham; Mrs. Flora H. Bungay, 170 Railton Road, Herne Hill, S.E.; Mr. R. R. Reed, Crawfordsburn Inn, Crawfordsburn, near Belfast, Ireland; Mr. H. Janes, Booking Clerk (L. C. & D. Rly.), Whitstable-on-Sea, Kent; Miss Myra Williams, 44 Colfe Road, Forest Hill, S.E.; Mr. John Tate, 24 Hanover Square, Bradford; Mrs. R. M. Blazey, "The Ferns," Wymondham, Norfolk; Miss Florence V. Hunnybun, Holton Rectory, Colchester; Mr. Joseph Leith, 20 Taylor Street, Ayr; Mr. J. M. Steward, 6 Guildford Place, W.C.; and dozens of others.

Second Class (9 prizes) £23 Cycle for £9
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Fourth Class (15 prizes) £23 Cycle for £11
Fifth Class (18 prizes) £23 Cycle for £12
Sixth Class (20 prizes) £23 Cycle for £13
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☞ **TAKE PARTICULAR NOTICE.**—COMPETITION IS NOW OPEN and **closes Saturday, December 31st 1898.** Results will be declared as soon as possible, although it may be a fortnight afterwards before all replies are posted.

Winners of prizes must clear them within a week or ten days, otherwise machines unclaimed will be passed on to the next in rotation. Enclose loose stamp for postage of Result of Competition. As so few are able to call and inspect the machines, **we guarantee to refund the full amount** paid for a Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, or for one of our Consolation Prizes **if the owner is not perfectly satisfied** with it on arrival. We cannot give any money or other prizes in lieu of cycles, and consequently cannot enter into any discussion relating thereto. One solution only allowed to each competitor. Disregard of this regulation renders any Prize liable to forfeiture.

£100 We offer this Reward to any lady or gentleman able to prove that we have ever in the whole course of our existence sold our cheapest machines under £15 cash either to any ordinary customer, agent, dealer or shipper. It is impossible for any English firm to sell a machine of the highest grade under £15; the material alone costs from £9 to £10, and A.B. Tyres cost an additional £3 or £4.

Mark letters "SHORT STORIES" on top corner of envelope, and address to the Managing Director,

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is assured in a few months by using LILLIE POWDER, which is absolutely the finest preparation for the Complexion owing to its Medicinal Qualities. For Gentlemen, after shaving. For Ladies, on the Toilet Table. Removes all Blemishes of the skin.

PRICE
ONE SHILLING.

BY POST
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Mrs. Langtry, so renowned for her glorious complexion, has for years used herself and recommended the LILLIE POWDER among her friends as being made from her original recipe. We are pleased to say that we have induced Mrs. Langtry to allow us to prepare the Lillie Powder in large quantities in order to cope with the demand which we are confident the Public will put upon it.

Prepared and Exquisitely Scented under the Strict Supervision of HER MAJESTY'S PERRUQUIER, MR. W. CLARKSON.

THREE TINTS—BLANCHE, NATURELLE & RACHEL.

TO BE HAD OF ALL THE BEST CHEMISTS AND HAIRDRESSERS.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

NO. 522. FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 31ST, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

Ask your Draper for

HOYLE'S

LOOK FOR THIS STAMP ON EACH PIECE

THOMAS HOYLE & SONS LIMITED REGD TRADE MARK MANCHESTER

NEW SEASON'S DESIGNS NOW READY

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WARRANTED FAST COLOURS

4/6 Complete. ACETYLENE CYCLE LAMPS

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5,000 First-class Silver Plated Carbide Gas Lamps, the most simple yet invented, perfectly safe, are so constructed that it is impossible for them to explode. Giving a 500 Candle-power Light. To be sold at the low price of 4/6 each; postage 3d. extra.

As this offer cannot be repeated, orders will be executed in strict rotation.

SEND YOUR ORDER AT ONCE SO AS NOT TO BE DISAPPOINTED.

THE UNIVERSAL ADVERTISING AGENCY,

53 Fleet Street, London, E.C.

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The Symptoms of Nervous Indigestion are well marked. They are Pain after Food, Severe Headache, Coated Tongue, Constipation, Flatulence, Loss of Appetite, Pallor, Nervous Twitchings, Sleeplessness, Loss of Flesh and Strength, and great Prostration of Mind and Body.

The Patient will be Well Advised to take a short course of Guy's Tonic. This useful Medicine never fails to restore the flagging "Powers of Life," create Appetite, ensure good Digestion and Assimilation, and thus invigorate and strengthen the entire System.

"Could Not Work or Sleep."

Miss CLARA ROBSON, of Warren Lodge, Hampton Wick, writes:

"Having suffered with Indigestion for some years, "and finding doctors did not do me much good, I "thought I would try Guy's Tonic. By the time I "had taken one bottle I found I could take almost "any kind of Food. I did not know previously "whatever to do, I was in such great pain. I could "not work or sleep; but since I have taken Guy's "Tonic I can enjoy all my meals, and I feel that it "is a pleasure to work; in fact, I do not feel like "the same person. I shall always be most pleased "to recommend Guy's Tonic."

"Appetite Increased."

"Ipswich.

"Miss COCKSEDGE has much pleasure in highly "recommending Guy's Tonic as a Remedy for "Weakness and Debility. The Tonic gives an "increase of Appetite and a general feeling of "Elasticity and Strength to the System."

The Reason why Guy's Tonic is so beneficial is not far to seek. It reinforces the Gastric Juice and tones the digestive Organs, so that all food taken is efficiently digested and assimilated. The full nourishment is then derived for the strengthening and building up of the Nerves and Tissues. Health and Energy follow as a matter of course.

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Advertisements should be sent to "Short Stories" Advertisement Department, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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Of all Grocers and Stores, or a Sample Bottle post free for 9 stamps.

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Sample Bottle of either sent free for 9d.; two assorted 1/3; three assorted 1/8.

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39/-

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PIANOS. UPRIGHT IRON GRAND.

Complete Iron frame, Brass Pin Plate, Nickel-bolted Wrest Plank, Check Action, Full Trichord, Full Compass, Riveted Hammers, Handsome Walnut Case, Inlaid Marqueterie Panel, Sconces, Trusses, etc. Tone and touch perfect. Guaranteed 25 years. 28 guineas, at 10/6 per month. Delivered free on payment of 10/6. Approval. Catalogues Free.

ORGANS. GENUINE AMERICAN.

Imported Direct. Solid Walnut Case. Mirror Top, Music Case, 2 Knee Swells, Mouse and Dust Proof, 8 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 14 Guineas, at 6/- per month. 10 Stops, 3 Sets of Reeds, 2 Octave Couplers. 15 guineas, at 7/- per month. Illustrated Lists Free. Kindly mention this paper.

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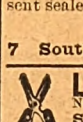

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A & 300 HOUSE

LIBERAL PAYMENT FOR WRAPPERS. PARTICULARS WITH EACH 2½d AND 3d BAR.

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For clearing the skin from Spots, Blemishes, Redness, Roughness, giving a Beautiful Complexion and pleasing appearance.

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A Happy New Year from the Editor and Staff.

GREAT STORIES

No. 522.] [ONE PENNY.

For the

Week ending December 31st, 1898.

An Eventful Winter.

"I CAN'T bear foreigners," said Lady Sylvia Somerton crossly. "They are dirty, they are dishonest, they are untruthful."

"My dear child!" her uncle remonstrated. "Surely your assertions are rather sweeping. Have you ever been abroad?"

"No," she confessed, "I have not."

"Then you judge all nations by that French scoundrel I had as a valet—and perhaps a few organ-grinders!"

Lady Sylvia laughed. She had the most delightful gift for seeing the ridiculous side of everything, even when things became personal.

"Well, anyhow," she said, "why go to Pau? A nasty, gossiping place—so I have been told."

"For the simple reason that there I shall get a little hunting."

"Hunting!" she said scornfully—"with bagged foxes! Can't you see the poor things, stiff and sore from being tied up in a sack being turned out for

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your delectation — if *you* call that sport then *I* don't!"

"Sylvia," said Lord Rivers mildly, "do you know that you are in a very bad temper?"

At that Lady Sylvia's clouded face cleared.

"I *am* cross," she said impulsively, "and a selfish wretch—of course, we'll go to the Antipodes if you like."

"In the meantime," he said good-humouredly, "I only want to go to Pau." And peace was restored.

Lady Sylvia was an orphan, and lived almost entirely with her uncle, who was devoted to his beautiful niece, and usually gave in to her whims, but in this instance he had been given a hint by the doctors that, for a winter or two, Lady Sylvia would be better out of England, but that he was not to frighten her by telling her so—hence the story of the "hunting."

So—to Pau they went, and when Lady Sylvia stood on the "Place Royale" and saw the Pyrenees before her—a glorious panorama of mountains, some of them crowned with snow—in the foreground the sunny "Coteaux" and the shining river, she breathed a deep sigh of appreciation.

"I am glad we came," she said, and then Lord Rivers knew that he had nothing more to fear, and would hear no more reproaches.

"There is a dance to-night at Lady Morley's," he said. "She is an old friend of yours, isn't she? I accepted the invitation on your behalf."

Lady Sylvia nodded—her eyes still fixed on the mountains, but presently her thoughts came back to earth with a run.

"I shall wear my white satin," she said decidedly, "and the turquoise necklace you gave me," and she ran off to hold a solemn conference with her maid.

She was certainly looking her loveliest that night—But the soft blue-black hair, the large, dark, dreamy eyes, the clear olive skin, were more the features of a Southerner than those of an English girl.

The same thought crossed the mind of the young Duque Sebastian Flor d'Espina, as Lady Morley, at his request, introduced him to Lady Sylvia.

The latter made a mental note that this was the best-looking man she had ever met—and how clean for a foreigner!

He began to talk to her—but in broken English, and conversation half of which is "word-hunting" is apt to be a trifle stilted, so they did not get on very well.

"Supposing we talk Spanish," she said suddenly, "it would make things easier for both of us." She said the above sentence in his own tongue, and he was startled to hear how she pronounced her words, like one to the manner born.

She noted his look, and smiled.

"I have a Spanish grandmother," she said, "and have spoken Spanish since I was a child."

"Ah," he said, "then that is why you have a Spanish face—and hold your fan Spanish fashion with your thumb outside."

She laughed.

"Is that Spanish?" she asked. "Then it must be the result of heredity, for I do it quite unconsciously."

After that evening, Lady Sylvia met Sebastian Flor d'Espina everywhere, the acquaintance ripened into friendship—the friendship—well, in any case, Lord Rivers thought it prudent to make a few inquiries about the young man in question, to avoid future complications.

The result of his inquiries was eminently satisfactory. The Duque Flor d'Espina was the head of one of the oldest families in Spain, he was very rich, was an attaché at the Spanish Embassy in Paris, was wild about diplomacy, and would, in all probability, blossom some day into an ambassador.

The situation, Lord Rivers felt, was not one to cavil about. Of the man himself, he knew nothing; but "Sylvia is not the woman to marry either a roué or a fool," he decided, and as he had known her since her childhood he was competent to judge.

One night at a dance, Lady Sylvia noticed that Flor d'Espina was preoccupied, his face wore an anxious, worried look, foreign to him; and she made up her mind to ask him what was the matter.

"Please tell me," she said, "if I can be of any use; but a woman can't do much, only sympathise."

"And that means helping a man over his discouragements and bad times generally, and giving him heart to start afresh," he said, "so I wouldn't say 'only' if I were you; but my trouble, I will tell you, though assuredly in this one you will not be able to help."

"Try me," she said quickly, "there is nearly always a way out of a difficulty, and two pairs of eyes can see better than one."

"Well," he said, lowering his voice, "the case is this. The Carlists have got up a plot against the Queen of Spain. The idea is to surround her villa at B—— take her prisoner, carry her on board the gun-boat which is always there for her protection, but on board of which the officers are Carlists to a man.

"She is to be taken straight to Brazil. Meantime the Carlists have got up a tremendous movement, it has spread all over the Basque provinces, and, within a few hours after their grand 'coup,' an army of some thousands of desperate men will march on Madrid and proclaim Don Carlos King.

"Now, I have been warned of this, and would go to Madrid myself, but, almost simultaneously with this information, I got a peremptory summons from my chief to return to Paris at once.

"I start by the first train to-morrow—I am only here to say 'good-bye'—Now, you can see what a dilemma I amin. I don't know a single soul here whom Icould trust in such a matter, and the coup is fixed for four days hence."

Lady Sylvia thought a moment before she asked—

"If you knew of such a 'soul' what would he be expected to do?"

"Go post haste to Madrid, and warn the authorities there. There is no time to be lost—I dare not wire or even write—I hear half the postal officials are in the plot and, if that is so, I should spoil everything, as it is, if the authorities were fore-warned they might bring the Queen privately to Madrid—await the 'plot's' fulfilment and arrest the ringleaders. Spaniards are like every other nation—they need some one to follow—'heads' gone—confusion reigns supreme, and chaos is not that which ought to reign in Spain."

Again Lady Sylvia was silent—then she laid a hand gently on his arm.

"Listen," she said. "In my childish days, I was at school in an English convent. In the same class with me was one of the Spanish princesses. We made great friends, chiefly, of course, because of my knowledge of Spanish. But the queer thing about it was that there was so strong a likeness between us, that the Nuns used to laugh about it—once or twice, each dressed in our quaint sky-blue 'uniforms' we were taken for each other."

"All that is very interesting, dear lady," Sebastian

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said a trifle impatiently, "but what on earth has it got to do with the subject?"

"Wait a moment—and you will see. The day after to-morrow, at mid-day, a special train has been o dered to take that same Princess to Madrid (I saw her only this afternoon, and she told me so herself.) She is going with a lady-in-waiting and an Equerry—good. *She* will not go—but *I* will—my cousin Lilian Maxwell as my lady-in-waiting—my uncle shall be Equerry for this once!"

"Are you joking?"

"Joking! No, certainly not. You must wire to the railway authorities at Bayonne in the name of the Princess that you want the 'Special' to-morrow morning at eight, having changed your plans.

"There is a very early train from here, which would just get us to Bayonne in time. If we could have confided in her, all would be well, but it is quite an open secret that her sympathies are all with Don Carlos, and we must just trust to Providence that nobody will find out the fraud till we get to our destination.

"Give me the address of the man in Madrid to whom you must write a letter, with names and details, and leave the rest to me."

Flor d'Espina stooped and kissed her hand.

"You are an angel!" he said.

* * * * *

Lord Rivers was wakened out of a post-prandial nap to hear his niece's queer story and her newly-fledged plans. She was half afraid he would forbid her to carry out her scheme, but she only proved by that how comparatively little she knew him.

A Conservative of the old school, revolution and rebellion were to him like red rags to a bull—besides, he had once been to the Spanish Court and had a most chivalrous devotion for the Queen, placed as she was in so difficult a position.

So now he was furious, but all he said was a big oath, and then, "I beg your pardon, my dear, but really, sometimes swearing is almost necessary—safety-valve you know—yes, of course, I'll go. You must wake Lilian up, ask her advice and tell her to hold her tongue," —which rather Irish speech amused Lady Sylvia not a little.

Well—strange as it may seem, everything went most smoothly.

The telegram was sent by Flor d'Espina, the party arrived at the Bayonne Station, and "Her Royal Highness," amid bowing officials proceeded in her special train to Spain.

At every station where they stopped, bouquets were presented, and bonbonnières, an exquisite déjeuner was provided when the time came, and lady Sylvia and her companions thoroughly enjoyed the chocolates and the fun—the former, (speaking Spanish like a native, and having been posted up by Flor d'Espina about one or two trifling but in this case important rules of Spanish Royal etiquette) knew how to behave, in fact, Lord Rivers declared afterwards that she seemed quite at home in her *rôle*.

At last the party arrived at Madrid, and uncle and niece drove straight to the address Sebastian had given them, left his letter and then went to a hotel.

Next morning, the papers contained a most amusing account of how an English Miladi had by *mistake* gone off in the Princess Dolores' special train, how she had accepted the Royal goods provided for her, and taken the salaams and civilities (intended for Royalty) as her simple due—but not one paper even hinted that the thing had been pre-arranged, but the person who was most puzzled about the affair was the Princess Dolores herself, who declared that she had never sent a telegram to Bayonne—but luckily her statement was made to the authorities too late to warn the Carlists that somebody was stirring against them, and the Queen and the little King were conveyed in safety to Madrid.

Lady Sylvia and her uncle were sent for by Her Majesty, and, after that interview, Lady Sylvia expressed no further surprise at the unbounded loyalty, devotion, and admiration, which Flor d'Espina had always manifested towards his liege lady.

As they were at Madrid at any rate, Lord Rivers said: "They had better look round them a bit"—so, for some days, Lady Sylvia lived amongst Murillos, and dim old churches, bewildering but exquisite mazes of stone.

One day a long letter came for her.

She carried it off to her room, where she stayed a long time, but she was hunted out again by Lord Rivers, who came to tell her to get ready—the Queen had sent for them again.

This time her Majesty offered Lady Sylvia a post at Court as Maid of Honour to herself.

Lord Rivers looked at his niece as they drove away from the palace (they were to give a definite answer to the offer in a few days time).

"Why don't you try it?" he said.

Lady Sylvia laughed, and Lord Rivers was quick to notice a touch of embarrassment in his niece's voice as she answered.

"I won't take the post for the simple reason that when you came just now to fetch me, I was busy writing a letter to accept another situation I have been offered —as Sebastian's wife."

CONSTANCE CRAIGIE HACKETT.

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Love's Sacrifice.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS.

By MARIAN FINDLAY.

Author of "Not in Vain," "Eileen," "A Girl without Sentiment," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

"WOMEN MUST WEEP."

A GIRL and a man were walking together down a pretty country lane in the South of England. It was early spring, but already the violets were peeping shyly forth, the hedgerows becoming rapidly sweet and radiant, and, on every side, was the glad promise of renewed life and beauty.

The girl was walking with bent head, nervously pulling at the ribbons which adorned her dainty waist, heeding not the sunshine or the flowers, for her heart was full of sadness.

The man strolled at her side in silence, his hands were thrust into his pockets, his straw hat pushed to the back of his curly head, while his fair, handsome face wore an unmistakable look of serious annoyance.

His companion was the first to speak.

"You are not angry with me, Duncan, are you?" she questioned, laying her hand half shyly upon his arm.

Duncan Marston gazed moodily before him, not heeding the gentle touch, and seeing not the tearful, beseeching eyes raised to his face.

"I am disappointed in you, Madeline," he said coldly, "bitterly disappointed. I thought you really cared for me, and I find I have been mistaken. I am not angry, my dear, only disappointed."

"Duncan," the girl cried, in tones full of anguish, "how can you be so cruel? You thought I cared for you! Do you not know that I love you more dearly, far, far more dearly than my life, that it is wringing my heart to let you leave me, and to think of facing my life without your love to brighten it? Oh, Heaven, how shall I bear it!"

Her voice broke and the slim hands were tightly clasped upon her breast, as if to still the throbbing, aching heart.

Marston could not but be touched by the bitter anguish in her last words, he put out his arms and drew her to him.

"Madeline," he whispered, "you are making life needlessly hard for us both. From a foolish, romantic sense of 'duty' you are casting love away from you. My child, you will soon find that you have made a poor exchange."

"Someone once said to me that the only thing worth living for was to do one's duty," Madeline remarked dreamily, resting her head contentedly upon her lover's breast, whilst his arms encircled her.

"That is utter nonsense," was his emphatic reply. "The only thing worth living for is love, my darling, it is the most mighty power in the world. Sweet, do you doubt it?" and his lips were laid upon her own in tender, passionate kisses, while he held her yet more closely to his heart.

Her heart echoed his words; no, she did not doubt it, she knew that its magic touch has power to transform a wilderness into a garden, a humble cottage into a palace of contentment and happiness; that it has power to make the homeliest face beautiful, the tired aching heart, glad and joyous, the darkest days bright with hope and gladsomeness. The God whose name it is planted the sweet flower of Love; it blossomed first in the Garden of Eden, it has been watered with a Saviour's tears and has grown and flourished until youth and age, poet and philosopher, sage and historian, acknowledge its almighty sway and unite in proclaiming it to be verily and indeed "The Greatest Thing in the World."

"Duncan," Madeline said presently, lifting her head from its resting-place, and raising her grave, earnest, eyes to his, "do you think I could expect or look for any real happiness if I sacrificed my poor little Vera? I am all she has in the world, and I promised her mother that the child should ever be my first care and thought——"

"Yes, yes, I know," her lover interrupted impatiently, "but that was years ago, you were too young then to realise the charge with which you were burdening yourself, or to think of the new interests which might come into your life, rendering the keeping of such a promise a difficult task."

"Lapse of time does not make a promise less binding, nor justify one in breaking it," Madeline put in softly.

"I am not asking you to break it," Marston returned, a little reproachfully. "Of course I should not dream of separating you from your little niece. I will even promise to care for the child, for your sake, if you will consent to become my wife and accompany me to India. Madeline, my dear one, can you let me go alone?"

Madeline's heart throbbed passionately.

"Duncan," she moaned, "you are breaking my heart. You know I cannot leave Vera, and the climate of India would kill her, Dr. Kingston tells me, even if she survived the voyage."

"Dr. Kingston be—shot!" was the angry response; "he is an old mollycoddle, and you are little better Madeline, where that child is concerned. If you really cared for me you would not continually be putting her first."

Madeline passed by the unjust words in silence; Marston knew they were ungenerous, and was quick to acknowledge his harshness.

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"Forgive me, my precious one," he whispered remorsefully. "I scarcely know what I am saying, it is so hard to think of losing you."

Madeline smiled bravely up at him, though her grey eyes were misty with tears.

"My poor boy," she said tenderly. "Ah, Duncan, if I could bear your share of the pain as well as my own, how gladly I would free you from it."

"My dear one," and he raised her hand to his lips almost reverently. "That is like a woman's divine unselfishness. What selfish brutes we men are compared with you! Sweetheart, you make me ashamed of myself."

"I don't feel unselfish, dear," she returned sadly. "I feel as if I want to keep you here," clasping her hands round his arm, "always beside me, and never—never let you go."

He smiled down upon her and touched her forehead lightly with his lips.

"That would be an ideal state of things, my pet, but unfortunately it cannot be carried into effect. 'Men must work' the song says, does it not?"

"Yes," she reponded, with sudden bitterness.

"And women must weep,
And the sooner it's over
The sooner to sleep.

"Oh, Duncan, why is life so hard? A few months ago," she went on, not waiting for him to reply, "when your love came into my life, I thought the world such a glorious, beautiful place to be in. Oh, I was happy, blindly, madly happy, never dreaming that life could hold for me aught but good; but duty's cold, stern fingers touched me, and I awoke from my rosy dreams of happiness to find that for me, such things were not to be! With women I think to love means to suffer, and their whole life may be summed up in one word: 'Renunciation.'"

Her cheeks were burning as she spoke, Marston laid his hand upon her shoulder.

"My little girl," he said gently, "it is so unlike you to speak so bitterly, you are always so brave, so patient."

"I have tried to be so, oh, I *have* tried," she moaned, "but the struggle, the pain is getting almost more than I can bear. Think, Duncan, just think of all the long, lonely years which must pass before I can see your dear face again; try to think, if you can, how the days will go drearily by, how I shall hunger and thirst for the sound of your voice, the touch of your hand—"

"And do you not think that I shall suffer in my lonely, far-off home?" he questioned reproachfully. "You will have Vera to comfort you, but I shall be alone."

"Ah, but it is all so different for a man, there is so much more in his life, there are so many outside interests to take him out of himself, whilst we women have, of necessity, to be stayers at home, and our grief is an ever present reality to us, there is no getting away from it."

Her companion made no reply, he recognised the truth of her words and could not gainsay them.

They walked on for a short time in silence through the fragrant lanes, where the setting sun was casting chastened gleams of mellow gold upon tree and hedgerow, giving to each a tender, softened radiance.

"I must go home now, Duncan," Madeline said at length, her voice sounding dull and weary, "but before I leave you I want to say that when you go away, I want you to feel that you are free. I shall not hold you bound, dear, in any way, and, in token of your freedom, I must give you back your gift."

She unclasped a slender gold chain as she spoke, and laid it, with the pendant—a small gold heart set with a single diamond—in his hand. For an instance only he held it, then, with a violent gesture, dashed the pretty trinket to the ground and set his foot upon it.

"Duncan," Madeline cried in dismay, "what have you done?"

And stooping, she tenderly raised the crushed fragments, pressing them lovingly to her lips.

"How cruel you women can be!" Marston cried, his face crimson with indignant anger.

"Madeline, are you utterly heartless I wonder!"

Madeline glanced at the broken trinket.

"I fear I am—now," she returned, smiling bitterly at her own wan attempt at a joke. "Don't be angry with me, dearest," she pleaded, "I did it for the best. You cannot guess what it would have cost me to give it up. Oh, my dear love, how can I let you go? If, in the years to come, God will give you back to me once again, my whole life shall be one long, long thanksgiving."

The sweet voice trembled, and the delicate face grew very pale.

Marston took her tenderly in his arms.

"God bless you, my heart's darling," he whispered fondly, "God bless and keep you always."

CHAPTER II.

Love's Big Heart.

When Madeline reached the pretty, low white house which she shared with her little niece and their faithful old servant, she found that Vera was already in bed.

"The poor lamb was just wearied out with pain," said Anne, "so I took and popped her into bed. 'I shall not go to sleep Anne,' she says, as I was carrying her up-stairs, 'I can't sleep till I have kissed Love good-night.'"

"Dear child," murmured Madeline. "I will go to her at once."

"Is that you, my own Love?" cried a sweet, childish voice as Madeline entered the bedroom. "Love," was the quaintly pretty name which Vera had bestowed upon the aunt she held so dear.

"Yes, darling," and Madeline laid her hand tenderly upon the hot forehead.

"Has the pain been very bad, my pet?"

"Oh, not so very bad," the child returned bravely. "My stupid back ached a bit, so Anne thought I had better come to bed."

"I am afraid it must have ached more than 'a bit,' my darling, to make these cheeks so flushed and your hands so dry and burning," Madeline said tenderly.

"Never mind now," returned Vera, "I shall soon be better now you are come," and the little arms were put up to encircle Madeline's neck.

"Did you have a nice walk?" the child asked presently.

"Very nice, darling," Madeline smiled bitterly to herself as she uttered the words.

"Your favourite violets are beginning to show their pretty heads," she continued, "I must carry you into the lane to peep at them to-morrow, if you are well enough."

"Oh, I should like that," was the eager reply, "but I'm afraid I shall be too heavy for you."

"No fear of that, my pet, you are such a mite of a thing, though you are nearly eight years old. And now shut those bright eyes, which are themselves just like two big violets, and I will try to sing the pain away."

Softly Madeline crooned an evening hymn to the

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tired little sufferer, her low, sweet voice seemed to have an almost magical effect, the restless limbs grew more quiet, and the tired lines on the *spirituelle* little face relaxed.

"How nice that is," the child murmured at length, with a little sigh of utter content.

"Not asleep yet, my birdie?" Madeline questioned.

"No, but I don't mind that; I think I am too happy to sleep. Dear Love," and again the fragile arms were put forth to draw Madeline's face down to her own. "Dear, dear Love, how good you are to me!"

"My own little girl, you are all I have to be good to and care for—Oh, Vera, my treasure, love me all you can, you are all I have in the world," and with a gesture of utter abandon, Madeline sank on her knees beside the bed and buried her face in her hands.

For a few moments nothing could be heard in the little white-curtained room but the child's quick, anxious breathing, and Madeline's stifled sobs.

With gentle touch Vera tenderly stroked the bent head. "My own, own Love," she whispered again and again. "You needn't tell me to care for you; why I couldn't live without you!"

It was sweet to Madeline to feel the child's soft, clinging arms round her, and the loving whispered words were as refreshing to her aching heart as summer rain to drooping flowers.

A week later and Duncan Marston was gone. The last good-byes were said, the last tender words spoken, and then Madeline saw him leave her. How and when would they meet again, she vaguely wondered, with a dull, sick feeling at her heart. He had spoken hopefully of his return, and of their happy life together in the years to come, but Madeline's heart was too sore to think of the future, and meanwhile life had to be faced, and all the daily round of duties taken up again. The days passed wearily by, and Madeline's cheeks lost some of their soft bloom, and her sweet eyes had a wistful, far-off look which did not escape Vera's notice.

One day she was sitting beside the little invalid's couch, reading a fairy story.

"'And the handsome Prince married the lovely Princess, and he took her away to his beautiful castle, where they both lived happily ever afterwards,'" she concluded.

"There, Vera, pet, isn't it a nice ending?"

"Very nice, but they all end like that, Love, don't they?" the child returned. "Is it true, are people always happy?"

"Fairy stories are not true, my darling," Madeline replied, "and people are not always happy I am afraid. But we are happy, Vera, you and I, so we will try not to worry about imaginary unhappiness."

Vera's deep blue eyes were raised earnestly to her aunt's face, and she pushed aside the tossed golden hair from her hot cheeks.

"Are you happy?" she questioned uneasily. "Sometimes I fancy that something troubles you, dear, and you do not tell me."

"Vera, my own, you are growing fanciful," Madeline returned brightly, stooping to kiss the sweet, upturned face. "Of course I am happy."

"And there is nothing troubling you, dear Love?" the child went on with tender persistency.

Madeline could not utter what was not true with those loving eyes searching her face. She made a hasty resolve, and, kneeling beside the low couch, took the little fragile form into her arms.

"Listen, my darling," she said slowly, "I will tell you what has troubled me. I have lost something, Vera, something I prized more than all else beside, book or trinket, it matters not what it was, it is gone and can never be my own again, and I have grieved over it my darling, foolishly, childishly. My Vera would be wiser than that, would she not?"

"I don't know," the child returned thoughtfully. "I am not very wise, but I don't think it would hurt me very much to lose anything I have, so long as I kept my own dear Love."

The ready tears sprang to Madeline's eyes. Ah, was not that just what she felt? How bravely she could have faced any trouble if she could but have kept her "own dear love" at her side!

Meanwhile there came many loving letters from Marston, telling of his lonely home, and how he longed for Madeline's presence to cheer and brighten it. Thus three years slipped away, and then there came an urgent appeal to Madeline to come out to him.

"I am doing well out here, my dear one," he wrote, "but the loneliness is very great, and I need you more than any words can say. If you care for me, darling, you will put my wishes first, and if you cannot make up your mind to leave Vera at school in England, why then, you must bring her with you, and let her make her home with us."

Very tenderly and eloquently Marston pleaded his cause, and, as Madeline read the letter, her tears fell thick and fast.

To leave fragile, delicate little Vera at school was quite out of the question, while to take her abroad was a risk which Dr. Kingston would not sanction, and poor Madeline grew sick at heart as she realised that her lover's visions of far-off happiness must end, as such dreams often do. That life's stern awakening had come to her, and must be faced, alone.

A pitiful little letter it was which she sent to her lover, a sweet, womanly effort to soften his pain and conceal her own anguish, which Marston, in the bitterness of his disappointment, chose to blindly misinterpret.

He could not guess with what heart-broken sobs those brave, tender words had been penned, and knew nothing of the weary loneliness and heartsick longing which she had so generously striven to hide, that his pain might be lessened.

In hot anger he wrote again; bitter, cruel words, which seemed to burn themselves into Madeline's brain when she read them.

"Dear God," she moaned, "how shall I bear it! He thinks I do not care and that I have grown cold and heartless; well, perhaps it is better so, 'twill be the easier for him to forget me, but oh, my dear, dear love, how am I going to live through the long, lonely years without you?"

CHAPTER III.

Ten Years Later.

It was Springtime once more, glad, joyous Springtime. The hedgerows were gay with blossoms, the balmy air was filled with a thousand fragrant perfumes, the birds were carolling their happiest strains, and all Nature seemed with one accord to rejoice that the winter was over and the sweet resurrection of the year at hand.

The windows of the pretty morning room at Ivy Cottage were thrown wide open, and gave a welcome admittance to the many sweet sounds and perfumes.

Great bowls of purple lilac stood upon the dark oaken

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table, and trailing boughs of white and pink hawthorn were placed in tall jars in distant corners of the room, making the air heavy with their fragrance.

A bright, girlish face, framed in a wealth of wavy, golden hair, looked in at the window and greeted the occupant of the room with a loving smile.

"It is such a perfect day!" she exclaimed, "do put your work away and come into the garden, Love."

Vera still clung to the old fond name, and Madeline was glad to have it so. She looked up from her sewing, smiling at the tender, coaxing tones which she found so hard to resist.

"The wallflowers seem to be crying out for you to come and admire them, and everything is so sweet and lovely that it is a shame to stay indoors. Oh, Love, isn't it a glorious, beautiful world?" the girl added, with a glad, joyous ring in her voice.

"Very beautiful, my Vera," was the low reply; there was a tinge of sadness in the soft voice which Madeline could not entirely repress.

How fair and sweet the old-world garden had seemed to her but a few years ago, when, with lightest, gladdest heart, she had been wont to meet her lover, listen to his burning words of love and feel his strong, tender arms around her. Ah, surely she had Heaven in her heart in those dear, halcyon days!

But now, alas, only the memory of former happiness remained to be dwelt on, in her solitary moments, with yearning heart-hunger.

Stifling a sigh, she rose to join Vera in the garden, and together they wandered about the paths, pausing beside the old sun-dial while Vera laughingly traced the quaint figures with a little sunburnt forefinger.

They made a winsome picture as they stood together, Madeline, in her soft, grey gown, with its dainty ruffles of snowy lace, serving as an admirable foil to the fresh girlish form at her side, clad in palest, shell-like pink, the golden hair bound by a ribbon of the same delicate hue, the big garden hat slung over her arm, and in lieu of being used for its legitimate purpose converted into an impromptu flower basket and filled to over-flowing with fragrant clusters of lilac.

"Is it not exquisite?" she cried, turning to Madeline and burying her face in the mass of blossom.

"Where are you going to put it all, Vera?" Madeline questioned, smilingly. "Every available vase is filled already, and each room is a veritable flower-garden."

"Oh, I'll find a corner for it somewhere, never fear, I cannot help gathering it, it is just irresistible."

The sound of footsteps upon the gravelled path made them both turn to see a broad, manly figure coming towards them. There was something familiar to Madeline in the tall, erect form and handsome, smiling face. A sudden rush of crimson flooded her face from brow to chin, and she stepped quickly forward.

"Duncan!" she cried almost breathlessly, "Duncan, is it possible?"

For answer he took her hands in his and held them closely. "Yes, Madeline, it is I," he whispered. "I see I am not forgotten."

For a moment Madeline did not speak, her heart was too full. Then she turned to the girl at her side.

"Vera, my darling," she said speaking hurriedly, and in tones strangely unlike her usually low, calm utterance, "this is my old friend, Mr. Marston; you will scarcely remember him, I think, you were so young when he went away."

Vera held out her hand with a frank, unaffected smile. "Oh, yes," she said, "I remember Mr. Marston quite well, and I am glad to welcome back an old friend."

"That is a very kind remark, Miss Vera," Marston said as he took her hand and gazed smilingly down into her eyes, "I am happy to think you will count me amongst your friends."

"Love's friends are always mine also," the girl returned simply; then turned to her aunt, saying she would take the flowers indoors as the hot sun was withering them, and Madeline was left alone with her lover.

For a few moments neither spoke. Madeline felt dazed and confused; the golden sunlight half-blinded her, and the strange, sudden joy in her heart was almost pain.

Marston took her hand and drew it through his arm, looking at her with the old, fond glance she remembered and loved so well.

"The years have been long without you, Madeline," he said tenderly, "but they have made little change in you. It is just the same sweet little woman I left behind, more than a dozen years ago."

Madeline laughed, softly, happily, the sudden, sweet gladness seemed to transform her; the lines which had begun to show round the tender mouth had disappeared, as if by magic. There was a glad ring in her voice, and a young, joyous light in her eyes as she met her lover's gaze, with simple, unaffected happiness.

"You are changed, Duncan," she said half shyly, "you are handsomer than ever, but I should have known you amongst a thousand others."

Marston laughed a pleased, gratified laugh, and pressed her hand more closely to his side.

"The change is only in my outward appearance, my darling, I assure you," he whispered fondly, "but what miracle has been wrought in your little Vera? The delicate child I remember seems to have quite disappeared."

"Yes," Madeline returned gladly, "Vera has now quite outgrown her early weakness and is fairly strong, and is she not lovely, Duncan?"

"Is she?" Marston responded absently, "I didn't notice. I had eyes for one face only, my dearest, the sweetest face on earth to me." And Madeline's heart thrilled with happiness as she listened to the tender words.

All the long, weary years of separation were forgotten now, the sweet, glad present blotted out all remembrance of the past. And is it not ever thus? We are so like the children who cry for their broken plaything, until becoming enamoured of some new toy, the trouble is all forgotten, and the smiles return even before the tears are dried.

We all crave for happiness in this life, it is a natural desire, and surely no wrong one, and, if it come to us we are always ready to forget the pain with which it was preceded, while we drink to the full of the cup of joy.

So the days came and went as an happy dream to Madeline, and life had a deeper, fuller meaning than ever before.

She longed that all the world might share her gladness, and the great love of her life, almost divine in its rare unselfishness, filled her only with purer, higher thoughts and fairer aspirations.

Marston accepted her devotion very naturally and with much complaisance. It pleased him and gratified his vanity to note how the sweet, bright colour would flood her face at his coming, and the swift, glad light illumine her eyes when they met his own.

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Three months flew by ere the first glamour of Madeline's happiness was shadowed, but at length a cloud arose, a cloud at first no bigger than a man's hand, but which hid the sunlight from her and filled her with a terrible, nameless dread.

It was a glorious day in August, the sky was a deep, cloudless blue, and the sun blazed o'erhead in fierce splendour.

Madeline and Marston were seated in the shadow of the verandah, which formed a welcome shelter from the hot sun.

They were very silent as they sat there. Madeline's work had fallen unheeded to the ground and her hands lay idly clasped in her lap. Marston was leaning back in a low garden chair, lazily watching the faint, blue clouds of smoke slowly issuing from his lips as he silently puffed away at his pipe. Presently they heard a quick, light step, and a soft voice singing:

"There's nothing half so sweet in life
As Love's young dream,"

made them both look up.

"You two look half asleep," Vera cried merrily, bringing her song to an abrupt end. "I feel it is my duty to arouse you and find you some employment, you both look so incorrigibly lazy."

"It is so hot," Madeline murmured, half apologetically, while Marston rose and pulled a chair forward for Vera.

"Love, here are some letters which have just come for you, are you equal to the exertion of reading them?" Vera questioned saucily, tossing a bulky packet into Madeline's lap. "And you Mr. Marston," she continued, "may hold this wool for me; it will be nice for you to feel that you are doing something really useful."

Marston smiled as he obediently took the skein from her hand, in doing so his fingers touched hers, and she blushed a vivid, rosy red at the contact.

"Why are you winding all this wool, Miss Vera?" Marston questioned presently, as he watched the small hands flying to and fro. "Isn't it much too hot to think of wearing such wraps as this stuff makes?"

"Yes," asserted Vera, "but it will not always be summer remember, we have to look ahead sometimes and think for the future."

"Ah," Marston replied dreamily, "if we could always look ahead, how differently our lives would turn out; if it were possible to look into the future how many of our early errors might be prevented!"

His deep tones were full of significance, but softly though they were uttered, the words did not escape Madeline's quick ears.

She did not speak, but her heart seemed to die within her as she listened.

She watched the shy colour come and go in Vera's cheeks, and she saw the tender light in Marston's eyes, which, long ago, she alone had power to call forth, and suddenly it seemed to her that life had lost all its sweetness and light; she shivered slightly and rose somewhat unsteadily to her feet.

Vera turned swiftly.

"What is it?" she asked anxiously. "Are you not well?"

"I am a little tired, Vera, that is all, the heat has made my head ache, I shall be better if I rest a little."

"Let me come with you," the girl cried, half rising, but Madeline laid a detaining hand upon her arm.

"No, my child," she said gently, "I shall be better alone."

Once safely in her own room she shut and locked the door and sank upon her knees beside the bed; no tears came to her relief, but a low, stricken moan, "Oh, Heaven," broke from her white lips.

How long she knelt there she never knew; she sank into a dreamy state, half sleep, half stupor, from which she was at length roused by the sound of low voices, talking eagerly. She heard, as in a dream, the deep, manly voice she loved so well, telling the old, old story, she heard the soft murmur of Vera's shy replies; then, from the low movement beneath her window, and the rustle of the ivy which climbed round the house, she knew they had risen, and that Marston's arms were round the girl at his side.

Then she heard her own name timidly uttered by Vera, followed by a quick denial from Marston.

"Madeline and I are the best of friends, but nothing more," she heard him say. "We had a childish fancy for each other, years ago, but that is long since past and gone. My little one; you are my very life and soul.'

Oh, the supreme agony of that moment to Madeline' In it the bitterness of death seemed to engulf her, blotting out for ever, all the joy of living; then there came a sudden wild pain at her heart, and a blackness before her eyes. It passed away almost instantly, and she rose mechanically, smoothed her hair and arranged her dress with that strange precision which often takes possession of us in some great crisis of our lives.

She forced herself to go downstairs, to smilingly reply to Vera's loving inquiries, and to meet Marston's gaze with unruffled composure.

A few hours later, when they were alone for a short time, Madeline seized the opportunity for which she had been waiting of speaking to Marston.

"Duncan," she said quietly, without a tremour in her soft voice, "I have been thinking that we have made a mistake, you and I. I do not think that, as your wife, I should make you happy, and it is better, is it not, to face these things now, before it is too late to remedy them?"

Marston glanced keenly at her, wondering if it were possible she could know anything of what had taken place that afternoon.

"Am I to understand, then, that you are tired of me, Madeline?" he queried, a little stiffly.

"Not quite that, dear," Madeline returned, smiling bravely into his face, "we must always be good friends, but I think a closer tie might, in time, become irksome, and it would scarcely be wise to risk that, would it?"

Marston took her hand. "I thought you cared for me, Madeline," he said reproachfully.

"I do care for you, Duncan," was the low reply, "you will always be as a dear, dear brother to me."

"But, my dear Madeline—" he was beginning eagerly, when Vera's entrance made him pause. Madeline rose as the girl came into the room.

"I think I must leave you two to amuse each other," she said a little wearily. "My head is still so painful that I fear I am poor company to-night."

Vera put her loving young arms round her aunt's slight form, noticing as she did so, how white and worn the sweet faced looked.

"Dear Love, is the pain very bad?" she questioned tenderly.

"It will be gone to-morrow, my darling," Madeline returned, kissing the upturned face, "the heat has tried me very much to-day. Good-night, my dear one. God bless you," and then, with a gentle "good-night" to Marston she left the room.

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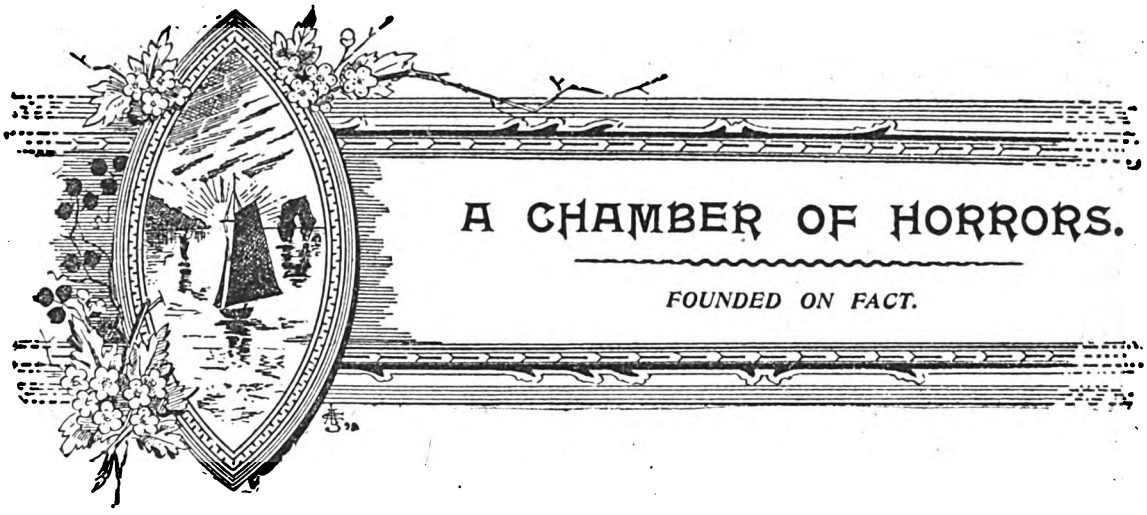

A CHAMBER OF HORRORS.

FOUNDED ON FACT.

THERE is a certain house in a certain town known to certain members of the theatrical profession as the "Haunted House."

For many years in the exercise of my calling—the histrionic—I had paid annual visits to this town, but for superstitious reasons had carefully avoided the domicile in question, and sought "diggings" elsewhere. Fortune, it is said, favours but the brave. Hence, on a tempestuous night in an unusually bleak October, I found myself wandering the streets of this afore-mentioned town, roomless, wet and hungry.

My old lodgings had been acquired by other members of our company, and every available set of "comfortable apartments" were "Quite full, sir!"

House after house had I inquired at, till I had made a call at every known address where "theatricals" were taken in and done for. I say "every," but in this I err.

One remained which I knew well, but for that very reason passed uncalled-at. At length, wearied by my unsuccessful search, I paused before it. The familiar shaped card stared me in the face, the legend, "Furnished Apartments," hung invitingly from its lighted windows.

I gazed, I hesitated.

My fears urged me to continue my explorations; my keen sense of physical discomfort pleaded with me to go no further.

"He who hesitates is lost," was again verified in my case, for calling up the sailor's philosophy of "any port in a storm," I ascended the steps and rang the bell.

An elderly woman of somewhat unwashed condition and forbidding physiognomy, after a lapse of some moments, emerged from the lower regions of the domicile, and partially opened the door.

After favouring me with an apparently suspicious inspection of my personal apparel, she asked me what I wanted.

"A bed and sitting room till next Sunday!" was my answer.

"Are you with next week's company?" she inquired, eyeing me once more, as I supposed, with the idea of arriving at the maximum rental it would be advisable to ask for her rooms. Receiving a reply in the affirmative, she motioned me into a large room on the right of the passage.

"I didn't intend to let this week," she said, with another hesitating look. "I'm not very well, but as you're alone, you won't give much trouble. You'd like something to eat, I suppose?"

"I should," I admitted, "but about terms?"

To my surprise, however, the price asked was rather below the average, so we quickly completed our negotiations, and in a few moments I was seated before a substantial meal. My supper was soon disposed of, so, feeling tired after my peregrinations I rang the bell, and on the old woman's re-entering, remarked that if she would show me my room I would retire at once.

For a moment she stared at me without speaking, the same hesitating, uneasy expression on her face I had noted on entering.

At length, finding her tongue, she said the bedroom was not quite ready, and suggested that she should make the fire up, and I amuse myself with a book for half an hour or so, by which time the room would be prepared. Her explanation appeared plausible, so I gave my assent, and was settling myself in the depths of an armchair, when I caught sight of her face. The expression of relief upon it appeared far greater than the occasion warranted.

Back with redoubled force came the superstitious dread with which the house's reputation had filled me, but which for the time being the warmth and light of the sitting-room had dissipated.

What did the woman's confusion point to?

Only that I was to occupy the haunted chamber! For one room alone was said to enjoy practically the monopoly of ghostly visitors. I determined to question her. "Is there anything else wrong with the room?" I asked tremblingly.

"What should there be?" was the reply—spoken almost fiercely—but with a whitening of her cheek, scarcely, I thought, consistent with her tone.

"Why—you see—is—isn't it supposed to be haunted?" I stammered, half ashamed of my fears.

"Haunted? Well, I've heard people as have seen ghosts or what they thought was such, but it's afore my time. Since I've had the house there's been no complaints, and"—with a meaning look at the jug on

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the table—"I hope you won't take too much of that during the week, then I reckon you won't make any either. I trust not, anyways, because I've a hard job to let as it is. Don't look for ghosts is my advice, sir, and depend upon it, you won't see anything worse than yourself."

"But haven't you another room at liberty?"

"No, sir, I haven't," and as if to preclude further questioning, she hastily left the room, leaving me to my reflections. And they were by no means pleasant ones, consisting as they did of the personal reminiscences of sundry of my professional brethren who had—if their statements were to be believed—spent nights of horror in the chamber which awaited me. I remembered, and the fact did not tend to dissipate my fears, that my *confrères'* stories, although varying slightly in detail, in the main incident corresponded. One and all had witnessed the re enactment of the tragedy to which the house owed its evil reputation. They had seen the nebulous form of a woman, stealing cautiously towards the shadowy figure of a man, who stood with his back turned, gazing from the uncurtained window. The woman had placed her arm caressingly round the man's neck, and as his face turned expectantly towards her, with one swift stroke of a glittering razor blade she had cut his throat from ear to ear. The body staggered, but in the act of falling, was caught in the extended arms of the woman, who had dragged it across the floor, and thrusting it into the depths of a huge cupboard, she had melted into the darkness and disappeared.

Was I, too, to be a witness of this ghostly tragedy? I trembled at the thought, but at this moment the landlady entered once more, bearing my candle, and with the information that she would show me to my room. Ashamed to confess my superstitious dread, I signified my willingness to follow, and like a lamb to the slaughter I was conducted to the upper regions. She led the way up an exceedingly broad staircase to a landing from which two or three passages branched. Taking one which turned off sharply to the left, the woman preceded me along a corridor, between two dead walls, to what was apparently a wing of the building entirely isolated from the rest. At the end of the corridor was a single door, which she threw open, and, signifying that my room was within, she left me.

As soon as I was alone I took a hasty survey of my surroundings, and was agreeably surprised to find nothing to add to my fears.

There was no ancient four-poster with catafalque-like hangings—no oriel windows through which the weird light of the moon cast uncanny shadows on the floor—no mouldering tapestry hanging from the walls, with dead and gone warriors worked thereon, and swaying to and fro under the influence of a moaning autumnal wind. No, none of that! The wind was there, certainly, coming in gusts through the joists of an ill-fitting window, but the tapestry wasn't, while in its place was a bilious-looking wall-paper of distinctly modern design. The furniture, too, was in keeping with the paper. Just a small, iron bedstead, with semi-detached brass ornaments—a twelve and sixpenny marble-topped wash-hand stand, whose only claim to antiquity lay in its plentifully besplattered dirt-stains—a chest of drawers, of about equal value, and deficient of a leg, which was efficiently represented by an ancient volume of the church service. These, and a chintz-covered packing-case, surmounted by a cracked mirror, comprised the lot—and a job lot they were! Stay! There was one piece of furniture I had forgotten—a large old-fashioned wardrobe, built into a recess. I had reason to remember this later. At the moment, I thought it a suitable place to hang my overcoat. I tried the door, but finding it locked I crammed the coat within the somewhat limited space of a drawer.

My nervousness had by this time almost entirely left me—due, I presumed, to the most material aspect of the room. Probably, but for my collar stud, it would never have returned, but that stud was my undoing. In extricating it from my shirt band, it slipped from my fingers, and fell to the floor. At one period in my career I should have jumped within the sheets and left it unsought until the morning. Experience had, however, taught me, that a collar-stud not found on the moment of its loss, was a collar-stud lost to its possessor for all time, a thing only to be unearthed from its hiding-place by some future occupant of the chamber who has another, and consequently no immediate, necessity for a second.

In my search I had occasion to remove the rug which lay beside my bed and close to the window. In a moment stud and everything were forgotten in the horror that met my eyes. There upon the uncovered boards was a dark red stain, the nature of which there was no mistaking. It was blood! Blood fresh and bright in colour, as if it had been shed but a few hours. It had sunk into the boards—it had filled the crevices—it had run in little rivulets hither and thither—there must have been pints of it. A sheep might have been slaughtered there, and caused no larger stain—or—Great Heaven—a man! A man who had stood with his back turned, gazing from the uncurtained window!

It was true, then, and this at my feet was the proof of the dark deed—the blood of the murdered, which neither time nor art could efface.

I stood spellbound, gazing upon the fatal spot—stood while one might have counted a hundred, and then turned to fly, preferring to face the rain and wind of the October night, rather than remain in that human slaughter-house.

There was one fact I had completely overlooked: I was quite undressed, so, notwithstanding my fears, I attempted to huddle on my clothing, but my trembling fingers refused their office. Then my terrors got the better of me, and giving it up in despair, I sprang into bed, and buried my head under the clothes.

How long I lay awake, trembling, I know not. It seemed hours. Finally, I must have fallen asleep, for when I awoke, the candle, which I perfectly remembered leaving alight, had burnt itself out, and save for the light of a particularly sickly-looking moon, the room was in darkness.

I had omitted to draw the blind, consequently that portion of the room adjacent to the window was lit up by the moon-rays, the remainder was in deeper shadow. What caused me to awake I cannot say, probably the weight of clothes upon my head. The first sound which greeted my awakening senses was that of a neighbouring clock striking the hour of midnight—the hour, upon the authority of Hamlet, "When churchyards yawn and graves give up their dead." At the same time, my eyes fell upon the dark spot on the floor, upon which the moon was shining. As I gazed, the mental picture I had drawn of the dead and gone crime took shape—the hideous phantasmagoria of the dark deed unrolled itself before me.

I saw the dim outline of a man emerge from the shadows beyond, and stand motionless, gazing from the uncurtained window. I saw another shadow-like form, in the shape of a woman, steal towards him with arms extended, as if about to confer a caress. The arm slowly

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encircled the man's neck, his face turned reciprocatingly towards her. Something glittered for a moment in the moon-rays, and then sank into the white throat, and with one swift stroke hacked its way through flesh and sinew. I saw the head fall back helplessly and blood appear, spurting out in jets, and streaming to the floor, into which it sank, dying the boards with its crimson stain. I saw the man's arms fly up, as if in mute appeal to Heaven—saw him stagger and fall forward, into the arms of the woman, who bore him slowly backward, till she reached the huge wardrobe. I saw her with difficulty thrust him into it, and double-lock the doors upon him, then, with one cautious glance round, fade slowly away into the darkness.

The dark stain upon the floor alone remained. I felt instinctively that what I had witnessed was but a vision of my mind's eye, yet everything was so real that I knew sleep was impossible till I had satisfied myself of its unreality. The cupboard alone could satisfy that, so I resolved to explore its recesses. I dragged my shaking limbs from the bed, reeled towards it, and shook it violently.

It was of course locked as before. No matter. It must open! I pulled and wrenched, till the screws tore themselves free from the frail and rotten woodwork, and the doors flew suddenly apart.

As they came open, something that had been huddled up within fell outward, full upon me; it bore me to the ground with its crushing weight.

It rolled over me, conveying a coldness as of the grave by its icy touch. I sprang to my feet in an ecstasy of terror, and thrust it from me. It fell within the band of light cast by the moon, and then I saw what it was. Oh Heaven, the horror of it! It was the body of a dead man, with his throat cut from ear to ear!

With a wild cry for help I rushed to the door. The long corridor was before me, dark and silent. It mattered not! Human society lay beyond! I turned to fly, but as I did so my foot caught in a mat, and I fell prostrate. For a time all was oblivion.

When I came to myself a doctor was bending over me. Beside him stood the landlady listening shamefacedly to his angry reproaches—reproaches in which, when I heard the medical man's explanation, I felt well inclined to join.

It appeared that on the morning of the day of my arrival, her son, a worthless reprobate, had, in a fit of delirium, committed suicide by cutting his throat with a razor. He had occupied the room in which I was placed, and at the moment of my arrival his body was lying in the bed in which I was to have slept.

The woman had not intended to let, but her cupidity being aroused at the unexpected opportunity, and my being alone, she had thrust the body within the cupboard, intending to remove it on the morrow, when she knew I should be at the theatre unpacking.

The re-enactment of the tragedy was, of course, the result of imagination, doubtless conjured up by my discovery of the blood upon the floor.

However, I had had enough of the "Haunted House," so, as soon as I could decently intrude, I went to the rooms of another member of our company, and begged him to allow me to share them with him. He consented readily enough, though, had he refused, and nothing offered but the pavement for a bed, and the dark vault of Heaven for a roof, I would have chosen them, rather than have spent another night in what had been to me a veritable "Chamber of Horrors!"

HUBERT BARTLETT.

£100 OFFERED THIS WEEK. £100

This week the Editor of SHORT STORIES addresses 100 envelopes to 100 people in various parts of the country. Inside each envelope he places a sovereign and locks them away in his private safe.

SIMPLY TAKE A POST-CARD

and address it to the Editor under the following conditions: Ask if a sovereign has been addressed to you, giving your full name and address clearly written in ink.

One hundred names and addresses have been picked out at random from directories, etc., etc.

No sovereign, however, will be awarded unless it is applied for, so it would be advisable for you to tell your friends to drop us a post-card, whether they are readers or not.

All applications for No. 13 distribution must reach us by January 3rd, addressed to The 13th Sovereign Editor, "Short Stories" Office, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

Each application must be made separately.

Result of Distribution No. 10.

THREE of the fifty people for whom sovereigns have been set aside have applied for them this week. They are:

M. J. Adams, 94 Alcombe Road, Northampton.
Miss Mulliner, 71 Granleigh Road, Leytonstone.
W. H. Proctor, School Board Offices, Congleton, Cheshire.

The unclaimed money was addressed to:

C. Hurdlo, 68 Church Road, Upper Norwood, S.E.; A. Jenkins, 45 Vue Road, Brighton; Thos. Simon, 13 Hauteville, Guernsey; W. G. Harris, Upper Street, Shere, near Guildford; F. H. Parker, "Wensley," Manor Road, Wallington, Surrey; J. Shain, Longfellow House, 29a Palmerston Road, Bowes Park, N.; Miss Warwick, 16 Cornfield Terrace, Eastbourne; H. J. Taylor, Collegiate School, Glastonbury, Somerset; G. F. Matthews, 20 West Street, Chichester; F. Glancy, Eaton's Lane, Boyle, Ireland; F. Martin, 4 Edith Villas, Newmarket; T. Youngs, Stowupland Street, Stowmarket, Suffolk; Mrs. Ker, 23 Falkland Road, Egremont, Liverpool; Alf. Jester, 22 Eridge Road, Tunbridge Wells; J. Wilson, Carr House, Seaton Carew, Durham; R. Robson, 35 Croydon Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne; J. F. Boyle, 53 Queen Street, Clonmel; J. Osborne, Main Street, Brampton, Cumberland; Mrs. Clowes, Holly Hill, Bowness-on-Windermere; Geo. Patterson, 24 Suffolk Street, Helensburgh, N.B.; J. Kish, 24 Galloway Street, Maxwelltown, Dumfries; Alex. Macrae, 8 Francis Street, Stornoway, The Outer Hebrides; Mrs. Powell, Panycoed, St. Clears, South Wales; P. R. Day, 18 Bloomsbury Square, W.C.; Thos. Olley, 8 Bristol Mews, Paddington, W.; Mark Beck, Bull's Head Lane, Stoke, Warwickshire; H. Ackland, Postmaster, Lundy Island; Jas. Lemin, 9 Fore Street, Redruth; Mrs. Adams, 2 West End Avenue, Harrogate; J. Quayle, 10 Wade Street, Leeds; T. Briggs, Hollows House, Little Town, Liversedge; Thos. Richardson, Sawtry, Peterborough; W. Jackson, Langham, Oakham; Thos. Day, 16 Church Road, Willesden, N.W.; Alf Young, 47 Alkham Road, Stoke Newington, N; John Andrews, 6 Park Hill Road, Bromley; H. Allberry, 49 Mount Ararat Road, Richmond, Surrey; Mrs. Wilson, 94 Wellesley Road, Gunnersbury; A. Campbell, King Street, Hammersmith; Miss Noakes, 15 Hastings Road, Maidstone, Kent; A. Allen, 41 Commercial Street, Hereford; T. Altham, 3 Princess Street, Nelson; F. Brown, 19 Castle Street, Reading, Berks; F. C. Burnham, Maidenhead, Berks; Mrs. Mundy, 163 Walton Street, St. Thomas's, Oxford; J. Knight, Harrold, Bedford; H. Brooks, 5 Manchester Road, Hyde, Cheshire.

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By CUTCLIFFE HYNE.
Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc.

BOOK I.—CONCERNING THE FLIGHT FROM CULLODEN MOOR.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

CHAPTER III.

How the five dragoons were outwitted; how Murtagh O'Neill provided doe-venison; how the two reconnoitred; how the flood-tide flows in S. Peter's Strait; and how a trading cutter was requisitioned without the usual formalities.

ALL throughout the chase snow or sleet had been coming down apace, but when O'Neill looked round, he saw that a snowstorm was driving up with the wind such as would put all previous efforts to scorn. He told Sneyd of this, and added, "Run two more minutes, yer honour, for all you're worth, and then I promise yez a halt." At the same time he slightly increased his own pace, and Sneyd, helped by the lead—as one always is, when running—puffed and panted in his wake, spurting most pluckily.

The clouds of downy flakes came down with racing speed, and enveloped all in their folds. O'Neill looked back. "Another half-minute," he said, "an' they'll have lost the sight of us." Then, directly afterwards, turning sharply to his right, he motioned Sneyd to stop, and pulled him down under the cover of a clump of juniper bushes. "They'll hide your honour nicely," he said. "Lie low, an' let the sodjers pass yez. I'll stay here. When they've gone by, an' we've got our winds again, we'll be up an' off across the strame. There's wood over yonder, an' once in it, they might as well search for diamonds in the Bog of Allen as try to find us there."

Sneyd crouched as he was directed, and presently heard the dragoons' heavy boots going past—*crush, crish, crush,* through the slushy peat soil. One, two, three, he counted; then four; and then, after a pause, five. These went stolidly on into the blinding storm, and were lost to hearing in the distance. There had been six in the first batch, so another should come up. But as minute after minute passed and he did not put in an appearance, the cornet concluded that the man had turned back.

O'Neill had evidently arrived at the same conclusion, for just then he started to his feet, and beckoning his companion, started off at a steady jog-trot, directly down-hill. Sneyd followed, and presently they came to the Ree, swollen by the morning's rains, but still not up to mid-thigh. The water was bitterly cold, but they were soon across it, and were pressing through the thick bushy undergrowth on the opposite bank.

Presently the trees around them became taller, and in a short while they entered a regular forest.

There was little chance of the dragoons following them here. In summer, what with hazels and other bushes, the place would have been well-nigh impassable; and, even now, the tree-trunks and bare branches were often set so thickly as to bar a straight passage. Rocks, too, jutting out from the surface, frequently necessitated a considerable detour. So that there was small probability that anyone but an experienced woodsman could follow their trail, even if he had been fortunate enough to pick it up. But, for all that, they did not come to a halt. The neighbourhood was too dangerous to stay in. When the storm had passed, and the soldiers did not see them elsewhere, they would most assuredly scour the wood. So the pair of them kept on at a good sharp walk, holding, as nearly as they could, a line parallel to the coast.

Steering amongst trees, when the sky is overcast, and a snowstorm is raging, would not be an easy task, but for

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one thing. If the wind remains fairly constant, one can set a fair course by it, failing a better guide. O'Neill, who had been a sailor, knew this, "And," said he, "we'll just hold on, yer honour, for six good Irish miles av the cover lasts, an' then we may sit ourselves down an' feel that we're in safety."

"And if we find ourselves out of the wood?" suggested Sneyd.

"Why, then, we'll hark back a hundred yards or so, an' dig a burrow of some sort there. Any way, there's nothing like a plantin' o' this kind for a bhoy to hide in when he's wanted. It's me own father that stowed away for two years in a ten-acre patch on the back of the Kesh mountain, wid twenty goulden guineas on his head. 'Twas a powerful sum of money, yer honour, wasn't it? I mind me the ould man used to sigh an' say he'd give information on himself blythely, av they could only promise to let him have the spendin' of the money when he came to be a ghost. But he couldn't figure out how that was to be done nohow, an' so at last he gives it up in despair, and just turns tail and runs away, and settles down peaceably in Galway. Howly saints! it's another climb we have before us. Awful mountainous this, yer honour, isn't it, for just a counthry place?"

Sneyd crouched as he was directed.

They had passed over on to the side of the hill which slopes away to the loch, and were keeping in a line more or less parallel to the shore. Now, the timber is gapped; but then, it was mostly as nature had planted it; and at the end of their six-mile tramp they were still in cover. They had come into a forest of Scotch firs, which ran from the Callart shore away up and up to that altitude which is known as the "tree-line;" and in its dark and melancholy aisles they found a safe asylum. Pushing through the thick covers had been a work of time, and, by the hour they brought up, it was nearly dusk.

The interlacing foliage above formed a dense canopy which, even in sunshine, on a clear day, threw the brown needle-strewn ground below into shadowy twilight; but now that the dark evergreens bore a deep burden of snow, save for the dim radiance which struggled through an interstice here and there, all was a deep and murky gloom. A pine wood, with its stiff straight trunks, and its desolate lower branches of dead wood, is never a cheering sight at the best of times. It will induce a gentle melancholy even in our liveliest hours; but when one's fortune is as those of these two fugitives were, the place is depressing in the extreme. Even O'Neill felt its influence. "'Tis worse than a wake widout the whisky, yer honour," he said. "But a man can get used to anything if he only lives long enough to learn, as me uncle said when the hangman hurt his ear wid the rope; and so here goes for buildin' a cabin."

A fork formed by two prone-lying giant trunks offered them a commencement, and by piling up branches and turf, and by scraping away the thick layers of mouldering woody *débris* from underneath, they had, in half-an-hour's time, a hut as snug as could be wished for, with a fire of resinous fir-cones and branches crackling merrily in front of them.

Now, fir-cones certainly do burn well, but they are not appetising to the palate even when roasted; and pineneedles make an excellent couch, but no one would dream of taking them internally; and now that kitchen, fireplace, and bedroom had been prepared, the two wanderers began to think keenly of supper. As Sneyd truly remarked, they were not likely to find a sheep there, and for his own part, he didn't see what on earth they were to do for a meal, except make up their minds to go without.

But O'Neill was more sanguine. "It's far too big a pain I've got in me belly to go to sleep," said he, "an', wid yer honour's lave, I'm off to forage for something to aise it with."

"If you think there's anything to be got, I'll come too."

"Wid due respect, best not," replied the Irishman. "Bad cess to me bringing up, there's a poaching cross in me blood, an' wid a night as dark as the inside of a haythen nigger, I'd be able to find me way about. Now yer honour'd be different. Once nicely away from the camp here, an' it's all Fermanagh to a Connemara stone-heap yez wouldn't be back till morning, if then. Just stay an' toast yer toes

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an' yer breeks at the fire, an' before yez can boast of a dry shirt to yer back, 'tis back I'll be av there's anything creeping widin three miles of us."

So, taking the pistols and recharging them carefully, the Irishman strode off into the darkness, and Sneyd, keenly anxious to contribute his share to the household comfort, climbed one of the slighter firs, and cutting from it a number of branches, stripped the thinner shoots from these, and arranged them on the floor of the hut, thereby forming a couple of luxurious, springy couches.

Meanwhile the storm howled remorselessly on. The more slender pine trunks swayed perpetually, and even the older and larger trees occasionally deigned to bow to the heavier squalls. Every now and again some branch, insufficiently buttressed up by its fellows, would crash down, and, letting fall an avalanche of snow, leave a window in the close-groined roof to light it in its descent.

Sneyd had but slender hope that the Irishman would be able to meet with any food, and at any-rate did not expect him back for a considerable time; and so, when a man appeared close beside him, having advanced unnoticed over the soft carpet of pine needles, he instinctively sprang to his feet, and laid a ready hand upon his sword-hilt. However, a cheery "All right, yer honour," reassured him, and he recognised his new comrade. The latter threw a burden from his shoulders to the ground. "That's a year-old doe," he said. "I came upon her upwind and unawares, broke her foreleg with a pistol shot, and then closed in and used my dirk. Red deer meat's just the thing for us."

He instinctively sprang to his feet and laid a ready hand on his sword hilt.

He had commenced skinning the animal as he was speaking, and soon had it denuded of its pelt. Then he eviscerated it, and proceeded to cut the flesh from the loin. After arranging the hot embers of the fire to suit his taste, he ashioned a couple of forked sticks to serve as grids, and giving Sneyd one, with instructions how to use it, he took the other himself, and followed suit.

The smell of roasting flesh rose on the cold night air, and Sneyd thought it the sweetest odour that had ever assailed his nostrils. He had not realised before, how hungry he was. And when his piece of meat was cooked enough to suit his fancy—rather underdone, I fear it was—he tackled it with his teeth, and felt that he had never known what it was to enjoy a meal before. That there was no salt, no bread, no plate, or knife and fork, little recked he. An empty belly wants none of these things to tempt it. Solid food is then in itself the height of luxury.

The pair of them ate to repletion, and, at the end of the meal, they laid themselves down on the springy beds of pine branches, and ruminated silently. O'Neill enjoyed the last pipeful of his tobacco. Sneyd mused dreamily for awhile over the events of the last few weeks, and then dropped off to sleep. The other puffed at his pipe, down to its last ashes, and dropped off also. And the pair of them snored in concert.

The sun was showing high through the pines when the ex-cornet of Sheridan's Horse next opened his eyes. The storm had ceased. Part of the snow was still perched on the branches overhead, but the most of it had either melted where it was, or fallen in small lumps to the earth. A dim, quiet light stole through the tree-tops and fell on the needle-strewn ground. But the view was still circumscribed. Whichever way one might look, straight brown trunks closed in the vista. Everything was a shade of brown—tree-trunks, dead branches, needles, cones—save for the dark green feathery branches overhead, and the few small patches of blue sky and fleecy cloud which here and there showed between them.

O'Neill was still lying open-mouthed on his back, snoring peacefully. He was a man of about the middle height,

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very squarely built, and heavily boned. There was no superfluous flesh upon him, yet a casual spectator would have called him fat, because of the wideness of his frame. He was one of those men who look strong, and who are a great deal more powerful than they appear. His face was typical of his country—with wide straight mouth, short tip-tilted nose, and merry blue eyes. There was sandy red hair on his head, and a red stubble on cheeks, upper lip, and chin. Artistically speaking, the man was no beauty, but his was a pleasant face, and a face that one would instinctively trust.

Remembering how little sleep the man had had of late, Sneyd did not wake him, especially as there was no reason why either of them should turn out just then. A fire would be dangerous in the daytime, as the blue smoke rising above the trees would betray their whereabouts; and, besides, they had cooked enough venison overnight to serve them for breakfast. No, there was absolutely no need to rise just then, and Sneyd himself was not loath to indulge in a still longer rest.

The Irishman opened his eyes at last, and, after making a meal of some of their cold meat, the pair of them fell to discussing what should be their next move.

"We're fairly safe from pursuit here at present, I take it," said Sneyd, "but we can't stay where we are for ever. I haven't much notion as to whereabouts we may be, but there are certain to be people in the neighbourhood, and sooner or later they must discover us."

"Sorra doubt about it, yer honour. What'll we do?"

"Slip cautiously down to the edge of the wood and reconnoitre."

"But why not reconnoitre from here?"

"Because we can't see through the trees."

"Thrue for yez; but we can see over 'em. Wait now. 'Tisn't every one of these trees I'd be afther sayin' I could climb, for there's many of them as big as a hogshead o' potheen in girth; an' though the bark's rough, it 'ud give way av yez swayed on it wid yer fingers. But see now, there's a thin chap there, an' av yez notice, his upper branches interlace wid the big fellow next door to him. So ye see, yer honour, I can swarm the wee fellow, lay out along the yard, in a manner of speaking, and then go hand-over fi-t up the rigging right up into the sky."

Sneyd nodded acquiescence, and the Irishman did as he had suggested, scrambling up with a seaman's activity, and pushing through a screen of the feathery dark green branches which closed after his passage and hid him from sight. He stayed up some ten or fifteen minutes, and then rejoined Sneyd on the ground.

"Well?" inquired the latter.

"Well, yer honour, the coach for the first stage is waiting for us to give the word to have horses put to and start. There's a loch* below us, wid an island† that holds a graveyard in the middle, an' a wee village on the other side. This side there's a sort o' low spit o' land running out, wid half-a-dozen houses on it; an' on the lee of that, there's a boat drawn up that's fit to carry us anywhere in rayson amongst the islands till we can come by a bigger."

"Then," said Sneyd, "as there's nothing to be done till nightfall, we may as well lie down again and snatch all the rest we can; there's no knowing when the next chance may come."

With that they settled themselves down on their beds once more, and dozed the day through. Night began to close in soon after four o'clock, and, as this was far too early to attempt their enterprise, they got the fire alight once more, and set to cooking all the remaining venison, partly as a meal for the present, partly as a provision for the future. There was no knowing how long their cruise might last, or how next they would be able to revictual themselves.

* Loch Leven.

† St. Mungo's Island. Burials still take place there.

He stayed up some ten or fifteen minutes.

About ten o'clock they moved leisurely down to the edge of the forest, struck the road which runs along the loch shore, and walked along it, holding themselves in readiness to dart into cover the moment any wayfarer put in an appearance. However, none seemed to be abroad, and the place was extremely desolate. They reached the shore where the boat lay, about midnight, and set to getting her in the water as quietly as possible. She was laden with herring nets, and these they left on the shingle. There was no need to take more than they wanted. Some people might have said that running off with the boat was nothing more nor less than robbery; but it must be remembered that fugitive soldiers, flying away to save their lives, are not apt to be straitlaced about such matters. The boat herself was not valuable—a rotten old craft of the skimming-dish pattern, with a couple of rude oars, and no other tackle—but, failing a better, she would serve their purpose. So they got in, and shoved off.

The tide was pretty slack in the bight where she lay, so with the two clumsy fisherman's oars they made fair way; but, once round the point, the full force of a fierce flood met them, and the boat steadfastly refused to make headway.

"Idjut that I was not to have known it!" muttered O'Neill. "The whole inner loch empties an' fills through this narrow gut, an' the water's racing in now like a mill-sluice. The ebb'll begin to make in a couple of hours, an' av I'd only had sense to wait, we'd ha' gone out then like a musket-shot."

However, by holding close in to the shore, they kept in the deader water, missing the full strength of the tide, which runs hardest in mid-channel, and by slow degrees

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They . . . set to getting her in the water.

they worked the cumbersome old boat along. The strain was intense, but both stuck doggedly to the task, and brought every muscle to bear.

But ill fate awaited them. In the midst of one of his hardest pulls, the blade of Sneyd's oar caught in a tangle of seaweed, and he tumbled heels over head into the bottom of the boat, with the loom broken off short at the thole-pin.

Round came the boat like a walnut-shell in a flooded gutter, darting into mid-channel, and shooting straight down towards the inner loch. There was no spare oar on board, and, with the remaining one, they were helpless to turn her up against the stream. O'Neill shifted his heavy oar to the stern rowlock, so as to have some command over the boat in case of need.

Neither spoke. The current had got them helplessly in tow. Words could not improve matters, and so both remained grimly silent. They swept on past the Green Island and into the broader loch, and there the force of the stream was more or less dissipated. O'Neill headed the boat in towards St. Mungo's Island as though he were going to land there, but Sneyd, who was sitting on the forethwart peering through the darkness, said to him in a loud whisper, "Look over there to your right; wouldn't that craft suit us better? She's larger than this, at any rate."

"Yer honour's right, an' av we can get her we'll slip down wid the ebb in an hour's time, an' be able to cruise where we please. Kape quiet now, av yez plaze, and I'll lay this ould wreck alongside."

The vessel which had attracted their attention was a little coasting cutter of some ten or twelve tons; undecked, save for a small cuddy forward. O'Neill sculled his boat cleverly and quietly across to her, and, as he lay her on board, Sneyd made fast his painter round the cutter's starboard runner, and jumped quickly over the side.

Rapid as he was, O'Neill was before him. Hastening forward the Irishman made fast the little forehatch, and then came aft to Sneyd, who was standing on a heap of stones amidships, not knowing exactly what to do.

"It's in ballast she is, yer honour, an' so we may guess she's come in here for freight of some kind or other. If her people are on board, I've got 'em all snugly under hatches forrard. We can't risk the din of a scrimmage. If there ain't anybody, well an' good; if there be, why we can talk to 'em when we get fairly to sea. Meanwhile, we must just sit snugly down here on the ballast till the ebb begins to make, an' no body ashore'll be the wiser about our bein' aboard."

"And how shall we get out?"

"This ways, yer honour. Wind's fair for the narrows. As soon as she swings we'll get the anchor, an' let her drop down a quarter of a mile or so under bare poles. The breeze is stiff enough to give her steerage-way wid that, an' 'twould be risky to get any canvas on her here. Blocks will squeak, and if they did someone ashore might be poking his nose out of doors to see what we was after. But I'll get everything ready for hoisting, and as soon as we're nicely out of earshot we'll give her the canvas, an' be off an' away as fast as we can tear."

"Can you take her out through the narrows?"

"Wid any dacent luck, yer honour, yes. There'll likely be a bar, but, wid the tide almost bang full, there should be lashins of water for a wee boat like this. And then, once outside, we must find our way along as best we can. Yez have no notion, I suppose, where we should steer to?"

"Not an atom. The poor old Major headed down here on the strength of a rumour that the Prince's vessel was still in these waters. But where exactly she is supposed to be lying he didn't know, and neither do I."

"'Tis a bad lookout that, yer honour. The coasts here-away is a regular maze of islands, so I've heard tell, an' 'twould be a hunt for a needle in a bundle of hay, I fear, to go after her haphazard. However, we may pick up tidings. And if we don't, well we'll look after ourselves somehow. 'Twill go hard av a couple of able-bodied men—beggin' your honour's pardon for couplin' meself wid yez—with a stout little boat to their feet, either starve or get caught, when they don't want to do either."

"Oh," said Sneyd, laughing, "I wasn't in a funk at all. I don't doubt but what we'll pull through somehow, thanks to your skill. But still, it is best to have a definite plan, if possible. Can I give a hand at what you are doing?"

"Much obliged, yer honour, but it isn't worth while. It's just castin' off the tyers from the mainsail I am, an' there is but two. The forestaysail is lying on the deck there, wid the sheets ready bent on; an' the jib's stopped out along the bowsprit wid spunyarn, so that a good bowst on the halyards'll break it adrift aisy. We're all ready now when the tide serves."

"What about victualling?"

"Begob, I'd forgotten that. There's that bundle of deer's meat lying in the stern thwart of the other boat. No, sit you still, yer honour, I'll get it. See, there it is. I'll stow it in this locker aft. Here's a breaker, as I live! Ach, wather! and it's meself that'd forfeit me ten days' beard for just one wee half 'un o' potheen. Oh, wirra, wirra, 'tis a sad world this. I wonder what they've got stowed away in the wee cuddy there forard?"

"A rug or two maybe, and a regiment of fleas. But look, isn't she beginning to turn—what do you call it—swing?"

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"Yer honour's right. It must be dead wather now. The ebb'll begin to make in ten minutes or so; an' when her nose turns nicely towards the narrows, we'll trip the anchor an' be off. I'll go forard and heave it short-a-peak, ready."

He got on to the little foredeck as he spoke, and began hauling in the hempen cable; and Sneyd, eager to be of some use, went after him, and was in the very act of laying hold on the rope behind him, when suddenly he leant down with a hand to his ear, and listened attentively.

"Hark!" he whispered, after a moment's pause, and the Irishman took a turn with the cable round the bitts, and listened too. "Isn't there somebody moving about ashore, over yonder? There they are again—rattling something over the stones."

"Be the powers, yer honour's right. 'Tis a boat they're shovin' down. There, hear the splash? Now they're heavin' a pair of oars into her. Here, give a hand at the cable. It's up and down, and the bottom's holding fast."

"They're rowing this way."

"The chaps that own the cutter coming to take her out with the ebb, by all that's blue. Heave on the cable, yer honour, for all your worth, or we must cut it. Come now—Yer-huh-he! Again now—Yer-ha-ha-hee! Hurroosh, there she comes; in wid her now, handsomely. Now, then, up staysail—there, she's away, steering herself like a witch. Up mainsail now. There's the throat-halyards. Rattle 'em in, up peak, and handsomely does it. Bad cess to it; there, she's coming up to the wind. Tumble aft, yer honour, and take the tiller. Hard a-weather wid it. No! to t'other side. That's right. There now, she has the mainsail. Helm amidships again, an' keep her steady so, whiles I run up the jib. There now, yer honour, give me the tiller, an' do you reprime your pistols. We mayn't want 'em, but 'tis best not to have 'em just flash if we do."

The boat astern had crept out from the shadow of the land leisurely enough. But, when she was in the open water, the man sitting in the stern made some remark which caused the two rowers to rest on their oars and turn round. They saw the cutter getting under weigh apparently of her own accord, and for the nonce their superstitious fears got the better of them. But when they got sight of two very substantial ghosts flitting about and hoisting canvas with all the speed they were capable of, then did those two rowers turn round and bend their backs to their work in downright earnest. Who the midnight pirates were, they probably had no idea; but, for all that, they were not animated by any particular love for them, and had a great desire to come up and argue for possession of the little vessel at close quarters.

At first the boat came up hand over fist. The breeze was light, and the clumsy little cutter moved but slowly through the water. The two fugitives saw this, and quickly held themselves and their weapons in readiness. There was a battering from the under side of the flimsy forecastle hatch which showed that they might also have other foes to contend with. But, to discourage the efforts of these last, Sneyd piled a good three hundredweight of stone on the little scuttle, and then came aft again.

The boat was still gaining upon them, but she was coming up more slowly. A stern chase is proverbially a long one, and the rowers were tiring after their first furious spurt; besides, their craft was heavy and tubby, and more intended to live in a heavy sea than to be pulled rapidly over smooth water. But notwithstanding this, it was unmistakable that she was drawing up, and as the men in her had settled down to a steady, dogged stroke, and were rowing as if they could keep it up for a week—or less—the chances seemed to point to their gaining their end in time. That is, if the wind did not freshen—as it appeared to have not the smallest intention of doing.

What the result would have been had the two parties come into collision, there could have been little doubt. Sneyd and O'Neil were both armed with lethal weapons, and were accustomed to using them. The others probably had their sailors' knives, and the boat's oars. They were three to one, certainly, but they would not have stood a chance.

The two fugitives had no fears on that score. They simply wished to avoid a combat, as wise men always will, when there is nothing to be gained by it. They had no grudge against the men they were depriving of their boat, and, besides, they wished to pass as ordinary thieves, and not to be recognised—even on suspicion—as fugitives from Culloden.

So when the wind, which is proverbially fickle, broke its promise of remaining light, and came down from the hills with some freshness, they rejoiced exceedingly, and saw the boat drop astern with feelings that were distinctly the reverse of regretful.

And so the little cutter and her freight passed through St. Peter's Strait with the first of the ebb, and ran down past Port na Mearlach and Ardshiel Point into broad Loch Linnhe.

CHAPTER IV.

How the boy came out of the forepeak; how he volunteered to pilot; and how the cruise to France was planned.

"Yer honour will know nothing of the mariner's trade?" O'Neill observed tentatively, when the cutter was well through the narrows into the open lake.

"Practically speaking, nothing. I can handle an oar and steer a row-boat, but that's all; so the sooner I set about learning the better 'twill be for me."

So Lawrence Sneyd received instruction in the noble art of steering a cutter with the wind free, and with Murtagh O'Neill at hand to prevent mistakes, he contrived not to execute an unpremediated jibe, or any other similarly objectionable manœuvre.

But, by the time they had rounded Ardshiel Point, the question of escaping from pursuit had been merged in that of where to go next. They had little fear of being overhauled; but their future course was a puzzle to them. Atlases were not as common on shore in those days as they are now, and neither had anything beyond a very vague notion of the topography of the neighbourhood which he found himself in.

When questioned upon the point, O'Neill scratched his red poll, with dubious forefinger. "'Twould be dangerous to go ashore and beg pilotage, for the wee craft is nigh certain to be known, and we'd be laid hands on an' strung up as pirates, without parley. An' 'tis dangerous work boxing about in these narrow waters. We might pick up a reef at any moment, in spite of the shrewdest look-out. 'Twill be bad enough in the daytime, but at night 'twould be impossible to go on. We must contrive to fetch up to an anchor somewhere."

"Then you think it impossible to find the Prince's ship, even if she be here?"

The Irishman looked around him, and shrugged his shoulders. Sneyd followed his glance, and saw the hopelessness of such a search, situated as they were. The other continued: "O' course, yer honour, we might blunder on her, in a manner of speaking unexpectedly, an' then all would be well! but I think a search is out of the question."

"Then what would you suggest?"

"This, yer honour. There are islands all down the coast. Let us work our way slowly and carefully down inside them till we make the North of Ireland. When we get down by the Mull of Cantyre I shall know my way, for I've been South from Rathlin Island often; and once there, we can make further plans. Of course, we shall have to pick our way down carefully, so as not to blunder on to any reefs of shoals, though the danger would be more to the little cutter than ourselves. I'd say, get outside everything and sail her down in the blue water, but unless we were

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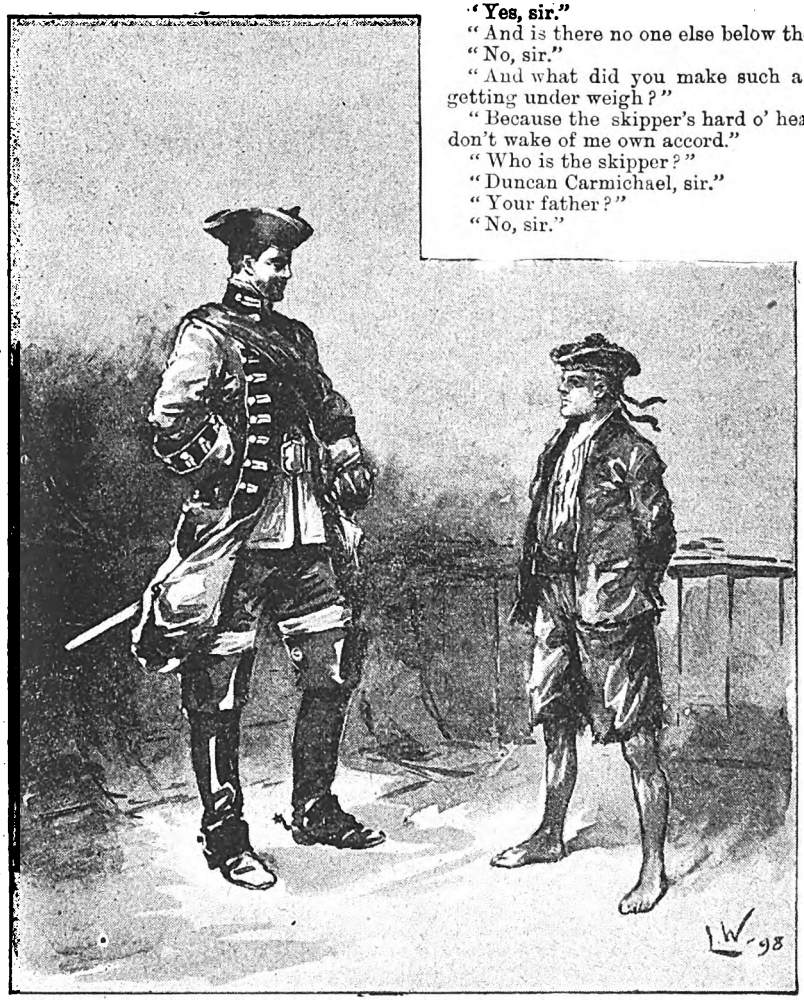

"Are you Sandy Carmichael?"

forced to it, that would be over venturesome. The wee boat is badly found for aught save simple coasting. She's neither chart that I can see, nor compass, nor lead, nor log ship."

"There may be something in the little cabin in the bows there. And, by Jove, there was some one in it!"

"By the powers, yer honour's right, an' it's meself that had forgotten him too. Have a care," he added, as Sneyd commenced pitching overboard the stones which he had piled on the forehatch, "there may be more than wan."

"All right," said Sneyd, slipping back a corner of the hatch and then sitting on it. "Hullo, below there! How many are there of ye?"

"There's nane but me," responded a voice.

"And who are you?"

"Sandy Carmichael, sir, an' I hope ye will na hurt me."

"Well, come up, Sandy Carmichael, and let's have a look at you," said Sneyd, slipping off the hatch altogether, and standing back upon his guard.

Forthwith up scrambled a small boy, with a prematurely old face, who tugged respectfully at a tattered bonnet which was pulled down well over his ears, and waited to be addressed.

Sneyd laughed. "Are you Sandy Carmichael?"

"Yes, sir."

"And is there no one else below there?"

"No, sir."

"And what did you make such a tremendous row for when we were getting under weigh?"

"Because the skipper's hard o' hearin', sir, an' he always licks me if I don't wake of me own accord."

"Who is the skipper?"

"Duncan Carmichael, sir."

"Your father?"

"No, sir."

"Uncle, then?"

"No, sir; he says he's my owner. He picked me up in a boat off the Irish coast when I was a wee bairn."

"H'm, wonder what you are now? Well, Sandy, we've run away with the cutter, and as you happened to be in it, we ran away with you too."

"Yes, sir."

"I hope you don't mind?"

The boy gave a short, hard laugh, which passed like a spasm across his face, leaving it stolid and wooden as before.

"No, I don't mind," he said.

"What are you laughing at?" Sneyd asked.

"'Cause you ask if I minded leavin' Duncan Carmichael, sir."

"Why, what was he like?"

"A brute, sir."

The boy said this without emotion. He made the statement as if it were a simple fact which could not be controverted; and Sneyd, after staring at him for a moment or two in surprise, slipped through the hatch into the forecastle. It was a grimy, malodorous little den, littered untidily with all sorts of odds and ends—ropes, blocks, pieces of mildewed sailcloth. In one angle was a rusty stove, with an iron pot hung beside it. On the bottom timbers of the boat were a couple of creel-fuls of peats. These were obviously intended as fuel. Meanwhile they served instead of floorboards in moderately light weather; though, when the cutter heeled over at all, it is probable that they all piled themselves up to leeward. Of food, there was not a vestige.

Sneyd put his head through the hatch again, glad to breath pure air once more. The boy had gone aft, and was staring solemnly at O'Neill. He was attired in a pair of short wide trousers of coarse grimy canvas, and a tattered coat of dark brown homespun. His legs were bare to the knee; his throat was bare and brown, and his shock of yellow hair was covered, as I have said, with a Scotch bonnet, pulled well down to the ears. As Sneyd came on deck the boy uttered a remark which gained him O'Neill for a friend at once.

"There's 'bacca in the locker you're sittin' on," he said.

The Irishman's pipe was out, filled, and lit, in less than a minute. "Sandy, boy," he said, "there's the makin's of a man in yez, av yez don't die of ould age before you're grown up. Laugh a bit, can't yez?"

The boy's face never moved a muscle. "I've forgotten how to laugh," he said. "Duncan Carmichael says it's wrong, an' used to welt me for laughin' when I was a bairn. So I dropped it."

"Well, you're a rum handful, you are. Hullo, here's his

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honour out again. Well, sir, an' did yez find anything worth packin' in a have-her-sack?"

"Nothing that I should fancy. Say, Sandy, what do you live upon here?"

"Fish, sir."

"Got any aboard?"

"No, sir. Catch 'em as we want 'em. Lines and hooks is in the after locker."

"H'm. That seems a primitive sort of proceeding. And supposing the fish don't bite?"

"Then we wait till they does, sir, an' has a drink o' water to stay the stomach with."

"Well, that beats all my goin' a-fishin'," exclaimed O'Neill. "And does your guv'nor—what's his name?—Duncan Carmichael—does he put up wid that sort o' livin', or does he have a dhrap o' the hard stuff to wash it down?"

"Hard stuff?" repeated the boy wonderingly.

"Yes, potheen. Come now, doesn't he have a drink of good potheen on board at times?"

"No," said the boy. "I never saw none. He has whuskey, though."

O'Neill chuckled. "That's the same thing as potheen, ye young haythen. It's yer education that's been sadly neglected, not to understand dacent English when yez hear it."

"Duncan Carmichael never teaches me anything," returned the boy, "'cept about working the cutter."

"An' what can yez do wid her?"

"Handle her by myself most weathers, and has to. Duncan Carmichael turns in and leaves me to it. He licks me when I rouse him up on deck; so I mostly let him lie, and carries on as far as the canvas'll stand. When it comes down hard I has to call him and take the lickin', 'cause, yo see, I ain't strong enough yet to snug her down by myself."

"Duncan Carmichael is a brute," said Sneyd. "I should like to treat him to a thundering good hiding."

"You'd best not let him come nigh you, sir," said the boy.

"Why ever not? Do you think he would be too strong for me?"

The boy avoided a direct answer. "You and Mr. O'Neill here are what they call Jacobites, ain't you, sir?"

"Well," said Sneyd, laughing, "it's rather a dangerous thing to admit just now; but I may say that we are, distinctly."

"Then," rejoined the boy, "I'd keep out of Duncan Carmichael's way if I was you. I don't know what Jacobite means, but I heard him say to a drover we had aboard yesterday, that if he could catch one he'd 'liver him up to them as wants him—meanin' the soldiers. He said there was a bonnet-fu' o' siller for every Jacobite as was handed over to 'em, and so he should consider it his duty as a Christian to grab as many as he was able."

"Sandy," said Sneyd, "you've taken a great weight off my mind. I had many scruples about running off with this boat. But after what you have told me, those scruples vanish. Duncan Carmichael is an enemy to my cause, and it gives me much pleasure to carry off his boat and turn it to my own uses."

"Then, sir," said the boy solemnly, "you'll carry me off as well, won't you? I'm his as well as the boat, and though I'm not so valuable, still I'm worth something, or he would have tripped me overboard on a dark night long since."

Sneyd looked at him curiously. The old, set face was without expression of any sort or description. The grey eye met his unflinchingly. Years of ill-treatment had not broke the lad's spirit; but they had taught him to repress his feelings.

"Sandy," he said kindly, "perhaps you mistake Duncan Carmichael's intentions. His manner is rough, but very likely he means well towards you. He wouldn't have kept you all these years else. As for coming with O'Neill and myself, I couldn't advise you to do it. We are men of desperate fortunes; outlaws with prices on our heads; and if you were caught in our company you would get into trouble too. The kindest thing we can do for you is to put you ashore somewhere hereabouts. You can walk to the nearest village, and hunt for a job. Believe me, if I could do better for you I'd do it."

The boy's face still wore its impassive look.

"Mr. O'Neill said, sir, you was here lookin' for a ship."

"And suppose we are?" replied Sneyd.

"The Prince's ship, sir?"

"Well?"

"Well, you won't find her, sir, that's all. We met her in Jura Sound three months back, heading to the s'uthard."

Sneyd and O'Neill exchanged a glance of disappointment.

"And then, sir," continued the boy, "Mr. O'Neill said that, if she didn't turn up, you'd head down to the Irish coast."

"Yez seem to have the ears of an ass, young man," said O'Neill.

A faint smile flickered across the boy's face. "An' neither of you knowed the way, sir."

"Well," said Sneyd, "what are you driving at?"

"Just this, sir, that you'll never find it alone. There's nothing on board to show it you but me. No chart, no compass, no anything. I've been down to Cawmelt'n wellnigh a score and a half o' times, and know every inch of the way—how the tides set at Easdale and the other places, and all the rest of it. Duncan Carmichael strapped it into me."

"What do you think, O'Neill?"

"I think we should take the pilot that's offered, yer honour, chance we don't get another."

"Very well, then," said Sneyd, "be it so. And now, then, to consider further. Supposing we get down to the Irish coast without mishap, what are we to do when we reach it? Nothing that I can see. In Ireland we should probably be in almost as much danger as we were in Lochaber. The Irish were in strong force with the Prince's army. My own colonel was an Irishman. The Elector's troops are sure to be in force there, and if we landed they would be wellnigh certain to have us by the heels before many days were past.

"Now what I've been thinking of is this: Could we contrive to navigate this little boat into a French port?"

O'Neill whistled long and low. "It's a large order, yer honour. For one thing, we're not rightly fitted for a cruise of that length. For another, the wee boat is full small for it. Ye see, we've neither instruments nor victual. Fishing may be all very well in these narrow waters, but it would be a slender reed to depend on in the open sea."

"We must land somewhere," said Sneyd, "and lift some sheep, and cure the meat either by salting or smoking it. Then we must overhaul some craft or other, and take from her, either by force or persuasion, barrels for our water, and a compass, and whatever else you want. And then, if you others are willing, we'll risk it."

"I'm yer man, sor," exclaimed O'Neill. "Sandy, lad, where's the convanientest place to stale sheep?"

"Charsaig Bay, in the Mull. Take 'em across and salt 'em down in Lowlan'man's Bay, in Jura. Snug anchorage there, and no one to interfere. Boil down salt in the kettle."

"Ye young villain, yez have been at this game before."

"Duncan Carmichael lifts a sheep or two occasionally, and sells the meat further up the coast," replied the lad unconcernedly.

"Well," said Sneyd, "our morality is dubious, although the laws of warfare more or less defend it; but that is downright thieving. You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Duncan Carmichael was my master," said the lad, evidently considering that this was a sufficient reason for his action, and that no excuse was needed.

Sneyd and O'Neill exchanged a glance of pity, and the conversation ended.

(To be continued.)

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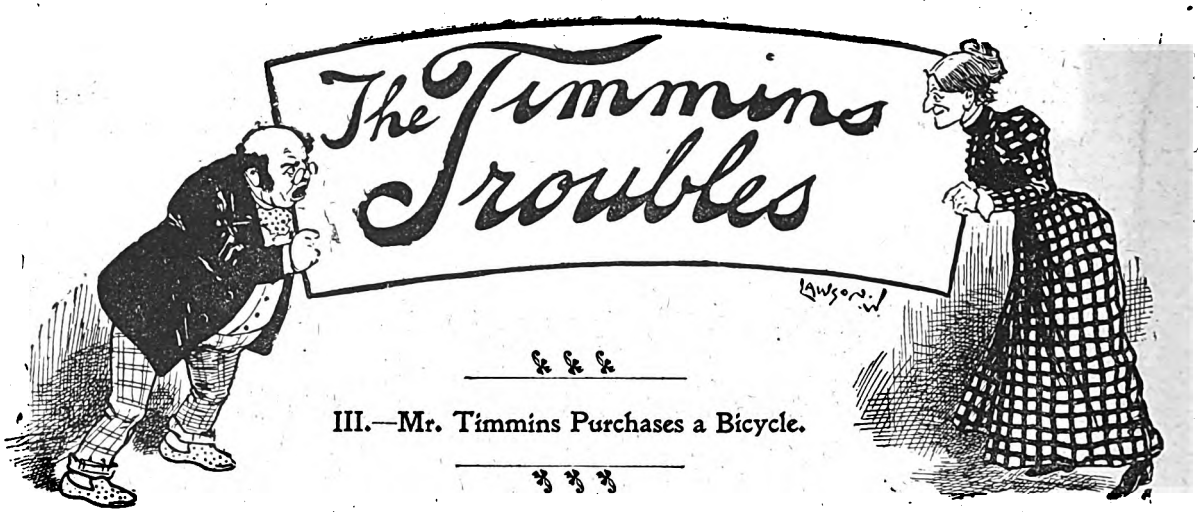

III.—Mr. Timmins Purchases a Bicycle.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, hurrying up to his wife's room, "if you'll come down in the yard I've got a pleasant surprise for you."

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Timmins; "what have you got—a horse?"

"Guess again," grinned Mr. Timmins, "it's something like a horse."

"I know. It's a new parlour carpet. That's what it is."

"No, it isn't either. I said it's something like a horse; that is, it goes when you make it. Guess again."

"Is it paint for the kitchen walls?" asked Mrs. Timmins innocently.

"No, and it isn't a hogshead of stove blacking, nor a set of dining-room furniture, nor seven gross of wash-tubs. Now guess again."

"Then it must be some lace curtains for the sitting-room windows. Isn't that splendid?" and Mrs. Timmins patted her husband on both cheeks and danced up and down with delight.

"It's a bicycle, that's what it is!" growled Mr. Timmins. "I bought it for exercise and I'm going to ride it. Come down and see me."

"Well, I am glad," ejaculated Mrs. Timmins. "You ought to have more exercise, and if there's exercise in anything it's in a bicycle. Do let's see it."

Mr. Timmins conducted his wife to the yard and descanted at length on the merits of the machine, which was an old "ordinary."

"In a few weeks' time I shall be able to go a mile a minute," he said, as he steadied the apparatus against the clothes post and prepared to mount. "Now, you watch me go to the end of this path."

He got a foot into one treadle and went head first into a flower-bed with a prodigious crash.

"Hadn't you better tie it up to the post until you get on?" suggested Mrs. Timmins.

"Leave me alone, will ye?" demanded Mr. Timmins, struggling to an even keel. "I'm doing most o' this myself. Now you hold on and keep your mouth shut. It takes a little practice, that's all."

Mr. Timmins mounted again and scuttled along four or five feet, and flopped over on the grass plot.

"That's splendid," commented Mrs. Timmins. "You've got the idea already. Let me hold it for you this time."

"If you've got any extra strength you hold your tongue!" growled Mr. Timmins. "It don't want any holding. It isn't alive. Stand back and give me room, now."

The third time Mr. Timmins ambled to the end of the path, and went down all in a heap among the flowerpots.

"That's too lovely for anything!" proclaimed Mrs. Timmins. "You went more than a mile a minute then."

"Come and take it off," roared Mr. Timmins. "Help me up!" and that worthy gentleman struggled and plunged like a whale in shallow water.

Mrs. Timmins assisted in righting him, and brushed him down.

"I know where you made your mistake," said she. "The little wheel ought to go first. Try it that way going back."

"Maybe you can ride this bicycle better than I can!" howled Mr. Timmins. "You know all about wheels! What you want now is a lantern in your mouth and ten minutes behind time to be Big Ben! Don't you see the big wheel has got to go first?"

"Yes, dear," murmured Mrs. Timmins, "but I thought if you practised with the little wheel at first, you wouldn't have so far to fall."

"Who fell?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Didn't you see me step off? I tripped; that's all. Now you just watch me go back!"

Once more Mr. Timmins started, but the big wheel turned round and looked him in the face, and then began to stagger.

"Look out!" squealed Mrs. Timmins.

Mr. Timmins wrenched away and kicked and struggled, but it was of no avail. Down he came and the bicycle was a hopeless wreck.

"What d'you want to yell for?" he shrieked. "Couldn't you keep your mouth shut? What do you think you are—a foghorn?"

"Never mind, my dear," counselled Mrs. Timmins. "I'm afraid the exercise was too violent, and I'm rather glad you broke it."

"I suppose so," snorted Mr. Timmins. "There's £3 gone."

"Don't worry, love. I'll go without the carpet and curtains, and the paint will do well enough in the kitchen. Let me rub you with arnica."

But Mr. Timmins was too deeply grieved by his wife's conduct to accept any office at her hands, preferring to punish her by letting his wounds smart rather than to get well, and thereby relieve her of any anxiety she brought on herself by acting so outrageously under the circumstances.

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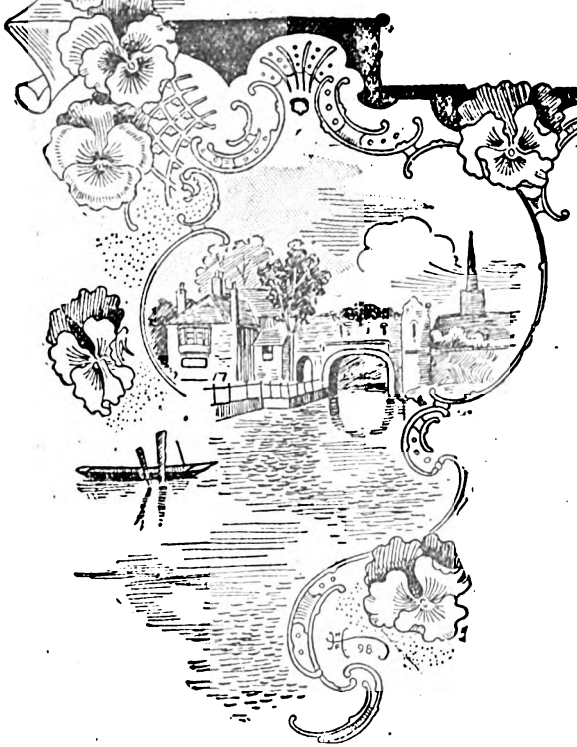

A TALL young man entered my dental rooms one December afternoon, and on being informed that I was busy, began to pace up and down the waiting-room.

I caught a glimpse of him now and then, and his restlessness so annoyed me that, when I was at liberty, I inquired what I could do for him rather impatiently.

He did not seem to notice my brusqueness, and asked abruptly:

"Do you fill teeth?"

"Certainly."

"Will you fill mine?"

"Of course; take a seat in the chair."

As the young man leant back and opened his mouth, I perceived that he was extremely nervous. His lips twitched, and his lower jaw shifted uneasily while I made my examination.

At length I said:

"Your teeth are in good condition with two exceptions—the lower molars are badly decayed, and need immediate attention."

"Yes," said he, "I am aware of that fact."

I prepared my instruments, and was about to begin operating, but was interrupted by my patient asking, in a low tone:

"Can you keep a secret, sir?"

"Yes," I replied, "my patients often entrust me with such things."

"Well," he continued seriously, ignoring my levity, "never mention to anybody that I have been here till the time comes."

"All right."

"Remember, till the time comes," he repeated earnestly.

By this time I had become convinced that my visitor was decidedly lacking in his mental qualities; he seemed to read my thoughts and said quickly:

"No, I am perfectly sane; and, furthermore, I haven't had a drop of liquor for over a week. You look like a man who can be trusted, and if you will do this work for me without asking questions, and consent to take a merely nominal fee, one year from now you will be handsomely repaid. Will you fill both those teeth, one of them with a diamond, for five shillings?"

I burst out laughing.

"My dear sir," I said, "you seem like a respectable man, but I wish you would cease talking in enigmas, and come to the point. In the first place, the price you offer is ridiculously low; and, besides, I don't happen to keep diamonds in stock as filling materials."

"Doubtless not, but here is one which will serve the purpose."

He fumbled in his waistcoat pocket, and produced a diamond which sparkled with much brilliancy.

"There is the gem," he said. "It is worth £20,000 to me."

I said nothing, but smiled inwardly; for the stone, although apparently a fine one, did not seem to me to be worth more than £50. My patient continued:

"Will it fit into one of those cavities and leave room for enough filling material to effectually conceal it, and prevent anyone but a dentist getting at it?"

"Yes," I replied, "the diamond is small, and the cavity in the left molar is quite large enough to hold it."

"The left one?"

"Yes."

"Well, go on, and get the job over as soon as possible."

I am not a believer in hypnotism, but some power that I could not explain made me do as the young man wished. I excavated the cavities and sealed up the diamond. In each instance the nerve had previously been killed. Neither of us spoke until the operation was completed. Then my patient said:

"Well, sir, I am exceedingly obliged to you. One year from to-day I will return, explain everything, and

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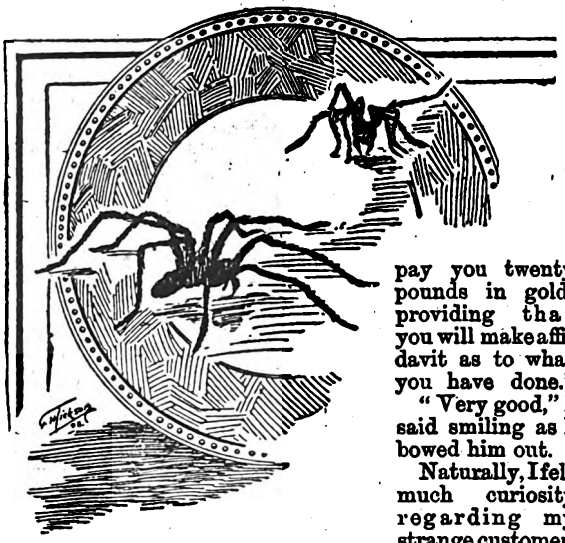

pay you twenty pounds in gold, providing that you will make affidavit as to what you have done."

"Very good," I said smiling as I bowed him out.

Naturally, I felt much curiosity regarding my strange customer. I thought at first that he might be a thief who had stolen the diamond. But such an idea was absurd. He looked honest enough, and then why should he come to me—a total stranger—if such were the case?

"Will!" I called.

"Yes, sir," responded my boy, with startling quickness. "What is it, sir?"

"Follow that man," I said, pointing to my mysterious caller, who had just reached the corner, "and let me know where he goes."

"Right," replied Will, seizing his cap, and he was off at a faster rate than I had ever known him to adopt.

He returned in about an hour, and said with a rueful countenance:

"I tried werry hard, sir, but he gave me the slip down Regent Street."

"How's that? You lost sight of him, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"You're a fine detective, and you took a long time to accomplish nothing," I said, with as fierce a look as I could command.

The spell which the young man seemed to have cast over me lasted for several hours. I was at work in a half-hearted way when a thought struck me like a blow.

I remembered that in my abstraction I had placed the diamond in the tooth on the right side instead of the left as I had at first intended. Both cavities had proved larger than I had at first anticipated. Of course, it did not really matter, but I had neglected to tell my patient about the change. He had gone away with the idea that his left side molar contained his much-valued diamond.

"Oh, well," I reflected philosophically, "what difference does it make? If he comes back I can extract the diamond, and if he goes somewhere else, it will serve him right for telling me a falsehood. Still, I doubt if I shall ever see man, tooth, or diamond again. I am several shillings out of pocket just because I was foolish enough to humour the whim of an eccentric individual."

About six months afterwards, Joe, the successor to Will, in the important position of general errand boy, announced that a "werry pretty lady" wanted to see me. I might as well explain here that the precocious Will had basely deserted me some time before, taking with him as souvenirs five pounds odd in money, some sheets of gold, and a few other articles belonging to my equipment.

My visitor had a worried look on her beautiful face.

"Are you Mr. Wilson?" she asked.

"I am."

"Do you know Mr. Albert Dawson?"

"I have no recollection of ever meeting a gentleman of that name."

"That is strange," she continued earnestly. "He seems to know you very well, and I have come to ask you to visit him."

"Why?"

"He has been terribly injured. Perhaps you read in this morning's paper of the singular assault on the Thames Embankment last night."

"No," I said; "I have not had time to look at the newspaper."

"Well," replied the young lady, "Mr. Dawson and I were returning from the theatre, and had reached a rather deserted spot, when suddenly two men sprang upon us, and while one held him, the other forced open his mouth and lacerated his tongue and cheek in a most terrible manner."

"Did they not attack you?"

"No, they did not," she replied, "and it seems very strange, because I had my purse in my hand at the time, and Mr. Dawson says he only had a few shillings in his pocket."

"Did they take anything from him?" I asked. I was much interested in my visitor's story, but still more in herself, for she had a most charming manner.

"Well, yes, but it seems almost too funny to mention it. Their only weapon, it appears, was a pair of dental forceps, and with these, in a most bungling manner, they managed to pull out one of Mr. Dawson's teeth. Then they made off at once. The whole affair took place in a few seconds."

A ray of light dawned on me.

"Is Mr. Dawson a tall man?" I asked.

"He is."

"Has he fair hair and large teeth?"

"Yes."

"All right; I will go with you. I think I remember him, although I did not recognise his name."

I was ushered into a well-furnished room, and at once recognised my mysterious client. He was sitting in an armchair, and his face was well covered with bandages. He was apparently in much pain, but smiled faintly as he recognised me. A servant who was in the apartment at my entrance withdrew, and as soon as the door was closed Mr. Dawson spoke: "Well, Mr. Wilson," he said faintly, "I'm in a pretty bad shape."

"I see you are," I returned; "but I hope it is not very serious."

"Oh, no," he said dolefully; "but it isn't the physical pain I mind so much. It's the loss of the diamond."

"Yes," I said, for the want of something better. I thought it best to allow him to talk, although it was with difficulty that he continued the conversation.

"I suppose you have wondered greatly why I had you to perform such a singular operation, and as everything is lost I think it best to explain the matter. My father is an exceedingly rich man, and I am his only son. Unfortunately, I fell into bad habits and became a victim of drink. My father did everything to stop my downward career, and finally reduced my allowance to next to nothing. So low, however, had I fallen, that I commenced to pawn everything I could lay hands on.

"Not to weary you, I hasten to tell you that this deplorable state of affairs continued until my twentieth birthday. On that occasion my father had a serious talk with me, and I was informed that by the will of my grandfather I had been left £20,000, to be given me at my majority. There was one condition attached to the bequest. My father handed me a small diamond, and stated that the jewel was to be kept on my person for one year. Should it pass out of my possession, the bequest was to be given to a charitable institution. As my father handed me the diamond he remarked sorrowfully that he had little hope of my keeping it.

"My emotions may be imagined. Even as I took the jewel I felt the horrible desire for drink come over me. My manhood, however, asserted itself. I walked out into the air with a terrible conflict raging within me. If I pawned the diamond, I would have enough money for a month or two, but how should I ever be able to redeem it? My father, as I have intimated, gave me little or nothing, my friends all fought shy of me, and I was incapable of work. In the midst of my reverie I passed your place, and a thought seized me. I entered, and you know the rest of the story."

I listened to Mr. Dawson's recital as he spoke with increasing difficulty, and rejoiced that I could so soon relieve his mind. Everything was clear to me. My errand-boy had evidently overheard my conversation with my mysterious patient. He had listened to our talk about a £20,000 diamond, and the tooth into which I intended to place it, and had informed some unscrupulous friend. The conspiracy had no doubt been formed carefully, and Mr. Dawson's movements were probably closely watched for a favourable opportunity to perform the robbery. The auspicious occasion had arrived on the previous night, and they had waylaid him and—extracted the wrong tooth.

I felt glad that my mistake had served Mr. Dawson such a good turn. Had I sealed up the diamond in the left molar, as I had informed him, my boy's rascally scheme would have succeeded. To make sure that my hopes were not based on false reasoning, I asked Mr. Dawson:

"Of course, it was the tooth on the left side of the jaw that the robbers extracted?"

"Yes," he replied sorrowfully, "it was. I suppose Miss Spring has told you all about the attack?"

"She has," I replied. My spirits fell when he told me the name of his fair friend. I had hoped she would have proved to be his sister.

"She is a girl in a thousand!" exclaimed my patient, with as much enthusiasm as his condition permitted. "Why, do you know, since I met her a month or so back, the desire for drink has completely left me. I feel sure that I could carry the diamond about me now with perfect safety; but alas, it is gone! I would not have my father know of this for all the world. I am at Miss Spring's residence, and her people insist that I shall not be moved for a day or two. Can you think of any way by which the diamond could be recovered without publicity? If we call in a detective, I fear that the story will leak out somehow. You befriended me once, that's why I have asked you to come now. Can you help me?"

"Entrust the matter to me," I said reassuringly. For some reason or other I felt inclined to prolong the conversation, probably that the joy of Mr. Dawson might be all the greater when I told him of the lucky error which had preserved the diamond.

"Do you think there is any chance of discovering the men?" he asked. Something in my manner seemed to give him hope.

"No," I replied, "not the least."

"Then what do you mean?" he returned, with much disappointment.

"Why, my dear sir, I mean just this. You have been labouring under a false impression, and fortunately the thieves have shared it with you. I was asked to place the diamond in the tooth on the left side. By mistake I put it in the right molar, and there it is at this very moment. All the robbers have for their trouble, is a large-sized tooth filled with amalgam in a very superior style, if I do say so myself."

As I made this revelation I laughed heartily and glanced at Mr. Dawson, expecting to enjoy the look of relief that would doubtless spread over such parts of his countenance as were visible.

To my great surprise he fell back with a groan of despair.

"You say that you put the diamond in the tooth on the right side?"

"Yes."

"Why, I had that tooth extracted three months ago when I was in Birmingham."

It was my turn now to get excited.

"You did?" was all I could say.

"Yes. I was there on a trip, and I met with a slight accident and loosened that tooth, so I had it out."

"What was the name of the dentist?"

"I have completely forgotten, but I remember the street and number."

"What was it?"

Mr. Dawson gave me the address and I took the next train for Birmingham. All my efforts were in vain, however. The dentist who extracted the tooth made a habit of throwing away such results of his skill. The dental organ with its £20,000 secret was doubtless submerged in some ash-heap.

There it may be to this day. Mr. Dawson's expected legacy went to the "Home for the Relief of Crippled Orphans," and a dozen other worthy objects.

Mr. Dawson, however, married Miss Spring, and by the last account was living very happily, having by his good conduct regained the favour of his father.

M. E. McDERMOT.

TWENTY £25 NOTES OFFERED.

THIS MAGNIFICENT OFFER is made by the Editor of *Pearson's Weekly* for one week only. Particulars of it will be found in the Christmas Double Number, published on Thursday, December 22nd.

It is necessary to comply with the conditions; you should, therefore, not fail to secure a copy of the paper at once.

In addition to this, the Christmas Double Number of *P. W.* contains the opening chapters of a new serial story, entitled "Cold Steel," by Mr. M. P. Shiel, an instalment of a splendid story entitled "Bunderby's Boys and I," by Arnold Golsworthy, profusely illustrated by Tom Browne, half-a-dozen complete short stories, well illustrated, besides numerous articles, and prizes of £1,000, £100, and £25 in a football competition.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER XLIV.

The Battle of Kharkof.

It was in Russia that events marched with dramatic sequence.

Whilst the struggle for possession of Petrovsk on the Caspian was taking place, telegraphic instructions reached the Grand Duke Paul to the effect that he was to cross the Caucasus with as many men as possible, and fall upon the British flank or rear. He explained that no effective force could possibly reach Vladikavkaz from Tiflis, by the post road over the mountains, under a fortnight, as his stores and the greater number of his troops were concentrated at Baku.

Discussion on the point was cut short by the seizure of the telegraph line by the British, but Duke Paul loyally strove to obey the directions received from St. Petersburg.

His disheartened and weary men only gained the Kazbek Pass to find it impregnably fortified against them by a strong brigade detached from the Madras army for this particular duty. In vain they strove to pierce the barrier of rock and Maxim guns. The fighting was fierce and unceasing, and as it transpired, the last lives spent in the campaign were given in this magnificent but gloomy gorge.

With the base thus secured, and an excellent railway at his disposal, Sir George White had only ordinary difficulties to surmount in joining his forces with those of Lord Methuen at Rostof and Taganrog.

The exact plan of campaign now began to unfold itself, but to note its salient details the reader should consult a modern map of European Russia.

The military strength of this great country was centered in three distinct localities, at Moscow, along the line of the river Dniester, including the Crimea, and south of the Caucasian range. Of course St. Petersburg, Poland, and the Austrian frontier were also held by great army corps, but there were many good and convincing reasons, which will presently appear, why the two former localities should not be denuded of troops, and on Austria a very watchful eye must be kept, for the successes achieved by England and the United States were quickening her pulses and stirring her ambitions.

The fighting was fierce and unceasing.

Away in the far east of Siberia, Canadian and American forces were encamped at Vladivostock and Nikolaievsk, whilst it was felt that the Baltic must soon be the scene of far-reaching events when the British and American fleets opened fire upon the defences of the Neva.

Sir George White, who now took supreme command of the combined armies in Southern Russia, knew, therefore, that the principal portion of the problem before him was to meet the enemy under those conditions most likely to achieve success in the first great battle.

The army of the Caucacus was practically non-existent. Sir Charles Warren's army corps, securely posted at Kremenchug on the Dneiper, held secure the chief river and rail routes from western and north-western Russia, and the Commander-in-Chief was left to deal with the divisions hastily placed on a war footing at Moscow, Orel, Tambof, Kursk, and Kharkof.

In all, he expected to meet 400,000 men, and to oppose them he had 280,000. The *personnel* of his troops, however, atoned for the relative paucity of their numbers. The severe hardships of the advance from India had weeded out the weak and sickly ones, and the contingent led by Lord Methuen was fully up to the standard of the superb army which had crossed the Caspian.

Officers and men were filled with quiet enthusiasm, whilst the daily receipt of encouraging news from the other centres of operations in France and Germany filled them with a keen desire to cross swords with the enemy under the strenuous conditions imposed upon their comrades elsewhere.

The Russians, taught by the experiences of their allies, did not seek to hurl themselves in small sections upon the invaders.

So precarious was the political condition of the country, and so excited was public feeling by the trend of events, that the Tsar and his advisers fully realised the imperative necessity there was for a crushing victory over the English at the first available opportunity.

Absolutely unprepared as they were for an attack in the vital quarter in which it had developed, they found the delays and anxieties of effective mobilisation almost as trying as Sir George White's progress through a barren country, filled with a sullen if not actively hostile population.

It soon became evident that the crucial struggle of the campaign would take place in the neighbourhood of Kharkof, a large town on the river of that name, and its tributary, the Lopani. Kharkof may be regarded as the commercial capital of Southern Russia.

The leading divisions of both armies had already met in the locality, but the commanders had received strict injunctions to avoid a serious encounter. Concentration and analysis of strength were the objects aimed at, alike by Sir George White, and his redoubtable opponent, General Kouropatkin.

Each wished to take the measure of the other before throwing the die which was to determine the tremendous stake at issue between them. Each felt intuitively that the future history of the campaign would be greatly influenced by the result of the impending battle, but neither of them knew the scope of the drama being played at that moment in Russia—a playing with empires in which they were but notable actors.

At last, towards the close of a sweltering August day, when the air was still tremulous with heat, and even the natives in the Indian Army growled about the supply of ice falling off owing to the difficulty of transporting the machinery, Sir George White found himself within striking distance of Kharkof.

From the heights through which ran the river Lopani, he could plainly see the tents of the Russian host, and the

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Intelligence Department soon provided him with reports that showed the disposition and numerical superiority of the enemy.

The British army was composed of eight divisions of 30,000 men in each, and these again were split up into five brigades. The first division, commanded by Lieutenant-General George Nicholas Channer, V.C., had been in position near Kharkof for some days, and had succeeded in blowing up a tunnel which carried the line from Kharkof to Taganrog through a precipitous and otherwise inaccessible mountain barrier which protected the British left from attack.

Sir George White . . . . earnestly examined the Russians.

The first and second divisions were stationed in the comparatively narrow valley through which the Kharkof river flows, somewhat in front of the confluence of that shallow stream with a small rivulet. The remainder of the army, with the guns and cavalry, were grouped on the more open ground which forms the watershed of the river Lopani, and there could be little doubt that in this confined space—for the front of the entire army did not spread over four miles—would be fought one of the most stubborn battles of modern days.

Sir George White, surrounded by his staff, passed the brief hours of declining light in earnestly examining the Russians.

To his trained eye it was quite evident that they were yet in a state of unpreparedness, and he said in a relieved tone whilst discussing the matter:

"I am glad that the attack will probably be delayed. It will give me time to think and the men time to rest."

He summoned a Council of War for ten o'clock, and, after an early meal, retired to his quarters, demanding complete seclusion until the hour approached for the assembly of the chiefs of divisions.

When this brilliant collection of distinguished soldiers had gathered round the Commander-in-Chief, it was seen that there were present Lord Methuen, as second in command, Major-Generals Sir G. B. Wolseley, Sir A. P. Grant, Alexander A. A. Kinloch, G. N. Channer, V.C., Sir Robert Low, Sir R. C. Stewart, W. Galbraith and W. F. Gatacre. Major-General H. F. Grant commanded the cavalry as a whole, and Major-General H. C. Lewes, the artillery.

Sir George White quickly placed them in possession of his views.

"I feel convinced," he said, "that our best plan of action is to await attack by the enemy. We are outnumbered by nearly two to one, and the broken nature of the country renders rapid co-operation of guns and cavalry with our infantry attack almost impossible. This fact also tells in our favour in minimising the superiority of the enemy in those arms.

"They, of course, like ourselves, have heard details of the principal battles in France, and know quite well that Lord Roberts has invariably commenced his operations in the dark or just before dawn. Kouropatkin will expect us to follow the same rule, and will await attack during the whole of this night.

"I have arranged that his rest shall be sufficiently disturbed by strong patrols along the front. To-morrow his men will be tired after the night's vigil, and he will probably endeavour to bring his strong artillery arm into effective use. It will be for you, Lewes, to see that he is kept fully occupied in this matter."

Major-General Lewes nodded affably.

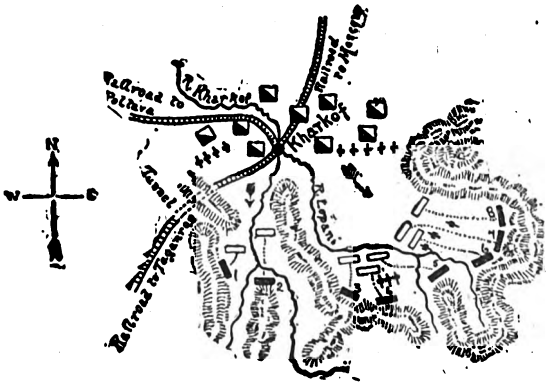
"If we still make no move I feel assured," continued the Commander-in-Chief, "that Kouropatkin will himself attack under cover of the night. His officers, of course, know the ground well, and it is conceivable that they may imagine we feel ourselves incapable of meeting them upon equal terms."

A quaint smile flitted round the Council at this instance of frail reasoning on the part of the enemy.

"We must see to it that our men are thoroughly rested and well fed during the day. As soon as the dusk cloaks our movements, each division will retire upon a special position assigned to it and marked here upon a sketch map of the two valleys prepared by the Intelligence Department. During to-night a comprehensive scheme will be prepared by that department, and handed to all brigadiers and commanding officers of regiments, so that there should be no confusion, or undue haste, or unnecessary delay.

"The object of this change of position will, no doubt, gentlemen, be quite clear to you. If Kouropatkin groups his dense columns with the intention of striking heavy blows at us in a definite locality, he will be completely nonplussed if there is nothing to hit at when he gets there."

And now Sir George White spoke very slowly and impressively. "It may be regarded as certain," he said, "that the advance will nevertheless be maintained, but with irresolution and anxiety in place of the confidence of the opening movement. If this be so, we can count upon accomplishing the first effective development ourselves; on the other hand, if Kouropatkin retires, we will follow up and give battle at dawn on the outskirts of Kharkof." The Commander-in-Chief paused, and a buzz of conversation at once rose, whilst the officers gathered round the large scale sketch-map, a small reproduction of which is given here.



PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF KHARKOF.

THE ARROWS SHOW THE LINES OF THE RUSSIAN ADVANCE.

A Russian division of 40,000 infantry with 3,000 cavalry and 100 guns. Nine divisions in all, but only 400 guns were used in the preliminary action.

Represent British and Russian guns.

An English division of 30,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry. Eight divisions in all, with 340 guns. Each division is numbered, and the position shown is that occupied during the day.

The same division at night, the dotted lines marking the line of march.

The Battery of Maxims stood in a semi-circle on the high ground behind division No. 5. Scale 2 miles to 1 inch.

Major-General Kinloch, who is perhaps the tallest man in the British army, and notable throughout India as a sports-

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man who never shoots a bear, but stabs him with a short hogspear, commanded the 5th Division, and forthwith expressed his satisfaction with the arrangements.

"If everything comes off as you predict, and I fully agree with your forecast, I ought to get a good share of the ultimate attack," he said to Sir George White, pointing to the position occupied by his corps on the map.

Kouropatkin . . . . hurried forward to ascertain what was the matter.

"Yes," said the Chief with a smile. "I thought you would notice that fact. Indeed, I intend to remain with you myself during the night, and I have caused the field telegraph to be centred there."

If General Kouropatkin had subjected his brain to a species of "X" rays, warranted to reveal the thoughts, his ideas could not have been more exactly made known to the British leader.

To tell the truth, he scoffed most loudly at the pusillanimity of the English in not venturing to attack him, and he was bitterly annoyed at the manner in which his artillery was held in check, and even badly knocked about by the magnificent service of the British gunners.

All through the baking heat of the day he eagerly watched for developments, but none came, and as night fell he gave orders for arrangements to be made for a general advance, timed to be effective about midnight.

Two divisions were to carry the British left in the Kharkof Valley, and then cross the low hills which intervened between this river and its neighbour, the Lopani. A third division would follow in support, chiefly to aid in the flanking movement directed against the British centre and main body, which would be assaulted in front by three divisions, two others acting as supports. The remaining division would hold Kharkof, being deemed superfluous for the task in hand.

At 11.30 p.m. the advance guard of the leading Muscovite divisions came in touch with the British vedettes.

These latter steadily retired, and, a few minutes later, the Russian officers halted their men to form them up for the final rush upon the British lines. The final rush was duly delivered, and spent itself upon thin air, to the intense amazement of the brigadiers.

Astounded to hear little or no firing, Kouropatkin, who was with the first body of supports in the centre attack along the Lopani flats, hurried forward to ascertain what was the matter.

He quickly decided that the British were in full retreat before him, and gave imperative orders that the advance was to proceed with the utmost celerity.

At twelve o'clock some desultory firing in front stirred the leading battalions to again stumble on at top speed in the darkness, but they met with equal disappointment.

By this time confusion, irregularity, uncertainty of formation, and loss of discipline, began to take serious effect upon the Russians. But they poured blindly on in disorganised hordes, and instead of turning to the south-east along the broad reaches of the valley, they streamed across the Lopani river, and blundered right on top of Kinloch's division before they knew that an enemy was in the locality.

A short and sharp bayonet charge by the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the Durham Light Infantry, enlightened them considerably, and two brigades, more frightened than hurt, staggered back across the shallow, boulder-strewn river. Kouropatkin now sent off nearly every member of his staff to order a general halt, and to hurry up the rocket apparatus.

This took some time in fulfilment, but the British troops never moved, nor did they show the slightest sign of their presence elsewhere than in the precise spot where they had been discovered.

Sir George White stuck rigidly to his theory. He knew that under existing conditions the Russian supports and reserves must be fast crowding on the fighting line, thus seriously discounting their tactical value. No other battle in which such large numbers of men were engaged had been confined to so small an area, and it was precisely this consideration that he aimed at.

Shortly before one o'clock a rocket hissed into the sky, and bursting over the slopes occupied by the 5th Division, revealed fully the nature of their position. Other rockets followed, and Kouropatkin found out the location of the whole British centre and right.

Whilst he was hurriedly striving to organise an attack in force along the entire front, the Russians underwent the most terrible experience that any army was ever subjected to. Not even the Plevna redoubt was the scene of such carnage as was effected during the next half-hour.

On the hill behind Kinloch's corps sixty Maxims and seven batteries of artillery had been arranged in a crescent, so as to command the whole plateau inclosed by the angle of the Lopani.

The guns fired shrapnel by guess-work, and destructive enough they were, but with the Maxims, by means of their sighting appliances, the element of human miscalculation was entirely eliminated.

These valuable weapons can be trained, during daylight, to sweep a definite area of ground both in length and depth, and fixed by means of indicators which prevent them from ranging beyond the predetermined limits. They fire 200 bullets per minute when in full swing.

Upon the Russian troops, crowded together in dense masses, a pitiless storm of lead, averaging nearly 12,000 bullets per minute, rained ceaselessly from the heights, whilst the artillery added terror to the more silent havoc thus caused in the darkness by sending salvoes of shrapnel shrieking and tearing through the ranks.

Every few seconds a rocket flew over the Russian host, shedding a fitful and supernatural light over the scene, and seeming, by its mere radiance, to render the holocaust of death more awful and more widespread.

Kouropatkin knew that the sole hope of extricating his army from its disastrous predicament lay in a successful general attack upon the British position.

With the desperate courage of despair, he devoted himself to this object, and at last managed to secure a combined advance on the six English divisions.

He reached Sir A. P. Grant in time.

It was at this stage of the battle that a chance Russian bullet smashed the telegraph instrument communicating with the 1st and 2nd Divisions on the left wing, and for nearly an hour no communication could be held with Channer or Gatacre who commanded there.

That stray ounce of lead gave Lieutenant Rodney his V. C.

The Russian advance along the Kharkof Valley, narrower and less practicable than the watershed of the Lopani, was considerably delayed by the natural difficulties of the ground.

Failing to find the British where he expected them, and hearing sounds of a heavy engagement on the other side of the hill, the Russian commander thought that the whole British force was to be found there, and at once changed

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his direction in order to cross the hill and delivered a flank attack on the British in aid of Kouropatkin.

Some time elapsed before Channer discovered this serious development, and although he was able to communicate it to Gatacre, they were quite powerless to inform the Commander-in-chief.

Both generals forthwith resolved to depart from their instructions and attack the Russians, but valuable time had been lost, and, if possible, Sir George White should learn what was going on.

It was impracticable to reach the British lines from the rear owing to the ravines and precipitous gorges that separated the two forces on that side, and the only way was over the hill now being crossed by the Russians and along the left bank of the Lopani, through the Russian fighting line, until the third division was reached.

Major-General Channer called for volunteers to take the message, and Rodney and five other officers were selected to make the attempt individually.

Rodney was the only one of the six who got through. He had lost his helmet, his tunic was slashed with sabre cuts, his left riding-boot was torn with a lance, and his horse bleeding from several wounds, but he reached Sir A. P. Grant in time for the latter to swing half his division round to meet the new attack.

Half dead with fatigue—for he had been working hard all day, and this daring ride was no small addition to his labour—he managed to mount a fresh horse, and proceeded in comparative safety to headquarters, where he was warmly thanked by Sir George White for his splendid achievement.

Dawn was now breaking over the field, and the end was near.

The only bit of solid fighting done by the Russians was on the right, where they certainly gave the divisions led by Sir A. P. Grant, Channer, and Gatacre, some trouble to beat them.

For the rest, a general advance of the British line converted a feeble resistance into a wild rout. The cavalry and guns took up the pursuit, and the remnants of Kouropatkin's force fled to the town of Kharkof, or were dissipated over the steppes to the north.

Leaving nothing to chance, for a fresh and powerful division, with the whole of the Russian guns and cavalry, still held the town, the Commander-in-Chief lost no time in preparing to carry the place by assault.

A fresh battle appeared to be imminent, and the artillery were already taking up position to begin shelling the fort at the confluence of the rivers, when a Russian officer, carrying a flag of truce, was seen riding at top speed towards the British lines.

"It is a ruse to delay us," said a member of the Commander-in-Chief's staff.

"If it be," said Sir George, "it will not avail them long. Meanwhile sound the 'Cease fire.'"

The envoy was speedily brought to the Chief.

"I am sent by General Kouropatkin," he said in English, "to arrange terms of capitulation."

"Any terms must be unconditional," was the brief response.

"General Kouropatkin thought that you would give no other reply," said the officer sadly. "In explanation of his action and desires, he sends you this translation of a telegram he has just received from Moscow."

Sir George White read the paper handed to him.

He started with genuine amazement when he had mastered its contents, the full purport of which he seemed at first unable to realise.

After a long pause, during which the staff marvelled at the deep concern and bewilderment of the Chief's expression, he said to the envoy:

"Convey to General Kouropatkin the assurances of my keen sympathy, and say that I will meet him immediately to discuss the situation."

The officer saluted, and rode off.

Then Sir George White read the telegram aloud to his staff, adding the memorable words:

"So far as Russia is concerned, gentlemen, the war is over."

CHAPTER XLV.

The End of the Romanoffs.

"Has he come yet?"

"No, Petrof, have a little patience. The Little Father won't keep you long."

"Ah! No! Not long! Not long—now! But it has been weary waiting."

"By the Prophet, we are impatient this morning. Here, come a little more to the front. You won't be so crushed. And why so anxious?"

"Don't you know? Are your eyes closed; are your ears heavy? It is a bitter day for our Little Father. Yes. The Romanoffs are nearly run to earth. A few hours longer—a few hours!"

The officer saluted.

"Hey? What do you mean, Petrof?"

"Silence, there!"

And with this gruff command there fell on the shoulders of the lusty moujik who asked the question a blow from the shaft of a lance. A mounted soldier passing along vainly seeking to maintain order, had overheard them. The little group scowled as he rode on and looked at each other with meaning glances.

The streets of Moscow were crowded with eager throngs. The Tsar was about to enter in. Everyone knew that: the word had been passed round mysteriously in the morning. He had suddenly left St. Petersburg, alarmed at the news of growing calamity, and had hastened down to the old capital to meet his brother, and throw himself into the centre of operations. The whole city was in a ferment of excitement.

For news of late had been amazing, stupendous. Scarcely had the terrible announcement come that the English had beaten the Asian army and had forced its way to Russian soil, than another and still more miraculous event convulsed the whole nation.

Seven days after the remarkable meeting at the Grand Duke Paul's house, the storm that had been so slowly gathering within the Russian dominions gained head, and burst with impetuous fury upon the crown. The Nihilists had risen, not in isolated localities, not with the ineffectual despair of scanty numbers, but simultaneously, multitudinously, in a single moment, and in every quarter.

The first tidings that came to St. Petersburg were sufficiently embarrassing. They announced the revolt of the southern provinces. With ready firmness and dispatch that danger, at least, might be effectually crushed; but scarcely had General Gourko time to make his first hasty arrangements, than fresh intelligence of disaster, growing worse and worse every moment, rained in upon him from all points. It staggered and confused him, for he found that he had at last to contend, not with a conspiracy, but with a nation.

Count Lucovitch had planned his operations well. Whilst the whole available Russian army was hastening to meet the British at Kharkof, and was already engaged, beyond its capacity, with the invincible army of India, a countless host of eager and reckless rebels, resolved to stake everything upon the one decisive blow for their country's freedom, sprang from concealment and hastened in

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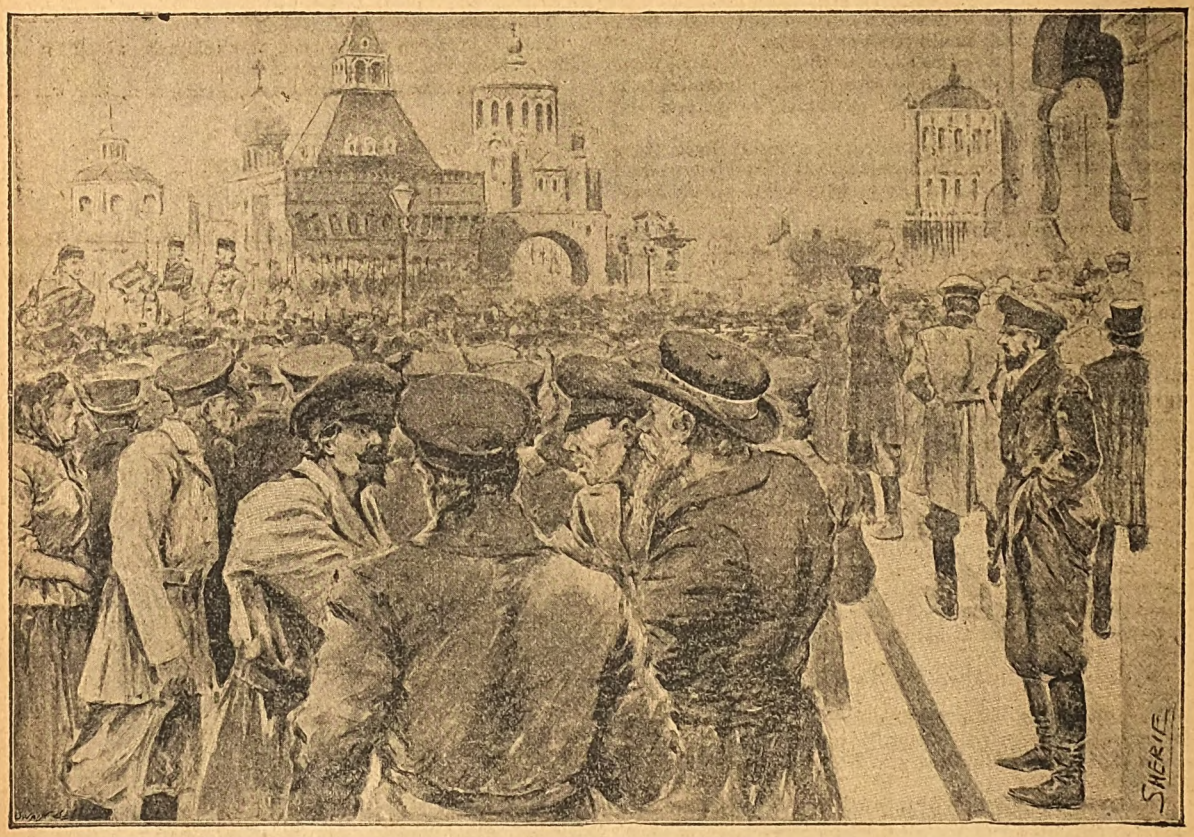

As he rode slowly through the crowded streets, it was ominous to notice that there was no clamour of welcome.

impetuous march—made more triumphant at every step from the easy victories obtained, and the constant reinforcements gathered from the districts through which they passed—to the three chief cities of the empire.

There was little or no resistance; indeed, none was possible. The path of the insurgents was scarcely defended. They were met by blessings rather than by musket-shots, and with incredible rapidity made their way to the seats of Imperial government. It was then that the Tsar, desperate, yet fearless, resolved to throw himself into Moscow, his ancient and sacred capital, the strongest of all his citadels. There, too, summoned hastily together, were gathered the heads of the Romanoff family and one or two of his trusted generals.

At last, about five o'clock, the gleam of arms in the distance betokened the arrival of the Imperial party at the railway station. A sudden hush came over the excited multitude. The Tsar rode at the head of his guards, accompanied by Gourko. His look was still haughty, and there was in it a strange expression of mingled anxiety and disdain. How would his Capital receive him? This torturing thought filled him with distraction.

As he rode slowly through the crowded streets, it was ominous to notice that there was no clamour of welcome, none of that popular enthusiasm which greets a ruler who comes amongst his people. His city of Moscow gazed upon the Imperial cavalcade in sullen silence, broken only by the low murmuring of subdued voices. The Tsar's brow darkened as he marked this significant fact, and his eye glittered with the fierce fire of royal anger.

"These dogs need whipping to their kennels," he exclaimed to Gourko.

"Pray Heaven the day is near when your Majesty may be able to punish them for their impious disloyalty," replied the minister, whose mind was heavy with foreboding. "Meanwhile, pardon an old servant's license when I earnestly recommend your Majesty to humour these cowards. We must take no wrong step just now. If your Majesty would deign not to notice——"

"There shall be no more submission or pretence," hastily interjected the Tsar. "The Romanoffs are not accustomed to play-act before their subjects. I will be monarch to the end. Our destiny is set by Heaven, and Heaven alone can accomplish it. What news from the north?"

Gourko's voice trembled slightly as he replied:

"St. Petersburg is surrounded, sire. But that alone I would not fear. Danger from without may be met with ease. But——"

"You hesitate! What is it you suspect?"

"This, your majesty. That the city itself may rise. There is disaffection through every rank. Should it have spread to the garrison we must be prepared for bad news indeed."

"And the south?"

"That," replied Gourko, "is for the present not to be counted on. The Nihilists have swarmed over every province, and the Black Sea is no longer in our hands."

"In that case," exclaimed the Tsar, with defiant pride, "we must depend upon ourselves. My forefathers had dangers like these to face, and in the hour of peril proved themselves kings. You will not find me unworthy of them, General. Let us ride on to the Palace. We will prepare a blow that will chill the very heart of rebellion and secure for ever the dominion of my race!"

(To be continued.)

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CONSULTATIONS FREE.

Puzzled writes to say that he has never yet come across a newspaper labelled "first edition," however early in the day he procures the evening paper. "How is it?"——Because there is no "first"; it begins at the second. This is the result of keen competition between rival publishers. In the same way, many papers advance from the second edition to the fourth.

R. T. B.—It is correct to call or leave cards after a dance to which you have been invited, whether you accepted the invitation or not.

J. T.—About the most rapacious appetite I know of was that possessed by a hog in Scio, Oregon. Its owner often said that it seemed to eat its own bulk of food at each meal. When the hog was killed the other day it was found to possess two perfect stomachs and two complete sets of intestines. No wonder it had such an appetite.

D. S.—In modern history, Leipsic holds the record as the battle in which the greatest number of lives were lost. In that protracted fight, which took place in October, 1813, 80,000 men perished. It was originally stated that in the two great attacks on Plevna, the Russians and their allies lost 46,000 men; but the number is now set down as 30,000.

W. A. H.—Strictly speaking, a creole is one born of European parents in the West Indies, though now the term is frequently used in the Colonies to designate anything West Indian, Negro and English.

C. H. G. writes: "Can you tell me why the figure of a cock is so often to be seen upon the top of a church steeple?"——The cock used to be placed on the top of sacred trees before it was transferred to buildings to disperse, by its gyrations and loud crowing, evil spirits and all the train of approaching calamity.

W.—The air we breathe wants washing occasionally. After a good rainfall the impurities are less in number, and the pleasure with which we take the air into our lungs when we go out after the rain shows that our organism appreciates the result of the washing.

F. N.—In Canton they name streets after the virtues, as we name them after prominent people. In some instances these names do not appear strange to us; Love Street, for instance, does not excite our astonishment. Pure Pearl Street is getting a little beyond us, but Benevolence Street and Unblemished Rectitude Street, especially the latter, go a little too far for our present notions. Perhaps we shall progress after the Tsar's Peace Conference.

Liverpool Juggins.—If a train, moving at the speed of twenty-five miles an hour, were suddenly stopped, the passengers would experience a shock equal to that of falling from a second floor window; at thirty miles an hour, he might as well fall from a height of three flights of stairs: and an express train's sudden stoppage would be like a fall from a fourth storey.

F. D.—The death-plant of Java is thus named on account of the strength of the perfume given off by its flowers. It kills all forms of insect life that come under its influence, and if inhaled for a few minutes by a human being, will overcome and kill him.

H. T.—Although working men are commonly called "Proletarians," strictly speaking, they are nothing of the sort. When King Servius Tullius reorganised the Roman State, he restricted the franchise to men whose property amounted to over £40 of our money and called all who had less, and whose only value to the state consisted in the possibility of becoming fathers to children, a "proletarius" from *proles* a progeny. As the proletarians did not vote, they were not called upon to pay taxes; hence, with this comparison, it is absurd to call "working men" by such a title.

M.—The laws of the United States contain no provision for the notification to the President-Elect that he has been elected. The votes are counted and the result inscribed in the journals of both Houses of Congress, but the successful candidate for the Presidency has to find out the result for himself. There is no trouble about that, of course, but it is strange that there should be such an omission.

R. J. would like to know during what part of the year dogs are most liable to suffer from rabies.——The majority of cases occur in the wettest months. In April, November, and December the recorded cases are double and triple those in June, July and August.

G. G.—Chinese rice paper is made from thin slices of the pith from the cane of a tree about five feet high. A sharp knife pares the pith into cylinders of uniform thickness, which are then unrolled and pressed out into so-called "rice" paper.

B.—The name "blanket" was first given to the fabric of which those comforting articles were made because it was produced by three brothers named Blanket. They were eminent woollen weavers who lived in Bristol in the reign of Edward III.

G. L.—The obituary list of 1893 contained more titles than that of any recent year. Including Baronets, Knights, and Companions (of various orders), it covered 158 titled personages.

Dulwich writes: "A friend of mine insists that the Crystal Palace does not stand in Sydenham. Surely such a statement is ridiculous on the face of it!"——Not at all. The district of Sydenham is entirely in Kent, while the Palace site is in Surrey, near Upper Norwood, the greater part of which is in Lambeth parish.

D. L. P.—The common tortoise sold in the streets for killing black beetles will do nothing of the kind. It exclusively lives on leaves and fruit. Some water tortoises are, however, carnivorous.

Y.—The day set apart for public worship varies with the religion of the worshippers. Christians observe Sunday; with the Greeks it is Monday; the Persians have Tuesday the Assyrians have public worship on Wednesday; the Egyptians on Thursday; the Turks on Friday and the Jewish Sabbath is Saturday.

S.—The wild tribes of the Caucasus teach their children the use of the dagger as soon as the little ones can walk about and hold the weapon. The first task is to stab water without making a splash, not so easy of accomplishment by a child as we might suppose.

F.—One of the largest forests in the world is situated between Ural and the Okhotsk Sea, and may be said to be growing on ice. The authorities had a well dug in that region recently, and it was found that at a depth of 340 feet the ground was still frozen.

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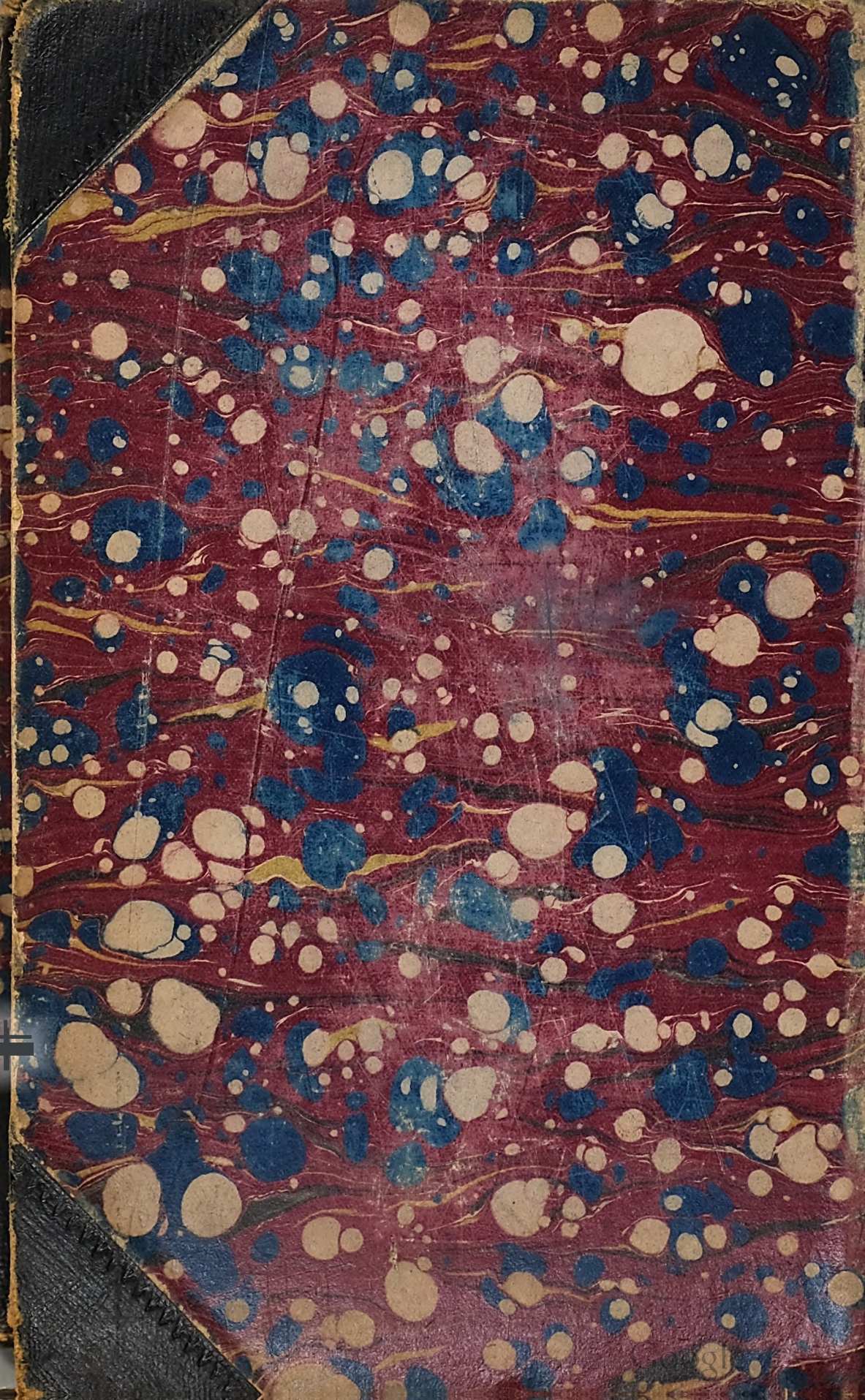
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